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ART AND PROPERTY IN
THE FORSYTE SAGA AND A MODERN COMEDY

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ABSTRACT

The Man of Property is unique among the Forsyte novels in that it is both the only pre-war book and the only book in which the Forsytes are seen in a completely negative light. Forsytes symbolize the forces of Property, which are always striving to suppress all forms of Art. By the end of The Man of Property Property stands triumphant. Bosinney, the Architect-Artist, is dead, and Irene, that embodiment of Beauty, has been enslaved by Soames.

In Chancery and To Let trace the gradual changes in both Soames and Irene, and the new relationship of Property and Art. The villainous Soames looks better and better, while Irene's goodness begins to dim. When the crisis of Jon's and Fleur's love comes to a head, it is Soames who is noble and self-sacrificing and Irene who is manipulative. When the focus of the novels is not on these two old antagonists, it is increasingly taken up with the problem of Fleur and Jon. It turns out that the possessive Fleur is not as bad as she appears, while Jon is unable to live up to one's natural expectations of him. In the end it seems that Fleur's possessiveness may even be an asset, as Property and Art arrive at a partnership by the end of To Let.

The White Monkey and The Silver Spoon have been criticized as rambling books full of trivial incidents. They actually chronicle Fleur's quest for a still satisfying life which does not include Beauty--that is, Jon. These novels also succeed in illustrating the aimlessness of the post-war generation and the moral rot which seems to be invading all levels of society.

In Swan Song the once villainous Soames must become the hero who saves the day for Fleur. She was sure that Jon was the answer to the problems of herself and her age, and he turns out to be a ghastly disappointment. If there is to be an answer, it must come through Soames's discovery of a classically simple peace among the traces of his forbears. In the end it is Soames who is the saviour of the modern age, and Fleur who is its Artist.

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INTRODUCTION

Certain tendencies soon become apparent in reading what recent criticism there is on Galsworthy. Many critics confine their interest in The Forsyte Saga to its first volume, The Man of Property. When critics do extend their attentions to the later parts of the Saga some parts of it get very short shrift indeed: The White Monkey and The Silver Spoon are often dismissed as rambling novels which dwell on trivia.¹ Is it feasible to think that a writer of Galsworthy's stature could really have devoted himself to trivia? Such a question leads nowhere because Galsworthy's literary abilities are a matter of some debate. Peter Marchant in an article of 1970² describes Galsworthy as nothing more than a literary journeyman.

Yet this literary journeyman received an Order of Merit and turned down a knighthood in his lifetime. And very soon after its initial publication The Forsyte Saga was a bestseller on both sides of the Atlantic. It became a bestseller once more with the B.B.C. serialization of the Forsytes in the late sixties.

Critics, however, are often unimpressed by the approval of the populace.³ More to the point, in their view, is the consistent failure of Galsworthy in the eyes of such literary contemporaries as Katherine Mansfield,

Rebecca West, D. H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf. Also, literary historians have had to shelve Galsworthy between two major periods; Galsworthy and his fellow Edwardians Wells and Bennett wrote just after the great Victorian writers, and just before the era of Woolf, Joyce, Lawrence, Freudianism, and the new stream of consciousness techniques. Galsworthy is thus merely a figure of transition.

Most critics would say that Galsworthy had his chance, after all. If he had remained as radical a young man as he was before the first war, he might have joined the ranks of the Georgian writers. Only one volume of The Forsyte Saga is pre-war--The Man of Property--and its premise is certainly very different from that operating in the remaining volumes of the Saga. As Carol Hawkes discusses in "Galsworthy: The Paradox of Realism",⁴ the most fundamental difference between nineteenth and twentieth century writers is that while the former found that the English social structure might fail to do justice to certain individuals, such as Hardy's Jude, they did not condemn the social structure in toto. It was only in the twentieth century that writers began to question the basic beliefs underlying society. The Man of Property uses Victorian realism as a tool, but it is very much a twentieth-century novel in its defeatist alienation of the individual and society.

This is the only non-Victorian component of the

Saga, however. With In Chancery and To Let Galsworthy is back among the Victorians. And we are sure, with them, that the creed is basically worthwhile at bottom, that there is much to be said for the Forsyte establishment. In this connection, certain critics have accused Galsworthy of selling out. C. Dupre sees In Chancery and To Let as undistinguished easy reading which simply gauged the mood of the day--these sequels to The Man of Property were in line with popular nostalgia for a pre-war world.⁵

Such decisions about In Chancery and To Let insure that The White Monkey and The Silver Spoon will be dismissed as soon as the critic encounters difficulties with the plot line and subject matter of these volumes. And after ways have been found to dismiss such large sections of the Saga, it is easy to conclude that the only real interest which the Saga offers is biographical, and that criticism of the work may legitimately confine itself to a re-telling of the young Galsworthy's adventures with his cousin's wife, and how Ada becomes Irene.

Such ghoulish delight in details of biography overlooks Galsworthy's larger concerns in The Forsyte Saga. In the Saga, besides mapping the complex relationship between Property and Art, Galsworthy depicts two very different eras. He exhibits both the strengths and weaknesses of Victorian England, and then goes on to describe the chaos of the post-war world. In this chaos a whole society is

searching for belief and a way of life. In his interest in both Victorian England and its less lucky successor the early twentieth century, Galsworthy is very much the critic of English society as a whole. This can only be a major undertaking, and is one in which Galsworthy has been preceded by many great names. Matthew Arnold is one such name.

It is tempting, after reading Culture and Anarchy, to see the Forsytes of The Man of Property as too confident Hebraists who have artificially tried to exclude such suggestions of Hellenism as Irene and Bosinney. Perhaps these Forsytes do not attend the tea-meetings of Arnold's middle-class Philistines (no Forsyte is ever conscious of sin), but they are in other respects very similar to the typical Philistine. The Philistine-Forsyte is very much involved with his money; a strict adherence to the rules of business is his life. Unfortunately business has become such a mechanical routine that Forsyte lives have narrowed, and the Forsytes do not realize that they should have striven to develop the whole man within themselves. They are inadequately equipped to see things as they really are, in their true essence and beauty. Of course the concretion of this essence which Forsyte eyes are missing is Irene, and when the collision of Irene, Bosinney, and the Forsytes is calamitous and destructive, one remembers that Arnold thought a balance between Hebraism

and Hellenism necessary. He warned that "when the two sides of humanity proceed in this fashion of alternate preponderance, and not of mutual understanding and balance, the side which is uppermost does not really provide in a satisfactory manner for the needs of the side which is undermost, and a state of confusion is...the result."⁶ Of course Galsworthy's ending for The Man of Property is worse than any simple "state of confusion", but it is still the result of war between Hebraism and Hellenism, instead of balance.

In the novels which follow The Man of Property, it is no longer easy to superimpose Arnold's theories on the Forsytes. Irene looks less and less a Hellenist as she manipulates her son Jon, and Soames looks less and less a Hebraist as he becomes aware of other satisfactions in life--the country, his daughter, Art--besides mere business. As Soames's and Irene's status becomes more unclear, the relationship between Property and Art is becoming increasingly complex. Finally the society of the Twenties is revealed as so very muddled and complicated that reliably distinct classifications--such as Barbarians, Philistines, and the Populace--can no longer be made.

Even if the world in Galsworthy's view becomes less organized in the flux of the Twenties, he himself always remains straightforward in his depiction of the Forsytes. His six novels on the Forsytes can be grouped together so that six separate chapters on the six novels are

not necessary. The Man of Property, with its status as the only pre-war novel of the Saga, and Galsworthy's original intention of seeing it as a self-contained unit, deserves a chapter to itself. In Chancery and To Let can reasonably be dealt with together in one chapter since in these books Galsworthy must accomplish a complete turn-around. Property, instead of being the antithesis of Art, as it is in the first novel, now becomes its partner. Such a change would not be credible if Galsworthy did not devote two full novels to the gradual changes in his characters.

The White Monkey and The Silver Spoon can also be handled together as both represent different attempts on Fleur's part to find meaning in life without Jon. The actual arrival of Jon, and the death of Soames, insure that Swan Song must rate a separate chapter to itself, as does The Man of Property. Thus the chapters of this thesis have not been composed at random.

CHAPTER I

Galsworthy wanted to believe in a God and in a life after death in which he and Ada would be reunited, but he could not. He could believe in art though, at least during the pre-war era, when he wrote that "man is a creature slowly (and mainly by means of art) emerging from the animal into the human being, and...sloughing off the craving for physical combat and destruction."¹ Man's artistic urges would eventually lead him to a harmonious existence in this world.

Yet, in The Man of Property, art itself seems to become a victim of unredeemed man's destructive habits. Bosinney and Irene are the incarnations of pure art and beauty, and both have a calamitous end. Even Young Jolyon and his father, who are part Forsyte and part artist, are not allowed any power over the course of events in this particular novel. There are certainly no evidences of harmony in the conclusion of The Man of Property. Circumstances force Irene to retreat back into Soames's cage, where he will forever keep her (at least he would have if Galsworthy had not turned back to the Forsytes after an interval of years, and continued their story with "Indian Summer of a Forsyte" and In Chancery)--Soames will forever keep her in a meaningless subjugation, and slam his door

in the face of Young Jolyon. At this point, all characters in The Man of Property inhabit a wasteland, in which art and any other form of hope have failed.

Of course the reader of The Forsyte Saga knows that things will look up. Irene does escape from Soames's gilded cage, Young Jolyon becomes successfully influential, and Soames himself looks better and better. There turns out to be much good in the established order of Forsytes, and the wasteland is for the most part redeemed. All this despite the intrusion of real life wastelands-- in the shape of World War I and the trenches--between the writing of The Man of Property and the rest of The Forsyte Saga. Perhaps the reason for Galsworthy's changed outlook, in spite of a wartime which he found agonizing, is that he could no longer afford to be pessimistic in his writing. His personal struggles were too much in need of relief, as the war shattered many of his idealistic beliefs. Whether this new outlook was the result of a conscious or unconscious decision, cannot be determined with any certainty.² In any case, the evidence of a change is clear enough.

No such considerations, conscious or unconscious, stopped the angry young man who wrote The Man of Property. He was an angry young man--but he was not an underprivileged young man, or a rash young man. His affair with Ada Galsworthy, his cousin's wife, had to be an open secret

until his father died. The divorce courts would have pained old John Galsworthy, and he still gave his son a good allowance. Admittedly such caution does not place Galsworthy in a heroic light, but could a starving young artist have known the Forsytes as well as young John Galsworthy, with his allowance and legal training, did?

And perhaps young John was very lucky indeed to get that allowance. The reader soon discovers that the standard Forsyte loves property far too much to be anything but stingy with it once he has any. Indeed all the Forsytes must be shamed into even the most conventional expenditures. Old Jolyon's "at home" in celebration of June's engagement to Bosinney is well attended because the Forsytes had "to get some notion of what sort of presents they would ultimately be expected to give; for... so very much depended on the bridegroom. If he were sleek, well-brushed, prosperous-looking, it was more necessary to give him nice things; he would expect them."³ As Forsytes operate within the letter of society, their business dealings are carried out within the letter of the law. All Forsyte fortunes are "legitimate", but it does not do to shine too strong a light on their individual components. Nicholas attends Swithin's dinner in a jocular mood. He has just superintended the employment of an Upper Indian tribe in the gold mines of Ceylon. The plan "would double the output of his mines, and, as he had

often forcibly argued, all experience tended to show that a man must die; and whether he died of a miserable old age in his own country, or prematurely of damp in the bottom of a foreign mine, was surely of little consequence, provided that by a change in his mode of life he benefited the British Empire" (I, 38).

Of course Forsytes take many precautions against such things as damp for themselves--Galsworthy warns that the most completely Forsyte of the Forsytes are likely to live forever. According to Young Jolyon, who is Galsworthy's narrator in this first book, James "is the perfect specimen of a Forsyte" (I, 188). Previous to this definition, Galsworthy has already touched on James's limitations. He has no imagination: "his nose, like the nose of a sheep, was fastened to the pastures on which he browsed" (I, 68). He could not attain the accomplishments of others in his own family: "In him...beat the true pulse of compromise; of all the brothers he was least remarkable in mind and person, and for that reason more likely to live for ever" (I, 69).

One would think, given their characteristics, that the Kingdom of the Forsytes would be forever secure. All the Forsyte sheep will continue to exploit when possible, so that they will complacently amass more and more property of which they can be stingier and stingier. And they will live forever as they pursue their chosen life's work. Yet

the major theme of The Man of Property is one of decline. The Forsyte edifice, in this book, not only cracks, but is, according to Galsworthy, blasted to pieces. From the first, Galsworthy warns his readers by simple statement of the coming destruction. Old Jolyon's "at home" is held when the tree of Forsyte fortune is "flourishing with bland, full foliage, in an almost repugnant prosperity, at the summit of its efflorescence" (I, 3). The tree then has a definite summit, and Galsworthy describes Aunt Ann's funeral as occurring at the very edge of Forsyte prosperity. Ann "died while the tree was yet whole" (I, 96), so that "she was spared the watching of the branches jut out beyond the point of balance" (I, 97). All the Forsytes arrived for the funeral--they "gathered for a last proud pageant before they fell" (I, 97). Of course the main difficulty in The Man of Property with which the family must cope centers around Irene's new relations with Bosinney, but other family problems exist long before the arrival of Irene and the architect. Individual Forsytes have many characteristics in common, but as a family they could be closer. Galsworthy devotes his first chapter to "a gathering of this family--no branch of which had a liking for the other, between no three members of whom existed anything worthy of the name of sympathy" (I, 3). Sometimes members of the family not only lack a positive feeling for each other, but even feel an almost irrational dislike for one another.

One of Soames's motives for building a country house is that Irene could not see so much of June if she were living in the country. "June disliked him. He returned the sentiment. They were of the same blood" (I, 51).

June's grandfather is another member of the Forsyte clan with whom Soames's relations are not strictly amiable. "There was, and always had been, a subtle antagonism between the younger man and the old. It had lurked under their dry manner of greeting, under their non-committal allusions to each other, and arose perhaps from old Jolyon's perception of the quiet tenacity...of the young man, of a secret doubt whether he could get his own way with him" (I, 144). Certainly June's problems over Bosinney's defection to Irene will greatly worsen the situation between Soames and Old Jolyon, but this will not be the only force aggravating the relationship. "In old Jolyon's mind there was always the secret ache, that the son of James...should be pursuing the paths of success, while his own son--!" (I, 144). This ache for the loss of son and grandchildren--all in accordance with the dictates of social propriety--gradually overwhelms Old Jolyon, and finally brings about definitive action and irrational hatred. Old Jolyon takes his will from James, entrusts it to Paramor and Herring, and changes it in favour of his son. "Slowly, surely, with the secret inner process that works the destruction of an old tree,

the poison of the wounds to his happiness, his will, his pride, had corroded the comely edifice of his philosophy. Life had worn him down on one side, till, like that family of which he was the head, he had lost balance" (I, 242). To Old Jolyon "the thought of the new disposition of property...appeared vaguely in the light of a stroke of punishment, levelled at that family and that Society, of which James and his son seemed to him the representatives" (I, 242).

That Old Jolyon wishes to see his Last Will and Testament as a punishment for James and Soames shows that the cracks in the Forsyte edifice are very wide indeed, without any help from Irene and Bosinney. The controversies they spark merely hasten the family's decline and complete its ruin. Bosinney's death cleaves the family into irremedial factions. When Soames, James, and Old Jolyon go to view Bosinney's corpse, Old Jolyon decides that he wants his son with him--"as though this visit to the dead man's body was a battle in which otherwise he must single-handed meet those two" (I, 287). Young Jolyon arrives, and decides that Bosinney's death will break up the Forsyte family--"the trunk was dead, withered by the same flash that had stricken down Bosinney" (I, 289).

Though Irene and Bosinney, those personifications of True Beauty and True Art, are certainly not the only factors at work in the Decline and Fall of the Forsytes,

they are the ones which receive the most emphasis, and in which Galsworthy shows the most interest. This is only to be expected, given Galsworthy's hope that art would be mankind's means of "emerging from the animal into the human being". Of course at this point in The Forsyte Saga, Galsworthy does not credit his Forsytes with too much humanity, so that, although he allows various forms of art to be present within Forsyte confines before the arrival of Irene and Bosinney, much of this "art" is of a philistine nature. Very early on Galsworthy is ruthlessly satiric in any references to Forsyte taste. Forsytes do not seem equipped to think on higher things--they are too busy ingesting, at each and every social occasion, their ever present saddle of mutton--the saddle of mutton which "marks them as belonging in fibre and instincts to that great class which believes in nourishment and flavour, and yields to no sentimental craving for beauty" (I, 41). The mutton may not be beautiful, but the dining rooms around it, in Forsyte eyes at least, more than compensate. In Swithin's dining-room "a cut-glass chandelier filled with lighted candles hung like a giant stalactite above its centre, radiating over large gilt-framed mirrors, slabs of marble on the tops of side-tables, and heavy gold chairs with crewel-worked seats" (I, 35). One would think that little more could be added to such dining magnificence, but Swithin decides that it is not complete with-

out "an elaborate group of statuary in Italian marble, which, placed upon a lofty stand (also of marble), diffused an atmosphere of culture throughout the room. The subsidiary figures, of which there were six, female, nude, and of highly ornate workmanship, were all pointing towards the central figure, also nude, and female, who was pointing at herself..." (I, 46).

Swithin is justly proud of his "'genuine modern Italian'" (I, 46) acquisition, but he was never so bewitched with it that he lost his bargaining instincts. He gave the half-starved "'poor foreign dey-vil that made it'" (I, 47) four hundred pounds though he knew it to be worth eight.

The Forsytes are always money conscious, even when they become "artists" themselves. "'Little Francie,' as she was usually called with good-natured contempt" (I, 157) is the "artist" among the Forsyte ranks. She produces such songs as "Kiss me, Mother, ere I die" and "Breathing Sighs" (I, 158), and makes a point of knowing the right people. She also finds time to keep "an eye on that steady scale of rising prices, which in her mind's eye represented the future. In this way she caused herself to be universally respected" (I, 158).

Probably Francie's "universal" acclaim does not include accolades from Soames Forsyte. He is not taken in by Swithin's Italian statuary, and would not buy it himself.

He has, however, at this point in his development, only enough taste to pick out the saleable commodity in art; he does not have the genuine appreciation of art which would allow him to enjoy art for itself. At Timothy's Soames talked "of the Barbizon school of painters, whom he had just discovered. These were the coming men, he said; he should not wonder if a lot of money were made over them; he had his eye on two pictures by a man called Corot..." (I, 265). Soames buys the best art, but only for its resale value.

Despite Swithin, Francie, and Soames, not all the Forsytes can be classed as hopeless philistines awaiting the arrival of a Messiah-like Bosinney. Both Jolyons balance their orthodox Forsyte characteristics with decidedly anti-Forsyte feelings, and between them, they have considerable insight on such topics as Love, Beauty, Art and Nature. The artistic sense of the Jolyons is doubly interesting--one wonders how the good taste of the Jolyons could ever develop given its Forsyte beginnings, and one is surprised to see that it is an artistic consciousness that bestows supremacy on Old Jolyon, the richest Forsyte--art has produced his wealth.

Old Jolyon is the richest Forsyte, and as such has a great deal of interest in the material side of life. For him, money is frequently a supremely important reality, and he is usually very interested in the business activities

that produce money. He has been successful enough at business to go into a semi-retirement. But even in semi-retirement prices flicker through his mind. He does not like his "gloomy little study" (I, 20) with its "dark green velvet and heavily carved mahogany" (I, 20), but he often stops to remark of the furniture: "'Shouldn't wonder if it made a big price some day!'" (I, 20). For Jolyon "it was pleasant to think that in the after life he could get more for things than he had given" (I, 20).

Prices will always possess a corner of Old Jolyon's mind because, for him, money has often represented real life--it is a tangible fact by which one can set a measure on the intangible. When Old Jolyon watches his butler laying the table for dinner, though he thinks his master is asleep, Jolyon realizes that the man is just "rattling through his work, and getting out to his betting or his woman or goodness knew what!...And didn't care a pin about his master!" (I, 81). Yet Old Jolyon cannot condemn the servant--"He wasn't paid to care, and why expect it? In this world people couldn't look for affection unless they paid for it" (I, 81). Jolyon has equated money and love before this. He had never wanted a total cessation of relations with his son, though of course as long as June and her mother had lived with Old Jolyon, Young Jolyon could never be received at home. "He had proposed to continue a reduced allowance to Young Jolyon, but this

had been refused, and perhaps that refusal had hurt him more than anything, for with it had gone the last outlet of his penned-in affection; and there had come such tangible and solid proof of rupture as only a transaction in property, a bestowal or refusal of such, could supply" (I, 26).

Old Jolyon is every inch the Forsyte in this equation, and he is as Forsyte in many of his interests-- for years business has been his life-blood, and, since the defection of his son, he has had no one with whom to discuss important matters. "It had been impossible to seriously confide in June his conviction that property in the Soho quarter would go up in value; his uneasiness about that tremendous silence of Pippin, the superintendent of the New Colliery Company, of which he had so long been chairman; his disgust at the steady fall in American Golgothas" (I, 33), and so on. Old Jolyon has not let his age lessen his watch of the 'Change and the Times, and he is far from ready to relax his hold on the companies he heads. Mastery is vital to the Forsyte businessman within him, and Galsworthy provides one glimpse of Old Jolyon in action at the general meeting of the New Colliery Company-- here Old Jolyon unites his "domineering temper and tenacity" (I, 142) with "a Jove-like serenity" (I, 139) and stares down all opposition.

Old Jolyon has exercised his tenacity for fifty

years in pursuit of a suitably Forsyte degree of wealth, yet at times he despises the money he and his family have earned. Early on in the novel he thinks of James disparagingly because he is obsessed with nothing but money; James is "a poor thing" (I, 20). He and his son are always nosing out bargains. Eight out of ten times Old Jolyon is as orthodox a Forsyte; yet the ninth and tenth time he is more philosopher than Forsyte. The only part of business he ever liked was choosing his agents; "his eye for men, he used to say, had been the secret of his success" (I, 23). Old Jolyon's interest was in character, not figures. In his old age, when all the detailed particulars of business are done, he is able to let his interest in character lead him to abstract wonderings about mankind in general. On his way to the opera the traffic makes him speculate: "What atoms men were, and what a lot of them! And what would become of them all?" (I, 26). It is this ability to think of mankind at large that allows him to reflect on all the participants in the tragedy as he views Bosinney's corpse at the end of the novel; his interests are not confined to June.

If Old Jolyon is a philosopher in embryo, his son Young Jolyon is (supposedly) a philosopher who has attained his full maturity. He is conveniently labelled as such-- Galsworthy says that Young Jolyon has "the introspective look of a student or philosopher" (I, 31)--and sometimes his

reflections are obscure--he thinks of his father, that representative of moderation, order, and love of property, as "a puppet in the power of great forces that cared nothing for family or class or creed, but moved, machine-like, with dread processes to inscrutable ends" (I, 33). Young Jolyon's perceptiveness must also be labelled: he often knew what his father thought, "for, dethroned from the high seat of an obvious and uncomplicated view of things, he had become both perceptive and subtle" (I, 151). Despite the labels and the occasional obscurity, Young Jolyon often philosophizes successfully.⁴ He and his father are both able to enjoy a visit to the Zoo with the children, though Young Jolyon decides that shutting up animals is "a horrible barbarity" (I, 150)--a fact of which his father and all other Forsytes are quite unaware. Yet Young Jolyon blames neither his father nor the Forsytes en masse. "As young Jolyon had in his constitution the elements of impartiality, he reflected that to stigmatize as barbarity that which was merely lack of imagination must be wrong; for none of the Forsytes...had been placed in a similar position to the animals they caged, and could not, therefore, be expected to enter into their sensations" (I, 150). Young Jolyon's empathy with the caged leads him naturally towards a sympathetic view of Irene, but he is philosopher enough to see Soames's and the general public's viewpoints also.

Most people would consider such a marriage as that of Soames and Irene quite fairly successful; he had money, she had beauty; it was a case for compromise. That was no reason why they should not jog along, even if they hated each other. It would not matter if they went their own ways a little so long as the deficiencies were observed....The advantages of the stable home are visible, tangible, so many pieces of property; there is no risk in the status quo. To break up a home is at the best a dangerous experiment... (I, 192).

Such an all-round viewpoint leads Young Jolyon finally to the assessment that people are "'never good or bad--merely comic, or pathetic'" (I, 199).

If it is a surprise that Old Jolyon can forget his Forsyte characteristics in bursts of philosophy, it is equally surprising that his philosopher-son is as subject to bursts of materialism. Of course one realizes that Young Jolyon would have to be an ascetic saint to remain unmoved when his father announces his re-inheritance. At that point in the novel Young Jolyon "tried to realize all that this meant to him, and, Forsyte that he was, vistas of property were opened out in his brain; the years of half rations through which he had passed had not sapped his natural instincts" (I, 244-5). Young Jolyon is no saint, but he is supposedly an artist, that antithesis of Forsyte professions. The Forsytes tend to view everyone but the commercial "artist" as irredeemably lost, but there is much of the Forsyte left in Young Jolyon's approach to art. He is uneasy that he does not make more money from his pictures, so much so that he willingly follows an

art critic's advice to pigeon-hole his pictures--if he specializes, collectors will find his pictures immediately recognizable. He starts by making a series of water-colour drawings of London, which he finally sells "at a very fair price" (I, 234). Along with a concern over price, Young Jolyon takes a typically Forsyte determination to his art, as his son Jon discovers after Young Jolyon's death, when he is preparing a one-man exhibition of his father's work. As he assembled materials, "Jon came to have a curiously increased respect for his father. The quiet tenacity with which he had converted a mediocre talent into something really individual was disclosed by these researches" (III, 837).

Both Young Jolyon and Old Jolyon, then, are mixed quantities. They are often Forsytes to a considerable extent, but they are far from philistine in the final analysis. This lack of philistinism is most obvious in the Jolyons' enlightened view of such quandaries as Art, Nature, Love, and Beauty. The enlightened viewpoints of Young Jolyon are almost aggressively present--it is fortunate that, in this first novel, this "character"⁵ is allotted comparatively little time, because he is predictable in his progressiveness, and can lapse into pedantry. This tendency is most pronounced when Galsworthy puts his views of art and society into Young Jolyon's mouth. When Young Jolyon has his "man to man" talk with Bosinney, he spends more time

ruminating about the Forsytes and their relationship to the "better things in life", than he spends discussing his heartbroken daughter.⁶ Young Jolyon tells Bosinney that it is Forsyte "'wealth and security that makes everything possible; makes your art possible, makes literature, science, even religion, possible'" (I, 189). The Forsytes believe in none of these things, but they turn them all to use. Young Jolyon goes on to say that most architects, painters and writers have no principles, and are Forsytes. "'Art, literature, religion, survive by virtue of the few cranks who really believe in such things...'" (I, 189). Young Jolyon is as advanced for his time in his attitudes to love and marriage as he is in his view of art in a Forsyte world. At his father's request Young Jolyon sounds Bosinney as to his intentions, but he is disgusted with his mission. "It was so like his family...to enforce what they called their rights over a man, to bring him up to the mark; so like them to carry their business principles into their private relations!" (I, 187). Indeed, in Young Jolyon's opinion, the businessman's view of what's important in life is the spurious heart of Victorian marriage. "'The core of it all...is property, but there are many people who would not like it put that way. To them it is "the sanctity of the marriage tie"; but the sanctity of the marriage tie is dependent on the sanctity of the family, and the sanctity of the family is dependent on the

sanctity of property'" (I, 192).

Such an analysis is typical of the pedantic Young Jolyon, but it is not at all his father's style. Old Jolyon may not be quite as advanced in his views on art as his son, but Old Jolyon has an unselfconsciousness, unlike his son, which allows him simply to enjoy life and the natural world around him--Old Jolyon escapes both the analytical tangles of his son and the blind philistinism of other Forsytes. Of course Old Jolyon is a Forsyte too, and as such he has his lapses. In his house are "Dresden china groups of young men in tight knee breeches, at the feet of full-bosomed ladies nursing on their laps pet lambs, which old Jolyon had bought when he was a bachelor and thought so highly of in these days of degenerate taste" (I, 237). Old Jolyon does move with the times, but he cannot forget how expensive the china was, and Old Jolyon "was not a man who allowed his taste to be warped when he knew for solid reasons that it was sound" (I, 238). Old Jolyon then gives due weight to the authority of money when it comes to appreciating art, yet money is not always his only criterion in judging art. Swithin proudly informs his family that he gave four hundred pounds for his elaborate Italian statuary; Old Jolyon is not impressed. He would not have given two hundred for it. This ends the discussion for Old Jolyon; he cannot spend all his time quibbling about art when the world around him has always

offered so much. Only age and loneliness for his son can finally erode Old Jolyon's considerable ability to enjoy living. At the opera one night he is recalled back to all the pleasures in life he was once able to feel. "Where were all the women, the pretty women, the house used to be so full of? Where was that old feeling in the heart as he waited for one of those great singers? Where that sensation of the intoxication of life and of his own power to enjoy it all?" (I, 27). The natural world means as much to Old Jolyon as man's urban existence. He always spent his holidays in the mountains, where the view made him think "of some great, dignified principle crowning the chaotic strivings, the petty precipices, and ironic little dark chasms of life" (I, 200). This is as near to religion as he gets, and there is nothing of the philistine in it.

Indeed, if Old Jolyon had been at all philistine, he would probably never have been able to acquire his wealth, and he has the greatest of the Forsyte fortunes. In the 1850s his palate was famous. "The palate that in a sense had made his fortune--the fortune of the celebrated tea men, Forsyte and Treffry, whose tea, like no other man's tea, had a romantic aroma, the charm of a quite singular genuineness. About the house of Forsyte and Treffry in the City had clung an air of enterprise and mystery, of special dealings in special ships, at special ports, with

special Orientals" (I, 23). No man who lacked an artistic flair could have done so well in Tea.

It seems then, that one need not always associate artistic qualities with poverty and a naive disregard for money. In such a moderate, well-balanced man as Old Jolyon art is united with wealth and power.

*

Swithin, Francis, and Soames are worlds apart from the Jolyons. Thus the Forsytes are very much divided in their approaches to the artistic, and such division can only accent the decline of the Forsytes as a family. This division takes on a crucial importance when those actual embodiments of Art and Beauty--Bosinney and Irene--arrive on the Forsyte scene.

Forsytes are not the most perceptive of races, yet even they have no trouble recognizing Bosinney and Irene for what they are. Bosinney is blatantly the Romantic artist. When Young Jolyon had his obligatory talk with Bosinney, Bosinney "looked worn...haggard, hollow in the cheeks beneath those broad, high cheekbones, though without any appearance of ill-health" (I, 187). When Bosinney is at home, he is casual and works in his shirt-sleeves. He does have to go out to building sites, and then bundles of papers were in his coat "and under one arm was carried a queer-looking stick" (I, 54). He has a "rugged, enthusiastic, careless face" (I, 57). His father was

a doctor with "Byronic tendencies" (I, 83), and Philip was his favorite son. It is only natural that this uninhibited artist should fall in love with Irene--she is a heathen incarnation of art and sensuality that belongs with someone like Bosinney. Young Jolyon is perceptive enough to see Irene as art itself. He saw her first at the Botanical, and "in shape and colouring, in its soft persuasive passivity, its sensuous purity, this woman's face reminded him of Titian's 'Heavenly Love'" (I, 235-6). Young Jolyon is an artist himself, and manages to find suitable words in which to describe Irene. The other Forsytes are not as articulate, but even they realize that Irene is somehow different. From the first Roger predicted that Soames would have trouble with her; she had "'a foreign look'" (I, 18). Another member of the family once compared Irene to a heathen goddess. The Forsytes do not need to be perceptive to appreciate Irene's sensuality--that facet of her is always obvious. It is more than obvious to Soames on one occasion when he meets her after she has just seen Bosinney. She is wearing "a soft, rose-coloured blouse with drooping sleeves" (I, 217) which Soames does not recognize. Soames then sees that Irene herself "seemed on fire, so deep and rich the colour of her cheeks, her eyes, her lips, and of the unusual blouse she wore" (I, 218). She is breathing fast, and "perfume seemed to come from her hair, and from her body, like perfume from

an opening flower" (I, 218).

Both Irene and Bosinney, then, are emphatic in their symbolism. There is no compromise in either of their natures, as there is in both the Jolyons. It is no surprise that such single-minded entities should have a much more clearly defined impact on the Forsyte world than, say, Old Jolyon does, even though he has an artistic bent which he unites with much wealth and power. Irene and Bosinney come to destroy and be destroyed among the Forsytes. Nothing that is not genuine⁷ can survive their proximity--whether it is a marriage in the making, between June and Bosinney, or a fait accompli, between Soames and Irene. Strangers may view the Forsyte family as a tower of strength and union, and remain ignorant of irrational dislikes beneath the surface. With the arrival of Irene and Bosinney, all such feelings are exposed, so that when the Forsytes go to view Bosinney's body they are reduced to factions which do battle. By this point, there are no winners in the world of The Man of Property. Earlier in the novel the purpose of Irene's existence has been outlined. "She was one of those women...born to be loved and to love, who when not loving are not living..." (I, 49). Yet by the end of the novel she must return to No. 62 Montpellier Square and resume "life" with Soames. She is "a captive owl, bunched in its soft feathers against the wires of a cage" (I, 292). Her lover does not

even have such a muted existence left him; at the novel's finish he is nothing beyond a "sightless defiant face" (I, 287) on a corpse.

If in a sense Irene and Bosinney have more power in The Man of Property than Old Jolyon, who is far too well-balanced to indulge in their fiery finishes, they also in another sense have much less power. Neither Irene nor Bosinney are able to harness their energy, as Old Jolyon did when he sat up nights to work at his business. Of course it may be unreasonable to expect that Irene could singlehandedly master the energy of Love, which is the subject of much Galsworthian rhetoric.⁸ He reports that one failing of his Forsytes is that they have forgotten "that Love is no hothouse flower, but a wild plant, born of a wet night, born of an hour of sunshine; sprung from wild seed, blown along the road by a wild wind" (I, 126). Young Jolyon at least gives Love its due though. He defines it as a "magnetic force which no consideration of honour, no principle, no interest" (I, 191) can withstand. Galsworthy certainly believes that Irene cannot possibly control such a force. At one point in the story Old Jolyon realizes Irene is dangerous, but he cannot say why. Old Jolyon does not believe in, as he should if he is to have a real understanding of the situation--he does not believe in "a quality innate in some women--a seductive power beyond their own control" (I, 200). To absolve

Irene completely of all possible blame, and as yet another illustration of Love's power, Galsworthy reveals that Love may even damage its own incarnation. When Young Jolyon saw Irene in the Botanical, he noticed "the look on her face, which reminded him of his wife. It was as though its owner had come into contact with forces too strong for her" (I, 235).

Very well then. Irene has no chance when pitted against Love; neither did Young Jolyon before her. Bosinney is a different story, however. He has as many chances of a long career filled with the construction of houses as any Forsyte. Instead his career and energies begin and end with the same house. This failure is in part due to Bosinney's reluctance to compromise, and in part due to his own habit of self-indulgence. He seems unable to realize that if he is ever to have an opportunity to surprise a world of Forsytes with a genuine work of art, he must in the beginning appear to be playing their game; he must, at least on the surface, seem to be a conventional businessman. Unfortunately his surface is frequently ruffled, and is seldom orthodox. On one occasion Bosinney preached architectural regularity; "Soames...fixed his gaze on Bosinney's tie, which was far from being in the perpendicular; he was unshaven too, and his dress not remarkable for order" (I, 87-8). Soames is of course severe, but even the well-disposed Young Jolyon finds Bosinney far from ordinary

in appearance. In his eyes Bosinney is "an unusual-looking man, unlike in dress, face, and manner to most of the other members of the Club" (I, 187). Such individualism is a luxury in a man who should be trying to beat the Forsytes at their own game. But then Bosinney is not used to self-denial. He masks his feelings as little as he corrects his outward appearance. He is pettish with Soames in the early negotiations about the house, so much so that at one point Soames fears Bosinney "might tear up the plans and refuse to act for him; a kind of grown-up child!" (I, 88). Childishness does Bosinney no harm on this occasion, since his client is determined to be cooperative, but the spontaneous indulgence of feeling is a bad habit in a man who hopes to accomplish great things. It is only a matter of time until Bosinney's personal life interferes with his art. Very soon it is apparent that Irene arouses currents of feeling in Bosinney that can hardly be compatible with work of any sort. An outing with the Darties and Irene leaves Bosinney's face "working with violent emotion" (I, 183). It is this same emotion that forces Bosinney to the "furious pace" (I, 253) he drunkenly holds on the night he is run over, and all hope of a sustained career for Bosinney ends. Perhaps such experienced eyes as those of Old Jolyon did not have much hope of a career for Bosinney in the first place. Old Jolyon found his daughter's suitor an "unpractical" man

(I, 112) with "no method" (I, 112) from the beginning.

Perhaps part of the reason that Irene is so inevitably Love's victim and Bosinney is so much the passionate uncompromising artist, even though such characteristics guarantee a mere prodigy's career, is that both characters are not fully rounded. They are types, and their flatness is a limitation on Soames. He must be, at times, a caricature villain as long as they are not fully developed. No doubt Galsworthy intends his personifications of Art and Beauty to be convincing characters, but they are too obvious in their symbolism for credibility. Bosinney's haggard and hollow cheeks with their high cheekbones effectively prevent Galsworthy's readers from seeing Bosinney as anything but THE ARTIST par excellence. And as one critic has already remarked, Galsworthy does tend to rub in Irene's sensuality⁹--as he does when she is wearing her "soft, rose-coloured blouse with drooping sleeves" (I, 217). Yet another reason for the failure of Irene and Bosinney as characters is their lack of feeling. In the next novel Irene tells Soames that she found out her mistake in the first week of marriage to him, but went on trying for three years--and the effort was not for herself, but for him. Yet in The Man of Property there is little evidence that Irene has any consideration for Soames. She never looks at his pictures, which are a subject one would think they could use to establish a

common ground if they both tried. The only really kind thing that Irene does for Soames in The Man of Property is that she does not lock her doors until bed-time, so that the servants won't know. Galsworthy does not elaborate on the suffering Irene must have gone through before she deserted her husband for her best friend's fiance. Readers would not know she suffered at all except that, at the end of the novel, when June and Irene have their confrontation in Bosinney's empty office Irene looks a little the worse for wear. "Unlike June's cheeks, her cheeks had no colour in them, but were ivory white and pinched as if with cold. Dark circles lay round her eyes" (I, 276). During this confrontation it becomes evident that Irene does feel some remorse over the way things have turned out. When June accused her of ruining lives, "Irene's mouth quivered; her eyes met June's with a look so mournful that the girl cried out in the midst of her sobbing, 'No, no!'" (I, 277). This moment of remorse on Irene's part is more than Bosinney ever seems to feel for his abandoned fiancée. His feelings are a complete blank to the reader, who can only assume that he deserts June without a qualm.

Perhaps Galsworthy would have been better off to characterize Bosinney and Irene more conventionally, so that readers could get a first-hand view of their probable sufferings. As it is, Galsworthy uses very little direct dialogue when the pair are on stage, and attempts to reveal

their actions and thoughts through the eyes and minds of others, who "happen" to be on the scene, as Young Jolyon is when he sees Irene and Bosinney meet in the Botanical. This method of characterization makes for an interesting experiment, but in the final analysis it may contribute to the pair's flatness. Such a method is too oblique, and Galsworthy cannot make the reader believe there is much depth to either Irene or Bosinney.¹⁰

The real problem is that, as long as the lovers appear superficial and less than fully developed, Soames must appear likewise. In this first volume of The Forsyte Saga Soames often sinks to the level of caricature. From the very beginning, Soames's relations with Irene have been brutish. Galsworthy describes their courtship: "It had been one of those real devoted wooings which books and people praise, when the lover is at length rewarded for hammering the iron till it is malleable, and all must be happy ever after..." (I, 50). To make matters worse, Soames is for the most part too much the sulky coward to transform his streak of brutishness into active brutality. He has "a secret fund of brutality in himself" (I, 62), and, when much moved he is liable to feel a "slow, sulky anger" (I, 105). Soames is no wild and dashing devil, but simply disgusting. He is almost comically predictable in his hatred of all that is good. He even hates sunshine, and spends his time determinedly drawing blinds. This puppet

has no inner depth, so that his own definition of the good husband, which deals entirely with surfaces, comes as no surprise. "He could not understand what she found wrong with him. It was not as if he drank! Did he run into debt, or gamble, or swear; was he violent; were his friends rackety; did he stay out at night?" (I, 49). From such revelations of the "inner" workings of Soames Galsworthy extracts a certain amount of humour at Soames's expense. Of course Soames's limitations also have their pathetic side, but Galsworthy easily crushes all such overtones by continual references to Soames's obsession with property, an obsession which takes the place of a soul. He wants to own both the body and soul of Irene. "Soames...experienced a sense of exasperation amounting to pain, that he did not own her as it was his right to own her, that he could not, as by stretching out his hand to that rose, pluck her and sniff the very secrets of her heart" (I, 61).

So to a certain extent, as others have complained, Galsworthy's Man of Property deals with mere types.¹¹ Some critics would have it that the whole of The Forsyte Saga is nothing more than the convolutions of types, not characters. Yet surely Galsworthy's attitude to Soames especially becomes increasingly complex in all novels subsequent to The Man of Property, so that such critics as Gilbert Murray can accurately refer to "'his steady and

convincing growth.'"¹² Whatever one may think of the Soames of later novels, even the caricatured Soames of The Man of Property can be unexpectedly powerful. More interest and credibility attaches itself to this Soames than to the Young Jolyon of The Man of Property. The brutish Soames does become the brutal Soames after the rape, affording readers a chance to unreservedly hate him. But Galsworthy is able to complicate this hatred of Soames, and the, for the moment, arch-villain can be surprisingly pathetic. When Soames tells Irene with her "inscrutable face" (I, 214) that she is made of stone, one cannot help feeling that there is some truth in this. Soames has to be pitied as he is "talking for long spells at dinner, as though by the volubility of words he could conceal from himself the ache in his heart" (I, 222). One wonders if Irene is right when she will not even let Soames kiss her goodnight. When Irene finally leaves him, and Soames hears she has left with a trunk and a bag, he runs upstairs "two steps at a time, as a young married man when he comes home will run up to his wife's room" (I, 267). Since readers must waver in their opinion of Soames, he can be regarded as a character who holds a considerable and continuing interest. In The Man of Property there are even indications of the man Soames will become in later novels, in which he becomes the Forsyte family's earthly guarantee that no family member will ever be forgotten or live in want. In the very first

chapter of The Man of Property Soames appears as the favorite of Aunt Ann; "she recognised in him a sure trustee of the family soul that must so soon slip beyond her keeping" (I, 14).

The Young Jolyon of The Man of Property sparks considerably less interest than Soames. After all, Young Jolyon has to be labelled the perceptive philosopher--and in this first book Galsworthy did not really envision him as a character, but only as a commentator. If anyone is merely a type, it is Young Jolyon and not Soames.

The real problem appears to be that Galsworthy has trouble with any character--such as Young Jolyon, Irene, and Bosinney--who has anything to do with art. Galsworthy is much more skilful when he is portraying the edifice against which art is rebelling. There is certainly an anti-Forsyte impulse behind The Man of Property, but as Peter Marchant finds, the Forsytes are too much for Galsworthy. Marchant notes the "sensual gusto in Galsworthy's descriptions of the Forsytes' property--their furniture, their horses and carriages, their houses and gardens, their food and drink"--and concludes that Galsworthy rejoices in what he intends to attack.¹³ If this is the case, Galsworthy has turned the new twentieth-century realism which Carol A. Hawkes discusses, on its head. She believes that a new realism was one step on the way to the new fictional techniques, such as a stream of consciousness,

of the twentieth century. By this "new realism" she means "a paradoxical realism that uses its power of evoking the familiar world as an instrument of revulsion from the values on which that world was built."¹⁴ Galsworthy set out to give us "a paradoxical realism", but he did not succeed. Materialism has too many attractions for Galsworthy, and for most of his readers, to let him countenance a total condemnation. Probably though, Galsworthy's readers are the ones who are most taken up with an interest in the material. Galsworthy spent his life in search of the serious consideration, and, by the end of The Man of Property, he must have found himself in an awkward box. As Carol Hawkes notes, Galsworthy meant the final scene of The Man of Property to be a repudiation of the Forsytes. But "to portray a reality which must be repudiated, yet from which there is no escape, could lead only to nihilism, and he was not nihilistic by temperament."¹⁵ To compound the problem, the first war made nihilism a luxury in which he could not afford to indulge. Thus Galsworthy appears, after the completion of The Man of Property, and the war years which came after it, predisposed to find some good in the established order. In any case, such a positive attitude is evident in the remaining Forsyte books. One must look to these to judge the validity of Galsworthy's escape from his own conclusion to The Man of Property. Art cannot avoid play-

ing a role in the struggle to escape from the wasteland.

CHAPTER II

As we chart our course through In Chancery and To Let, it becomes apparent that we do not have to grasp at straws in a wild effort to force Galsworthy's Forsytes into admirability. The wasteland has been transposed; the army of blacksuited Forsytes is no longer the enemy, but the only hope for sanity in a world of tumultuous morals and mobs. If art and beauty are to survive in the post-war world, they must align themselves with the Forsytes--and even this alliance, unlikely as it may seem after the wholesale condemnation of The Man of Property, may not be enough to ensure a place for art and beauty in the post-war era. Galsworthy ends To Let with what could have been a comic denouement, yet he chooses to orchestrate Fleur's wedding in a minor key. By this point he has escaped any necessity of regarding the Forsytes and their property as inevitably destructive of the "finer things" in life, but he still has not come out ahead. The flux of modernity may crush beauty as surely as the Forsytes of The Man of Property did. To Let ends not so much with answers, as with possibilities.

Galsworthy does not transpose his wasteland all at once. In In Chancery Forsytes at large are still quite revolting on the topic of the Boer War. Aunt Juley wonders

at the ingratitude of the Boers, since everything has been done for them. Most of the other Forsytes are just as obtuse, though such artistic free spirits as June think the Boers should just be left alone. Of course that nemesis of Beauty, Soames, is adamant on the rights of suzerainty, both with Boers and wives. The papers bring Irene immediately into his mind. "A headline ran: 'Boers reported to repudiate suzerainty!' Suzerainty! 'Just like her!' he thought: 'she always did. Suzerainty! I still have it by rights'" (II, 419). It is in his insistence on the ownership of women that Soames is most like his old self in In Chancery. As one would expect, Soames's beliefs about Irene have only hardened through the years. Young Jolyon refreshes the reader's memory of Soames's reaction to Irene. He remembers with disgust Soames's "flat-cheeked, shaven face full of spiritual bulldoggedness;...his spare, square, sleek figure slightly crouched as it were over the bone he could not digest" (II, 397).¹ Soames cannot see this aspect of himself. His mind is limited to thoughts of real estate, as always. He has not given up on Irene, and believes he may yet get her back, for "there she was like an empty house only waiting to be retaken into use and possession by him who legally owned her" (II, 439). Soames is able to envisage resumed co-habitation in such clean and simple terms because he is too dense to respond to the soul in other people. He cannot understand Irene's

attraction to Young Jolyon any more than he can understand her loathing for him. An attraction between Irene and Young Jolyon does occur to him, but he dismisses it: "It could not be! The fellow was seven years older than himself, no better looking! No richer! What attraction had he? (II, 516). Soames might sound faintly pathetic here, but fortunately his actions in having Irene shadowed and his dealings with the ridiculous Polteed are not forgiveable.²

Indeed, it seems that wherever women are concerned Soames must always be at his worst. His courtship of Annette is hardly stirring. "The girl blushed. This... now gave him much the same feeling a man has when a dog that he owns wriggles and looks at him" (II, 438). Perhaps the problem here is that Soames does not know whom he really wants--Irene or Annette--and Galsworthy's description of his dilemma is hardly complimentary. "He was like a child between a promised toy and an old one which had been taken away from him..." (II, 437). When Soames is not looking at what female toys he has to play with, he is wondering what his efforts at courtship will cost him in terms of dollars and cents. He does not like to see too much prosperity in the restaurant Annette's mother runs, because it will mean a higher price when he has to buy her out. When he does buy the restaurant, he is not so carried away by the heat of passion that his business instincts

fail. He plans to replace his mother-in-law with a good manager to "make the restaurant pay good interest on his money. There were great possibilities in Soho" (II, 568).

Galsworthy takes pains to make clear that "the heat of passion" has nothing whatever to do with Soames's conquest of Annette. Soames makes a declaration of what he wants from his second marriage: "'If I get satisfaction for my senses, perpetuation of myself, good taste and good humour in the house, it is all I can expect at my age. I am not likely to be going out of my way towards any far-fetched sentimentalism'" (II, 575). So Soames is never in any danger of acquiring any of the lustre of the romantic hero, and the outcome of this marriage is not surprising. Annette is just another possession in Soames's collections. "Her beauty in the best Parisian frocks was giving him more satisfaction than if he had collected a perfect bit of china, or a jewel of a picture; he looked forward to the moment when he would exhibit her in Park Lane, in Green Street, and at Timothy's" (II, 574). Young Jolyon's attitude to Irene is worlds away from this, as is Val's to Holly.

Certainly Soames never shines in his dealings with Annette, and perhaps some readers would have it that he is as much a monster in deciding that the doctor will not operate to make sure of his wife's life, as he was when he raped Irene in The Man of Property. This is debatable,

however.³ Whatever our response though to Soames's action in the medical crisis which ends In Chancery, we can at least be sure that the Soames of this novel is in many respects rather villainous, just as he was in The Man of Property. He is still "a snarling dog" (II, 501) at the mention of Young Jolyon, and his connections with art still seem primarily monetary. When he is getting to know Annette, he is very concerned over the quality of her taste, but while he is showing his pictures to Annette and her mother he is ashamed of his Meissonier; "Meissonier was so steadily going down" (II, 413).

The case against Soames is strong, but throughout In Chancery things do begin to change for the better. The process is gradual, but by To Let Soames has become so admirable that he is, far from being the enemy of Beauty, actually good for it. Galsworthy embarks on this process of redemption cautiously. He is no longer so hard on Soames when he describes his appearance and characteristics. Soames has "a face concave and long, with a jaw which divested of flesh would have seemed extravagant: altogether a chinny face though not at all ill-looking" (II, 349). Later in the novel, Galsworthy explains that Soames had a certain belief in his own appearance--"not unjustly, for it was well-coupled and preserved, neat, healthy, pale, unblemished by drink or excess of any kind" (II, 450). In The Man of Property Soames was law abiding

through habit; now readers are told that in him there is a "sense of law and order innate" (II, 349). Previously unknown sides of Soames's personality begin to appear. He is not smugly complacent and self-satisfied about his life, which has been limited to money making since Irene left him. He thinks: "'Nothing seems any good--nothing seems worth while. I'm lonely--that's the trouble'" (II, 518). And the things he is capable of missing are sometimes amazing, considering the Soames of The Man of Property. After Irene's defection he goes to live in Brighton, which he doesn't like that well because it is a "town devoid of the scent of sweetpeas" (II, 371).

Surely any man who can notice this scent is not completely a lost soul when it comes to the question of Irene. Granted, Soames is far from perfect in In Chancery when he has any dealings with Irene, but Galsworthy does invest Soames's overtures toward her with some pathos. Soames still remembers Irene's birthday. She had had "four birthdays in his house. He had looked forward to them, because his gifts had meant a semblance of gratitude, a certain attempt at warmth" (II, 421). Even her thirty-seventh birthday can still inspire a forlorn hope in Soames--"'I could send her a present for her birthday. After all, we're Christians! Couldn't I--couldn't we join up again!'" (II, 422). Soames's perception of the situation is yet more pathetic when he believes that he

himself has only to forgive his erring wife, and everything will then work out right for them. When he goes to give Irene the brooch he is "filled with a sort of exaltation, as though he were a man read of in a story who, possessed by the Christian spirit, would restore to her all the prizes of existence, forgiving and forgetting, and becoming the godfather of her future" (II, 452).

Galsworthy has allowed pathos to Soames before, so that the reader is not completely taken off guard when he perceives the pathetic in Soames once more. What is a surprise though is that Galsworthy at one point compares Soames to an artist in his quest for Irene. About his interest in Irene we are told: "And as in an artist who strives for the unrealisable and is ever thirsty, so there rose in him...the thirst of the old passion he had never satisfied" (II, 438). Such a comparison excuses much in Soames's behaviour towards Irene, possibly even the shadowing by Polteed's lackeys and Soames's undying possessiveness towards his one-time wife. Actually Soames himself is never any more pleased with the Polteed business than any of Galsworthy's readers--he thinks of it as "the spidery, dirty, ridiculous business" (II, 538)--and his possessiveness towards Irene is redirected by the end of In Chancery, towards the new-born Fleur, so that Soames may not really be in need of too many excuses.

Certainly there is one area of Soames's life in which

his behaviour is impeccable from the very beginning. His love for his father shines through even the carefully sanitized social conventions of the Forsytes. No embrace is possible in a Forsyte household, but Soames will, "as if by accident" (II, 380), touch his father's shoulder. Soames invests his most fundamental emotional longings in James's vicinity.

That evening in Park Lane, watching his father dine, he was overwhelmed by his old longing for a son--a son, to watch him eat as he went down the years, to be taken on his knee as James on a time had been wont to take him; a son of his own begetting, who could...become more rich and cultured than himself because he would start even better off....He would force it through now, and be free to marry, and have a son to care for him before he grew to be like the old old man his father, wistfully watching now his sweetbread, now his son (II, 552).

And it is no wonder that Soames can be so attached to James, that "least remarkable" of all the old Forsytes. Great age has made the eternally doubting James, "thin as a line in Euclid" (II, 580), lovable. He is a character, an Every Aged Parent, who is humoured, but also loved and carefully protected. His reactions are always primary considerations for his wife and children, so that he does not often overhear the upsetting, as he does when he finds out Dartie is back. Such news, as one would expect, makes him stand, "inimitably stork-like, with an expression as if he saw before him a frog too large to swallow" (II, 525). Some of James's appeal carries over to Soames, who may himself become a character, even before he reaches his

father's great age. Such a possibility is brought to mind on reading Soames's reaction to his worst yet confrontation with Irene and Young Jolyon:

Never in his life had he been so near to murderous violence, never so thrown away the restraint which was his second nature....he felt frightened, as if he had been hanging over the edge of a precipice, as if with another turn of the screw sanity would have failed him....'I feel very queer,' he thought; 'I'll take a Turkish bath. I--I've been very near to something. It won't do' (II, 558).

By To Let it is an undeniable fact that Soames has developed into an older man who is as much a character as James ever was. Galsworthy stresses that by the start of the twenties. Soames has become very much like his father: "As modern life became faster, looser, younger, Soames was becoming older, slower, tighter, more and more in thought and language like his father James before him. He was almost aware of it himself" (III, 844). Certainly the reader must notice the dry outlook and slightly cranky fussiness of the mature Soames. This Soames defines his wife's and daughter's enjoyment of stores as "ribbandry" (III, 651)--"It was his word for all that incomprehensible running in and out of shops that women went in for" (III, 651). No fashion is able to sway Soames. Annette insists he have one of the new cars, but he remains critical of the "tearing, great, smelly things" (III, 844). He looks on his "Rollhard with pearl-grey cushions, electric light, little mirrors, trays for the ashes of cigarettes, flower vases--all smelling

of petrol and stephanotis" (III, 844) much as he used to look on Montague Dartie. "The thing typified all that was fast, insecure, and subcutaneously oily in modern life" (III, 844). Soames prefers to spend his days fussing instead of complacently admiring the results of modernity. When he hears that the Authorities are going to build a TB sanatorium near his own house, he is disturbed, because "he was quite of opinion that the country should stamp out tuberculosis; but this was not the place. It should be done farther away" (III, 739). Even if the sanatorium is built somewhere else, Soames will not rest easy. There will always be some other detail to make him unhappy. Even after his restless daughter has been through the ceremony, and is safely married off to Michael, he is uneasy as everyone changes into travelling clothes. "Why didn't Fleur come? They would miss their train. That train would bear her away from him, yet he could not help fidgeting at the thought that they would lose it" (III, 868).

Perhaps it is in the natural course of events that Soames should evolve into an appealing and James-like character. It may be genetic. Anyway it has more to do with Soames's unconscious self than his conscious self. But by To Let Soames's conscious actions--those about which he has a choice--are as improved as any actions which may be the result of nature and inevitability. One notices this both with the large and the small scale. The stick-

in-the-mud Soames of The Man of Property has become witty, and occasionally even imaginative. This new Soames knows how to come back at the contemptuous June. When they meet in her gallery, he tells her that it must have been his sins that brought him to see all the "stuff" (III, 640) of June's proteges. Spontaneous imagination is even more surprising in Soames than wit. Old Gradman is a part of Forsyte office furniture, but Soames does not take him for granted. While looking at his Will and Marriage Settlement he has time to ruminate about the business nurse of the Forsytes.

It struck him suddenly how like Gradman was to the stout brindled yard dog they had been wont to keep on his chain at The Shelter, till one day Fleur had come and insisted it should be let loose, so that it had at once bitten the cook and been destroyed. If you let Gradman off his chain, would he bite the cook? (III, 759)

Of course wit and imagination are desirable qualities, but the real improvement in Soames takes place along a more substantial front. Suddenly Soames is able to behave admirably around women, even when they treat him poorly. When he discovers Annette's infidelity he doesn't search her room or decide to have her watched. He isn't even really angry--"Where was Annette? With that chap, for all he knew--shé was a young woman!" (III, 768). Of course Soames does not have the emotional investment in Annette which he had in Irene. But even Irene does not stir him into unseemly behaviour by To Let. When he sees Irene with her son in June's gallery at the beginning of the novel,

he begins to behave as the old Soames would have, but then abruptly stops.

He lowered his catalogue. If she saw him, all the better! A reminder of her conduct in the presence of her son, who probably knew nothing of it, would be a salutary touch from the finger of that Nemesis which surely must soon or late visit her! Then, half-conscious that such a thought was extravagant for a Forsyte of his age, Soames took out his watch (III, 639).

He is too busy waiting for Fleur, to behave badly toward Irene. Indeed Fleur has been his sole preoccupation for so many years that some bitterness seems to have gone out of his memories of both Young Jolyon and Irene. When the notice of his cousin's death appears Soames is even capable of a little dry humour. When Winifred wants to do Young Jolyon justice now he is dead, Soames answers: "'I should like to have done him justice before...but I never had the chance'" (III, 826), and turns his attention to thoughts of Michael Mont. Later in the novel the exhibition of Young Jolyon's work brings his mind back to the adulterous pair: "And there, among the drawings of his kinsman...he thought of him and her with a tolerance which surprised him" (III, 874).

It is the last woman to enter his life, his daughter, who makes this tolerance possible, and towards her he is always selfless, with no trace of the nefarious behaviour which ruined his relationship with Irene. When he discovers that Fleur spends every possible minute with Jon, even when it means walking the last few miles to The Shelter, he decides he cannot spy on her. "If she wanted to keep things

from him--she must; he could not spy on her" (III, 703). At another time Soames and his relatives were glad that Irene did not have money of her own; Soames had all the more control over her. The Soames who is Fleur's father cares very little about control, so little that he thinks of making a settlement on her at once, so as to defeat any predatory government which may be elected.⁴ Whatever Fleur's objectives, Soames puts no obstacles in her way, even when he is convinced that he is losing her. Of Fleur and Jon he thinks: "All she cared for was this boy! Why should he help her to get this boy, who was killing her affection for himself?" (III, 846). Yet he decides to see Irene, as Fleur asks. This selflessness reaches its peak after Fleur knows that she cannot have Jon, and blames her father for it. At first he is outraged, but this feeling dies when he sees how desolate Fleur is. "What could he give her to make amends? Pearls, travel, horses, both young men--anything she wanted--that he might lose the memory of her young figure lonely by the water!" (III, 855).

Galsworthy is so jubilant at this transformation of Soames in his personal life that he is moved to demonstrate exactly how good Soames can be, even when only his business side is taken into consideration. In a general way, Soames is very good for England. He is the Model Capitalist.

He was well off. Did that do anybody harm? He did not eat ten meals a day; he ate no more than, perhaps not

so much as, a poor man. He spent no money on vice; breathed no more air, used no more water to speak of than the mechanic or the porter. He certainly had pretty things about him, but they had given employment in the making, and somebody must use them. He bought pictures, but Art must be encouraged. He was, in fact, an accidental channel through which money flowed, employing labour....In his charge money was in quicker and more useful flux than it would be in charge of the State... (III, 758).

This Model Capitalist is not just a mere encouragement for Beauty and Art; he is actually a necessary part of them both.

Soames had not spent thirty-eight years over his one hobby without knowing something more about pictures than their market values. He was, as it were, the missing link between the artist and the commercial public. Art for art's sake and all that...was cant. But aesthetics and good taste were necessary. The appreciation of enough persons of good taste was what gave a work of art its permanent market value, or in other words made it 'a work of art' (III, 699).

By the end of To Let, then, Soames has become quite the reverse of his villainous self in The Man of Property. Certainly he was once the relentless persecutor of Beauty, in the shape of Irene, but now his characteristics and pre-occupations have completely changed.

It is reassuring to discover that Beauty has lost its greatest opposition, but one cannot at once assume that it is now safe. As Soames has been gradually changing throughout In Chancery and To Let, so has Irene, and not for the better. A careful examination of her changing nature shows that a chaotic modernism is beginning to take hold in the Forsyte world; it may be the last thing needed to trample Beauty down. Of course this new danger is not immediately

obvious; all changes in Irene are very gradual. Indeed, in In Chancery Irene's connections with Art and Beauty seem, if anything, more emphatic than ever when she is perceived through Young Jolyon's eyes. To him she is "a passive, fascinating figure, reminding him of Titian's 'Heavenly Love'" (II, 387). In Paris we are told that Young Jolyon "took his way to her hotel on a bright day with a feeling such as he had often had going to visit an adored picture" (II, 479). During their courtship Young Jolyon notices every detail about her; "it was like discovering a woman in what had hitherto been a sort of soft and breathed-on statue, almost impersonally admired" (II, 479). After Soames has made his last attempt at regaining Irene, and she and Young Jolyon have thrown in their lot together, Jolyon decides that "more than a woman was sitting there. The spirit of universal beauty, deep, mysterious, which the old painters, Titian, Giorgione, Botticelli, had known how to capture and transfer to the faces of their women" (II, 560), is present in Irene.

Other factors, however, seem also to be present in Irene in In Chancery. Her opponent in The Man of Property was Soames, which worked out well as Soames was consistently villainous. Soames of course continues to make difficulties for her in In Chancery, but in this novel she also acquires another "opponent"--Jolly. She and Jolly compete for Young Jolyon's attention throughout In Chancery. Young

Jolyon is in Paris "discovering a woman in what had hitherto been a sort of soft and breathed-on statue" (II, 479) when Jolly enlists. As soon as he hears this news, Jolyon realizes that he has been neglectful, and returns to England. Once in England, Jolly continues to prey on his father's mind, even when matters concerning Irene arise. Soames requests an interview with the newly returned Jolyon, and they fence from their different points of view. Their meeting does not come to an open conflict though since Young Jolyon feels he can't really get into a row with Soames after his son has gone to war. Thoughts of Jolly are even potent enough to prevent his father taking action in Irene's actual presence. When she wordlessly offers herself to Jolyon he almost accepts her, but a vision of "Jolly lying with a white face turned to a white wall" (II, 546) stops him, at least for the moment. Jolyon is fully aware of his quandary between the two centres of attraction. After Jolly has died, unknown to his father, Jolyon is consumed by suspenseful worry.

Only in Irene's presence had he relief, highly complicated by the ever-growing perception of how divided he was between her and his son. With Jolly was bound up all that sense of continuity and social creed of which he had drunk deeply in his youth and again during his boy's public school and varsity life--all that sense of not going back on what father and son expected of each other. With Irene was bound up all his delight in beauty and in Nature (II, 553).

His dilemma inflicts a "sentimental paralysis" (II, 553) on Jolyon for a time. In the end, however, Irene proves herself

able to tip the teeter-totter in her favour. It is the circumstances surrounding Irene's position, after she and Jolyon have both been served by Soames, which finally stir Jolyon into action. He and she decide not to contest the action and to start providing evidence at once.

And what of Irene's competition? Young Jolyon finds his son is dead almost at the same moment as he decides to become Irene's de facto husband. It seems Irene brooks no "opposition." What kind of competitor has Irene defeated though? Is he another evil Soames?

He is not. Some believe that Jolly is actually a version of the young Galsworthy.⁵ However this may be, any reader can see for himself that the boy is anything but nefarious. He is undoubtedly immature; his public school code of behaviour is amusing. When he discovers that Holly has been seeing Val Dartie, he is outraged, but ready to go into action: "He felt that this was emphatically one of those moments for which he had trained himself, assiduously, at school, where he and a boy called Brent had frequently set fire to newspapers and placed them in the centre of their studies to accustom them to coolness in moments of danger" (II, 474). Granted, Jolly's immaturity does have its less appealing side. He is too shallow to go into agonies over what his role in the Boer War might be. When he thinks of enlisting, he thinks "of riding over the veldt, firing gallantly, while the boers rolled over like

rabbits (II, 473). Jolly has as little concern about the rights of women as he does about the rights of distant colonials. When he first comes down for his Vacation, he does not at first know of Holly's interest in Val--he is just aware that Holly's life no longer revolves solely around himself. "And between Holly and himself there was a strange division, as if she were beginning to have opinions of her own, which was so--unnecessary" (II, 473).

Jolly can be rather irritating, then, but he does nothing to deserve the death Irene seems indirectly to allot him. While no critic has commented on the disturbing connection between Irene and Jolly, many have condemned her conduct towards her own son Jon. It is in relation to Jon that Irene becomes clearly despicable, a far cry from the Irene who was the unblemished heroine of The Man of Property. Galsworthy does his best to convince his readers that there is nothing wrong with the relationship between Irene and Jon.⁶ Indeed in his view it is almost poetic in its perfection. When Holly watches Irene read a letter from Jon, she decides it is "the prettiest sight she had ever seen" (III, 680). As far as Holly and Galsworthy are concerned, she has seen "a vision of perfect love" (III, 680). Yet this "perfect love" soon begins to seem claustrophobic. When Jon goes to Spain with his mother, he is privileged, for "in this isolation he had unparalleled opportunities of appreciating what few sons can apprehend, the whole-

heartedness of a mother's love" (III, 726). Even her husband's death later in the novel fails to make Irene less whole-hearted. When the distraught Jon--divided between Fleur and his parents--goes back to his room, he finds that "she had evidently been in--everything was ready for him, even some biscuits and hot milk" (III, 824). Such over-powering devotion is bad enough, but Irene's approach to the crisis of Jon and Fleur is deadly. She tells Jon: "'Think of yourself and your own happiness! I can stand what's left--I've brought it on myself'" (III, 842). She makes sure that her own situation is continually before her son, so that he has no time to brood over his own concerns.⁷

Most critics have stopped their examination of Irene once they condemn her behaviour towards Jon. This, in their view, is the main reason Irene is dangerous. To Galsworthy though, however unbeknownst to himself, a condemnation of Irene solely because of her conduct towards Jon is woefully insufficient. In the overall world view of the Forsyte existence Irene represents much of what is generally amiss. By the end of To Let, the Forsyte world is heaving. Soames is well aware of the lamentable state of things.

'To Let'--the Forsyte age and way of life, when a man owned his soul, his investments, and his woman, without check or question....'To Let'--that sane and simple creed!

The waters of change were foaming in, carrying

the promise of new forms only when their destructive flood should have passed its full....Athwart the Victorian dykes the waters were rolling on property, manners, and morals, on melody and the old forms of art--waters bringing to his mouth a salt taste as of blood, lapping to the foot of this Highgate Hill where Victorianism lay buried (III, 877-78).

Galsworthy's most obvious symbol of the problems facing the post-war Forsytes is Prosper Profond. He has "done, seen, heard and known everything, and found nothing in it" (III, 752). Visits from the disillusioned Prosper are "like having the mood which the War had left, seated--dark, heavy, smiling, indifferent--in your Empire chair" (III, 752). It is when the oily Prosper rouses himself to action that he is most dangerous. His affair with Annette causes Soames to regard him as "unmorality let off its chain, disillusionment on the prowl" (III, 769). By this point in the novel Monsieur Profond has been the alligator in the river of Soames's existence for some time; Soames had been "refusing to see more than the suspicion of his snout" (III, 741).

Prosper is certainly the most prominent symbol of the disorder facing the inhabitants of the early twentieth century, but Irene also serves as a symbol. Very early on Galsworthy links Irene with the new century. When in In Chancery Irene and Jolyon meet in a very Victorian hotel, Galsworthy states that "in her clinging frock Irene seemed to Jolyon like Venus emerging from the shell of the past century" (II, 546). Jolyon's perception of what Irene

represents, is of course complimentary; Soames provides the other side of the coin. When he and Annette watch Queen Victoria's funeral procession, he realizes it is the end of an Age. As soon as he sees Jolyon and Irene, who are also watching the procession, he is indignant.

What had they come here for--inherently illicit creatures, rebels from the Victorian ideal? What business had they in this crowd? Each of them twice exiled by morality--making a boast, as it were, of love and laxity! (II, 577)

In To Let Soames expands his view of Irene's accomplishments; he decides that she is not only responsible for love and laxity on her own account--she represents the twentieth-century habit in general. At Lord's Soames has time to ruminate:

It seemed to him, fantastically, as he looked back, that all this modern relaxation of marriage...that all this modern looseness had come out of her revolt; it seemed to him, fantastically, that she had started it, till all decent ownership of anything had gone, or was on the point of going. All came from her! (III, 801)

Of course in the real world, no one Irene can cause an avalanche of moral value, and Galsworthy purports to be a writer of novels in the realist tradition. But in a curious way, in The Forsyte Saga at least, Irene does seem to be the cause of all subsequent decay. Her influence is unwholesome, and is not limited to such isolated victims as her son Jon. This is Galsworthy's final, and very uncomplimentary, judgment on the Irene of The Man of Property.

This transformation of Irene is undoubtedly a blow

to the cause of Art and Beauty, but it is not the end. By To Let Irene and Soames are no longer the dominant points of interest; the younger generation, in the shape of Jon and Fleur, has taken over. It is to these two that one must look for the advancement of Art. Fleur, of course, is merely the daughter of Soames, and Galsworthy seems always to hold her parentage against her. He derides what positive and artistic aspects there are to her. When she is waiting for Jon to hurry back from Spain, Galsworthy remarks that "what poetry there was in the daughter of Soames and Annette had certainly in those weeks of waiting gathered round her memories of Jon" (III, 739). Actually Galsworthy is absent minded; if one examines the whole of To Let, one finds that Galsworthy has assigned a considerable amount of "poetry" to Fleur's composition. She is introduced as being like Goya's "La Vendimia." Although Soames feels that he owns only a rather poor copy of this, "he would still look at it...if his daughter were not there, for the sake of something irresistibly reminiscent in the light, erect balance of the figure, the width between the arching eyebrows, the eager dreaming of the dark eyes" (III, 633-4). The real Fleur is also often observed to be dreaming. Soames can recognize the signs; when he and his family are staying in a hotel, he sees "Fleur where he had left her. She sat with crossed knees, slowly balancing a foot in silk stocking and grey shoe, sure

sign that she was dreaming. Her eyes showed it too-- they went off like that sometimes" (III, 652). When Fleur's mind is working on a more conscious level, the reader finds she has even given some thought to what she feels comprises Beauty. She tells Jon that she likes beauty to be exciting, and then defines her position in general. "'I think beauty's always swift. I like to look at one picture, for instance, and then run off'" (III, 687). The essence of Fleur seems to be perpetual movement, but she is stable enough to be receptive to one of Beauty's more popular manifestations--love. Her description of this phenomenon is hardly that of a philistine: "'One of the chief effects of love is that you see the air sort of inhabited, like seeing a face in the moon; and you feel--you feel dancey and soft at the same time, with a funny sensation--like a continual first sniff of orange-blossom--just above your stays'" (III, 689). And when love does not work out as she wishes, she turns to art, as June before her did. The one thing that seems to be any comfort to her on the night she first knows she has lost Jon, is the player piano. She has it play "a dark tune, with a thrum and a throb" (III, 854). To the anxious Soames the tune seems a mania, but he himself is unable to comfort her.

Certainly, then, Fleur is not hopelessly philistine when it comes to art, as Galsworthy may like us to believe.

But most readers would have to agree that artistic qualities are hardly the central essence of Fleur. She is, after all, her father's daughter--and she can be as calculating and unemotional as any lawyer. She does not waste time being upset when she realizes that her mother is having an affair--"In a disturbed domestic atmosphere the heart she had set on Jon would have a better chance" (III, 719). To her mind all those about her must be viewed as either a help or a hindrance to her main purpose; no more thought need be wasted on them after this initial assessment. She operates coldly and alone. She decides that June may be some help to her after she discovers the truth about Soames and Irene. But "instinctively, she thought: 'I won't give anything away, though, even to her. I daren't. I mean to have Jon; against them all'" (III, 755). Such ruthlessness must be exceptional from a girl of her young age. Other aspects of Fleur's calculating approach, however, are quite basic. When she wants her father to go and negotiate with Irene, she tries all manner of wheedling, which fails. So she cries, and gets her way.

Fleur is seldom at her best in her behaviour towards her father. It is bad enough to be a calculator, but her attitude towards Soames makes her appear rather cold. Jon is devoted to Irene, but Fleur does not give her father the same unconditional affection, as he is perfectly aware. At one point they discuss whether or not Fleur will have

Jon; she insists that he can't stop her. "'I don't suppose,' said Soames, 'that if left to myself I should try to prevent you; I must put up with things, I know, to keep your affection'" (III, 790). Soames in fact does not for a period keep her affection after his mission to Irene fails. Fleur insists that he has betrayed her, and then asks "'What did you--what could you have done in those old days?'" (III, 853).

None of this is very flattering, of course, but the truly damning component of Fleur's makeup, in Galsworthy's eyes, must be her possessiveness. Galsworthy makes Fleur sound almost mindless in her consuming obsession for Jon. He describes her state of mind once she has discovered the truth: "Now that she knew what she and Jon were up against, her longing for him had increased tenfold, as if he were a toy with sharp edges or dangerous paint such as they had tried to take from her as a child" (III, 780). A few pages later in the novel Galsworthy's metaphors become more unpleasant. About Fleur he remarks: "But the more uncertain and hazardous the future, the more 'the will to have' worked its tentacles into the flesh of her heart--like some burrowing tick!" (III, 783). Holly is aware of this side of Fleur's personality. She tells Jon that Fleur has "'rather a 'having' nature'" (III, 794). Finally even Jon has "a treacherous lurking doubt lest Fleur, like her father, might want to own" (III, 840).

It becomes increasingly clear to most readers that a cold, calculating, and possessive Fleur surely cannot advance the cause of Art overmuch. Her touch seems to wither all Beauty--even when Jon is involved. One would think that their love should always be beautiful. Yet at times one look from Fleur acts on Jon "exactly as the tug of a chain acts on a dog--brought him up to her with his tail wagging and his tongue out" (III, 714). Such a metaphor does not suggest a love which soars to celestial heights of trust and union. Fleur's mere presence seems to have polluted all possibilities. She must have cast a blight over Jon.

When one first looks at Jon one sees that his doggish behaviour cannot be his fault. He in fact may be the very champion of art which is wanted. One cannot connect him with sordid every day concerns, such as getting and keeping a job. His father does feel obliged to bring the topic up, but he gets nowhere. Galsworthy says that Jon "had held with his father several discussions, from which, under a cheery show of being ready for anything--except, of course, the Church, Army, Law, Stage, Stock Exchange, Medicine, Business, and Engineering--Jolyon had gathered rather clearly that Jon wanted to go in for nothing" (III, 655). Jon himself has no worldly drives that might prompt him to a career. He tells Fleur that he does not think he will be any good at making money; he is quite content to

live on the family capital. What drives Jon does have are all of the Good Samaritan variety. Despite Forsyte wealth, "'the condition of the world'" (III, 713), and all the people starving, seem to have made an impression on him. He is convinced "'one ought to help'" (III, 713).

As soon as one hears, then, that the idealistic Jon is "terribly susceptible to the charm of words" (III, 660), and that he makes poetic attempts, it is very easy to regard him as the artist in embryo. Others have confidence in him along these lines. When Young Jolyon feels he must define himself as an amateur in his artistic attempts, he is able to console himself with the thought that he has at least left Jon behind him. "Jon would do something someday--if the Age didn't spoil him--an imaginative chap!" (III, 657-8).

On closer examination, however, this charming picture of Jon begins to buckle. His naivete is irritating. He is supposedly "an imaginative chap", but he goes about wearing blinders. When Fleur tells him that they must get married behind their parents' backs, or lose each other, Jon insists that it can do no harm to let their parents know--"'They can't really stop us, Fleur!'" (III, 781). Fleur must remind him that they are both dependents without money. The naive Jon is also too good. After the crisis has come, and Jon has had to give Fleur up, he does not hate his parents, or even curse his fate.

To marry Fleur would be to hit his mother in the face; to betray his dead father! It was no good! Jon had the least resentful of natures. He bore his parents no grudge in this hour of his distress.... Even though he might be willing to give up all else for the one thing he couldn't have, he would be a fool to think his feelings mattered much in so vast a world, and to behave like a crybaby or a cad (III, 857).

Actually, perhaps such a generous reaction is to be expected from such a coddled boy as Jon, for we remember that nothing distracts his mother from her attentions to him. Even on the night of her husband's death her son is uppermost in Irene's mind. When Jon goes back to his own room, he finds that "she had evidently been in--everything was ready for him, even some biscuits and hot milk" (III, 824).

While Jon's biscuits and hot milk may seem like the last straws in a detached view of his character, there are more serious matters on which Jon must be examined. For instance, what would Jon have to do if he were to become a successful artist? His father was a success in a limited way because he had the good fortune to be a part of a still living Victorian tradition. It was quite within his abilities to take to its limits the already established and still living genre of English watercolours. When Jon and Irene prepare Jolyon's work for exhibition, they find that "on its old-fashioned plane and of its kind" (III, 837) the work is good. "There was a great mass of work with a rare continuity of growth in depth and reach of vision. Nothing certainly went very deep, or reached very high--

but such as the work was, it was thorough, conscientious, and complete" (III, 837). Jolyon, then, was no great innovator or pioneer--but he did not have to be. It was still possible to make a contribution by building on the work of others. Unfortunately for Jon, he stands at the threshold of a new era--an era in which the disorder started by Irene and symbolized by Prosper Profond has taken over. In a moment of pessimism, Jolyon summarizes what is happening in the new age:

'The young are tired of us, our goods and our ideals. Off with their heads, they say--smash their idols! And let's get back to--nothing! And, by Jove, they've done it! Jon's a poet. He'll be going in, too, and stamping on what's left of us. Property, beauty, sentiment--all smoke. We mustn't own anything nowadays, not even our feelings. They stand in the way of--Nothing'" (III, 751).

If anything creative is to emerge from the new age, it will be the result of some pioneer's discovery of a fresh beginning. If no such new beginning is found, the art of the age will be an art of destruction--for at least the old ways can be thoroughly stamped into the ground. Can the naive and coddled Jon aspire to being an innovator? If he can't be an innovator--and his father wasn't one--does he even have the strength of mind to stamp anything into the ground? Early in the novel we discovered that Jon "saved moths from candles, and couldn't bear spiders, but put them out of doors in screws of paper sooner than kill them" (III, 682).

So Jon does not do very well as the artist in embryo. Has art, then, no hope in the muddled twentieth century? All that is left is the discredited and possessive Fleur. The answer to this quandary is that, after all, possessiveness may not be so bad, even if, in an earlier novel, it was this very quality which poisoned June's relationship with Bosinney. Certainly, possessiveness seems repellent enough when the Forsytes of In Chancery indulge their anti-Boer feelings. And Soames's continued pursuit of the unwilling Irene makes the quest for property seem as loathsome as ever. Even the comic echo of Soames's pursuit--Winifred's efforts to rid herself of her "man of the world" (II, 354)--has its seamy side. When Monty arrives back in England Winifred comes to the "deep conclusion that after all he was her property, to be held against a robbing world" (II, 523). This does not sound so bad--Winifred almost sounds protective. But the reader soon discovers that when Winifred decided to forgo public measures against Monty, she also decided that "if she wanted to punish him, she could do it at home without the world knowing" (II, 525). This version of marriage is no more appealing than that which the thwarted Soames tries to impose on a frightened Irene.

But, with the triumphant conclusion to In Chancery, Galsworthy ennobles possessiveness. While it is true that Soames can never give up his instinct to possess, he does

at last take aim at an appropriate object--his baby Fleur, who causes "the sense of triumph and renewed possession" (II, 605) to swell within him. As has been discussed, this outlet for Soames's possessive nature develops into a selfless love for Fleur, no matter what she may do.

A final decision on the pros and cons of possessiveness and the love of property can only be made after a world view of the Forsyte existence is once again taken. As has been discussed, by the end of To Let the Forsyte world is in tumult. Soames can merely observe:

The waters of change were foaming in, carrying the promise of new forms only when their destructive flood should have passed its full....Athwart the Victorian dykes the waters were rolling on property, manners, and morals, on melody and the old forms of art--waters bringing to his mouth a salt taste as of blood, lapping to the foot of this Highgate Hill where Victorianism lay buried (III, 877-8).

This drowning twentieth century can offer no moral hero for imitation or direction--only the antics of the dissolute Prosper Profond. Does the twentieth century then at least have a still inspiring and vital past to which it can look back fondly?

Soames does not forget Timothy, the last of the old Forsytes, of whom he is certainly fond. However, even he can only regard both his Uncle and his Uncle's environment as being completely dead. He thinks of Timothy's on the Bayswater Road as the "'Mausoleum'" (III, 664), and almost decides to exhibit it. "Would it not be almost a duty to

preserve this house--like Carlyle's--and put up a tablet, and show it? 'Specimen of mid-Victorian abode--entrance, one shilling, with catalogue.' After all, it was the completest thing, and perhaps the deadest in the London of to-day" (III, 665). The one inhabitant of this perfectly Victorian house is very nearly as dead as his surroundings. On one of Soames's visits Timothy is able to rouse himself sufficiently enough to give his nephew out-of-date advice: "'You--' said Timothy in a voice which seemed to have outlived tone, 'you tell them all from me--you tell them all...to hold on--hold on--Consols are goin' up,' and he nodded thrice" (III, 803). For the most part though Timothy is far too intent on conserving energy to allow any change in his routine, which, for the first time in his life he is able to enjoy thoroughly and without worry. When Soames tells Smither that he finds Timothy's resumed babyhood "'rather sad and painful'" (III, 668), she soon reassures him:

'As I say to Cook, Mr. Timothy is more of a man than he ever was. You see, when he's no walkin', or takin' his bath, he's eatin', and when he's not eatin', he's sleepin'; and there it is. There isn't an ache or a care about him anywhere' (III, 668).

Soames can find no reserve of guidance or direction when he visits this last relic of his family's past.

If the Forsyte world is in such a deplorable state that even stolid Forsytes can neither look forward with any confidence, nor find any help in the past, how can such a

delicate intangible as Art hope to survive? Perhaps a clue is contained in Soames's very pessimism about the future. The waters are rolling "on property, manners, and morals, on melody and the old forms of art" (III, 878). In this key passage it is evident that property, and most likely then its companion, possessiveness, are no longer antithetical to art. Galsworthy is convinced that all three must share the same fate, for better or for worse. Soames's one time enemy, Young Jolyon, agrees with this new point of view. Much earlier in the novel, when he is exclaiming against the nihilism of the young, he says that "'property, beauty, sentiment'" (III, 751) are all smoke. Once again, then, property is placed side by side with Art, or at least with Beauty.

This equation of property and its one time opposite becomes doubly interesting when one finds that Soames believes property will come through, despite loose morals and "people breaking contracts all over the place" (III, 757). The country might be "in for a spell of gambling and bankruptcies" (III, 757) and the War might have ruined things in general, but Soames still has faith in "'English common sense'--or the power to have things, if not one way then another" (III, 757-8). He is not alarmed by "waters bringing to his mouth a salt taste as of blood" (III, 878);

Soames--like a figure of Investment--refused their restless sounds. Instinctively he would not fight them--there was in him too much primeval wisdom, of

Man the possessive animal. They would quiet down when they fulfilled their tidal fever of dispossessing and destroying...they would lapse and ebb, and fresh forms would rise based on an instinct older than the fever of change--the instinct of Home (III, 878).

Home and Property then will be triumphant, and destruction is only "necessary to make room for fresher property" (III, 878). And if Property can come through, Art is probably not far behind, at least to Galsworthy's adjusted way of thinking. "Fresh forms" is vague. Most likely Galsworthy is not confining himself to a new species of red-brick bungalow when he uses this phrase. It could very well indicate a new artistic and intellectual flowering.

Property and possessiveness then are possible saviours from the point of view of Art. Perhaps Fleur, true Forsyte that she is, is the best person to whom one could entrust the cause of Art and Beauty. After all, she is the one with the "having" nature. She wants Jon in To Let, to the point of obsession, and as subsequent books prove, she remains true to this first fixation, much as June remained faithful to the memory of her Bosinney. And there may even be something admirable in this steady adherence to a prime fixation, although both she and Jon eventually marry others. After all, Timothy's only coherent advice is "'to hold on'" (III, 803), as Soames remembers when he ruminates on the problem of Fleur's infatuation with Jon.

And Fleur infatuated with her boy! Queer chance!
 Yet, was there such a thing as chance?...But this!
 'Inherited,' his girl had said. She--she was 'hold-
 ing on'! (III, 806).

Fleur has studied the remains of Victorianism and adopted what is still of use. In her struggles for Jon she becomes the exponent of an adapted and still living Victorianism, which, whatever its limitations, may be better than a nihilistic chaos of modernism. Fleur, probably alone among the rush of flappers she will meet in the twenties, has what might become, with luck, a coherent philosophy-- a philosophy which one suspects, after an examination of Galsworthy's new approach to Art and possessiveness, might be able to include Beauty, given the chance.

This is mere optimism, however. What luck do Fleur, Property, Possessiveness, and Art actually have in the conclusion of To Let? Not as much as they deserve, one would think. Weddings have often been convenient endings for novels; they usually suggest that hero and heroine will float into "happy ever after" land, where they will enjoy an existence freed from material difficulties, spending all their spare time gazing rapturously into each other's eyes. In this case of course the heroine appears at the wedding, but not the hero, and there seems to be no surety of anything. There is no guarantee of happiness on a personal level, as Holly is well aware. She "had a horror of unhappy marriages. This might not be one in the

end--but it was clearly a toss-up; and to consecrate a toss-up in this fashion...seemed to her as near a sin as one could find in an age which had abolished them" (III, 861-2). Surprisingly enough Galsworthy feels that this marriage does not even have material sureties. He admits that the Forsytes have now gone upper class, and have joined their money to land, but he qualifies any optimism: "Whether this was a little late in the day, and those rewards of the possessive instinct, lands and money, destined for the melting-pot--was still a question so moot that it was not mooted" (III, 860).

Not even Property then can claim an unqualified victory here. Fleur must find other ways for the exercise of her possessive nature, and other ways to find Beauty; Michael is merely "pleasant-faced". He can never be Jon. This is a daunting task for Fleur, but she at least means to try. She tells June: "'I shall forget him, I suppose, if I fly fast and far enough'" (III, 867).

Finally then, even an alliance with the once despised Forsytes, in the shape of Fleur, has not ensured a place for Art in the post-war world. Modernity may be too much for it, but there remains hope as long as Fleur flies fast and far. To Let ends not with answers, but with possibilities. The next two books, The White Monkey and The Silver Spoon, are the story of Fleur's continuing efforts.

CHAPTER III

The White Monkey and The Silver Spoon document Fleur's efforts to find happiness, and, since Fleur is nothing if not possessive, and also since Art and Property have now been linked, these volumes explore the state of Beauty in the Twenties as well. Such an exploration is eminently worthwhile, but many complain that the main protagonist is lost among all the different characters and plots.¹ Perhaps on the surface things do seem to be a jumble, but actually all plots and sub-plots do work together; often sub-plots will reinforce the "message" of a main plot, or expand upon it. This is certainly what does happen in The White Monkey, and what tries to happen in The Silver Spoon.

Whatever the final effect of the two books, they do have Fleur in common. In each book she is searching; is there a way in which she can live happily and successfully without Jon? She is a comprehensive explorer. When she explores a possible solution, or way of life, she explores its every facet: the general outlook of fellow participants in this mode of living--their morals, attitudes, accomplishments, expectations, habits, and Art. A by-product of Fleur's search then, is an examination of those approaches to Art which Galsworthy felt were evident in the

1920s. The two books are his estimations of the relative successes achieved by these approaches.

The first way of life to come under scrutiny is the lifestyle of the moderns. In The White Monkey Fleur flings herself heart and soul into modernity, only to find that however hard she may try, she cannot assume a truly modern stance. The Silver Spoon adds insult to injury when Fleur discovers that she cannot be old fashioned with conviction either; such an attitude first makes her uncomfortable, and then devastates her. These failures on Fleur's part help explain why she, the married woman, will turn back to Jon when he reappears as a married man. They are considerable excuses.

The most considerable of the two occurs in The White Monkey, which is Fleur's try at modernity. In this book sub-plots are well coordinated with the main plot, and the total effect amounts to a great deal of pessimism. The main plot, of course, centers in Fleur and her quest, and Galsworthy uses this plot to describe modernity and modern art in some detail: he provides examples, lists their aims, and decides on their limits. When he has concluded that they are spurious, he compares modern art to what he considers a more genuine art, which unfortunately cannot succeed in the modern era. Such incompatibility is a pity, because in Galsworthy's view, modernity desperately needs something real to hang onto.

The Young Moderns of Fleur and Michael's circle try to fill any void in their outlook with frenetic movement, a tendency of which Michael is well aware:

They were all restless--all the people he knew. At least all the young ones--in life and in letters. Look at their novels! Hardly one in twenty had any repose, any of that quality which made one turn back to a book as a corner of refuge. They dashed and sputtered and skidded and rushed by like motor cycles--violent, oh! and clever" (IV, 121).

In their mad rush to get nowhere, the Moderns have at least been able to take the time to settle on their priorities, which Fleur feels duty bound to honour in her dealings with Wilfred Desert. An innate conservatism gives her some qualms about accepting the impassioned Wilfred's invitation to come and see his rooms: "She thought it over many times, and but for the fumes of lunch, and the feeling, engendered by the society of the 'Vertiginist,' of Amabel Nazing, of Linda Frewe, that scruples of any kind were 'stuffy,' sensations of all sorts 'the thing,' she would probably still have been thinking it over now" (IV, 60-1). Others, such as Marjorie Ferrar, are so enthusiastic about the modern essentials that they take the new mode of behaviour to its logical limits. Miss Ferrar is quite frank about her adherence to the new code: "'My ambition...is to be the perfect wife of one man, the perfect mistress of another, and the perfect mother of a third...'" (IV, 127). Of course all Young Moderns do not confine themselves to visiting bedrooms. Some even find the time to produce "Art." Hugo

Solstis is one of the era's composers--he "was one of those who were restoring English music, giving to it a wide and spacious freedom from melody and rhythm, while investing it with literary and mathematical charms" (IV, 18). Great new things are also happening in the world of Letters, where Walter Nazing is writing such sentences as "'Solemnly and with a delicious egoism he more than awfully desired her who snug and rosy in the pink shell of her involuted and so petulant social periphrasis'" etc. (IV, 127).

This new flowering of activity among the "artists" is all very well, but Galsworthy and the Monts are not impressed with post-war art. Michael is quite blunt about his position on the new writers; he tells Fleur: "'The vice of our lot is, they say it pretty well, but they've nothing to say. They won't last'" (IV, 15). Fleur is as aware of her circle's failings. When she reads Walter Nazing she knows that he is "the kind of author who must be read at a gallop, and given away lest a first impression of wind in the hair be lost in a sensation of wind lower down" (IV, 126). Later she tells Holly that there is not much to the art of the twenties as a whole; expressionism has "'no inside'" (IV, 135).

Fleur does not condemn every writer of her acquaintance, however. Both she and Michael realize that Wilfred Desert is the genuine article, in fact the Bosinney of his time. Wilfred is a very "sudden" gentleman, a

loner who is liable to journey across continents at a moment's notice. Michael believes he has much potential; he explains: "'The really big people don't talk--and don't bunch--they paddle their own canoes in what seem backwaters. But it's the backwaters that make the main stream'" (IV, 15). The much admired Desert is not just an artist in embryo. What he has already published has considerable substance, as his publisher, Michael, knows: "'Wilfred has emotions, hates, pities, wants; at least, sometimes; when he does, his stuff is jolly good'" (IV, 15). The public is as appreciative as the publishers. Copper Coin sold well because "people wanted life again" (IV, 117). It seems they also want something that they can comprehend, as Wilfred's "The Court Martial" shows.²

One could give in to enthusiasm and hail Wilfred as a saviour of the modern era. Unfortunately though, modernity defeats him as much as it does Fleur. She tries her best to have a suitably casual and adulterous affair with Wilfred--keeping Paris and Proust in mind at all times--only to find herself, after each visit to his rooms, "going away without having added to her sensations" (IV, 61). Such visits make her feel deficient: "Surely she had not experienced one-tenth of the thoughts or sensations that would have been assigned to her in any advanced piece of literature!" (IV, 62). Wilfred is just as old-fashioned. He feels he must tell Michael and be completely above

board, and when it is clear that he cannot have Fleur, he does not lightly cast off his failure and turn elsewhere. Instead he takes the trouble to go East.

Fleur's abortive attempt at modernity has serious ramifications, both for herself and for art. She is left feeling a failure, and that nothing has any point. She can only lecture herself: "Get up! Go out! Do something! But what--what was worth doing? What had any meaning in it?" (IV, 171). Worse still, one of England's opportunities to find meaning, Wilfred and his art, has been forced into exile. England is left to make do with the likes of Walter Nazing.

This overall pessimism is reinforced by a subplot surrounding one Aubrey Greene, a painter who dares to deviate from cubism, and his dealings with the impoverished and generally unhealthy Bickets. Things start off well. Greene is very much a modern young man--he is quite willing to promise Fleur a seance or two for a favour--but he does not feel obliged to confine his art to modern movements any more than Bosinney did. He treats Mrs. Bicket realistically, and both Monts agree that he does a fine job of it. They find it "'Leonardoish'" (IV, 199), though Michael warns Greene that the critics will be hostile. The picture should have been a convincing blow against all the 1920s rubbish that passes for art, but it was tainted from its very conception. Mrs. Bicket is

available for nude modelling only because her husband must stand in the gutter and sell balloons for a living. The picture's suggestion of an idyllic existence is a fraud. It is not really a depiction of a nude, but the sham veneer of a cold hard reality, as Tony Bicket realizes when he says to Michael: "'Money! It's money bought her. Money'll buy anything. It'll buy the 'eart out of your chest'" (IV, 211).

This hard reality is too much for the Bickets, and they, like Wilfred, leave England. Once again it seems that the modern era and genuine art cannot co-exist.

Bicket's usefulness to Galsworthy does not end when this truth has once again been hit home. He uses Bicket to exhibit an entire portion of society. The Bickets are those who occupy "two ground floor rooms, at eight shillings a week" (IV, 54) and usually owe rent. They sit before "a very little fire" (IV, 55) and are so underfed that they were C₃ during the war. Their suppers are bread and margarine and cocoa, and they must steal to meet doctors' bills. Fleur may be searching for meaning in her Chinese room, with its ivory panels, copper floor, central heating and cut-glass lustres--but after a view of the Bickets, one not only demands a meaning from modernity, but asks why modern man, if Bicket can be called one, even bothers to exist.

Perhaps such a demand seems extreme, but Galsworthy

does deliberately steer his readers to this fatalistic point of view in the final sub-plot of The White Monkey, which is the story of Soames's struggle against Elderson. A view of the Bickets' wretched existence has already shown the hopelessness which the poorer classes must face, even in the twentieth century, so that one turns to Soames's world of exclusive clubs, servants, and boardrooms with considerable relief. It is a rude shock to find that even this well ordered world is under the attack of such maggots as the innocuous looking Elderson. Soames takes in every detail of the manager: the man is "as bright and pink as a new penny" (IV, 218)--Soames looks "at the fellow's cuffs--beautifully laundered, with a blue stripe; at his holland waistcoat, and his bird's-eye tie" (IV, 219) and concludes that he is "a regular dandy" (IV, 219). Soames is not taken in by appearances, however, and scents the rot underneath--rot that in the world of Bickets is just not disguised. He is also perceptive enough to appreciate the true seriousness of his situation with the P.P.R.S. The Company's affairs leave him no time to talk to Fleur and her friends about seances and mediums. When such topics come up he can only think that it is time "he got back to Elderson, and what was to be done now, and left this fiddling while Rome burned" (IV, 132). In this twentieth-century burning, all the standards upon which the inhabitants of boardrooms could once count are being eroded. As one

might expect, the new art forms of the twenties do not shore up this once comfortable world any more than they do any other. The likes of Nazing, Sibley, and Linda Frewe have already forced Michael--who knows that these authorities would insist he reduce himself "to squealing and kicking in the stomach" (IV, 140) in his struggle with Wilfred--to ask himself: "Was the word 'gentleman' a dud?" (IV, 140). Soames is also compelled to re-examine this now outmoded concept. His answer to Michael's father, who says that Elderson is a gentleman, is that there is "'no liar like a gentleman'" (IV, 158). Soames finally decides that one cannot even count on honesty. He remembers the moral of George Forsyte's picture--"'Eat the fruits of life, scatter the rinds'" (IV, 216)--and applies it to the field of business. He concludes that England must soon be in a depression, and wonders: "Perhaps that chap Elderson had foreseen this already, and was simply feathering his nest in time. If one was to be copped in any case, why bother to be honest?" (IV, 216).

Despite this erosion of standards, Soames naturally does his best, and in the struggle he turns out to be the one remaining lion of the old order. He investigates thoroughly, masters the Board of the P.P.R.S., and correctly foresees all possible consequences. Unfortunately he still fails, and Elderson, with all his loot, escapes.

By this conclusion to the Elderson Business, Gals-

worthy seems to say that the modern social order, on all levels, is deplorable and declining. There are no longer any such things as standards. Why does modern man keep on with the effort? And among the mass of mankind, what is the use of all the self-styled artists attempting to produce? They must compete with the Eldersons--Soames views the Manager as a "clever chap, bit of an artist, perhaps" (IV, 42). The message seems to be that when the old order has crumbled, and genuine art with it, there will be some successful "artists" in the modern era, but these will be charlatans.

Thus The White Monkey ends in almost total pessimism. Fleur has yet to find a solution to the problem of life without Jon. What few worthwhile artists there are cannot succeed in post-war England, and England is left to make do with such pretentious nothings as Nazing and Sibley Swan. Such "artists" have no powers of revitalization or recreating--and twentieth-century England is desperately in need of a new lease on life. All levels of society are giving way before a creeping rot.

Even though Galsworthy has taken some pains to create a multi-faceted image of despair in The White Monkey, he somewhat inconsistently decides to attempt an up-beat ending for the volume. He links Fleur's pregnancy and delivery of Kit with an emerging bedrock optimism in Michael. All the events of The White Monkey--Butterfield

confronting Elderson, Victorine's sitting in the nude for passage money, and her husband's decision to sell balloons-- all these events have brought Michael a great faith in, and admiration of, English grit. The feeling is enough to make him say to Soames: "'I get awfully bucked at being English every now and then. Don't you?'" (IV, 228). In this mood, and with the knowledge of Fleur's pregnancy, Michael decides the modern insistence that nothing matters is wrong:

It did matter that some person or some principle outside oneself should be more precious than oneself-- it dashed well did! Sentiment, then, wasn't dead-- nor faith, nor belief, which were the same things.... Faith, sentiment, belief, had gone underground, possibly, but they were there, even in 'Old Forsyte' and himself (IV, 244).

The actual birth is the last thing needed to convince Michael it is good to be alive. "Say what you liked, you couldn't beat it! They might turn their noses up at life, and look down them at it; they might bolster up the future and the past, but--give him the present!" (IV, 272).

This new resurgence of faith on Michael's part, however, seems tacked on to the volume. It cannot cancel out the pessimism which went before it, so that all the problems which were revealed throughout The White Monkey must still be seen as unresolved.

Fleur is no quitter, however. If she cannot be truly modern, she will try turning the clock back. In The

Silver Spoon Fleur's inability to deal with modernism comes to a head, so that she is forced into an old-fashioned stance. One would think that Fleur's fortitude should have some reward, but unfortunately this is not the case. Her attempt to be convincingly post-Victorian does not bring her happiness either.

All in all The Silver Spoon is not a very placid book. In this volume the main plot and sub-plots are not as well coordinated as they were in The White Monkey--making the book rather choppy. Worse than any choppiness, the book may also be seen as repetitive in its themes. Once again Galsworthy uses his main plot, the clash between Fleur and Marjorie Ferrar, to describe modernity and modern art. Once again he decides that the two do not amount to much; all concerned know that the celebrated clash is mere pettiness. The Silver Spoon, then, can never be seen as any great novel. But despite the choppiness and repetition Galsworthy is at least able to make clear the magnitude of the failure which oppresses Fleur as a result of her battle with Marjorie Ferrar.

One imagines that such battles must be frequent in the flux of modernity which Galsworthy describes. In The White Monkey Galsworthy portrayed the Young Moderns as restless souls oppressed by a void whenever they searched for meaning. They are much the same in The Silver Spoon, when Michael wonders as he watches Kit in his bath:

Were they fit to bring him up....Born to everything they wanted, so that they were at wits' end to invent something they could not get; driven to restive searching by having their own way?...And for those, like Fleur, born a little late for the war, the tale of it had only lowered what respect they could have for anything. With veneration killed, and self-denial 'off,' with atavism buried, sentiment derided, and the future in the air, hardly a wonder that modernity should be a dance of gnats, taking itself damned seriously! (V, 348)

As before, Galsworthy has no great opinion of the Art which comes out of the dance. Michael may be in Parliament now, but the Monts are still in touch with the "artists" of the time. One Mrs. Magussie invites them to meet a violinist who has just returned from a world tour. In this tour he had "in half the time played more often than any two previous musicians" (V, 522). Such heroic constancy in performance has at least made the young man a name. "As an artist he had been known to a few, as an athlete he was now known to all" (V, 522).

Galsworthy is as doubtful of modern theater as he is of modern musicians. As part of his research into Marjorie Ferrar's activities, Soames must attend an updated performance of The Plain Dealer. For this "there was no music. They hit something three times before the curtain went up. There were no footlights. The scenery was peculiar..." (V, 439). But then one could hardly expect the orthodox from a play directed by Bertie Curfew, who came back from his visit to Russia complaining bitterly about the way Russians spoke their lines, though

he himself knew no Russian. Of course as one of the spectators of his revamped Plain Dealer observes:

"'You couldn't give a play like this if you took the words in'" (V, 439). In both Russian and English modern theatre then, the meaning of the text is of little importance.

Ironically enough the New Critics of theatre do not consider the advanced Marjorie modern enough in her acting. They agree that "'she can't speak for nuts; you're following the sense of her words all the time. She doesn't rhythmatisise you a little bit'" (V, 440). It turns out that the celebrated Ferrar's list of "artistic" achievements cannot satisfy either the more radical moderns, or such traditionalists as Galsworthy.

To be in the know she read, of course, anything 'extreme,' but would not go out of her way to do soShe was 'in' with the advanced theatre, but took it as it came. Her book of poems, which had received praise because they emanated from one of a class supposed to be unpoetic, was remarkable not so much for irregularity of thought as for irregularity of metre (V, 369-70).

Galsworthy strongly suggests that the world of art in the 1920s has many Marjorie Ferrars in it. She is a dabbler, making no serious effort in any field. She does a little of everything, even painting, but only when it is convenient. For instance it is convenient for her to paint Francis Wilmot at a time when MacGown is usually in the House. "She was painting his portrait, so that a prepared canvas with a little paint on it chaperoned their almost daily

interviews, which took place between three and four when the light had already failed" (V, 398). Somehow the reader knows with certainty that the prepared canvas will never have anything more than "a little paint on it".

The protagonists themselves are equally in the know about the true state of affairs as far as modernity and modern art go. Soames has planned his daughter's case on a grand scale--"a clever fellow at the Bar could turn the whole thing into an indictment of the fast set and modern morality, and save all the invidiousness of exposing a woman's private life" (V, 380). Fleur's barrister will hopefully be able to avoid trivial particulars and instead make massive moral judgments. But for all the careful thought and worry which Soames has invested in the case, he is still well aware that it itself is only a typical product of modernity. He thinks of it as "terribly petty. Society lawsuits--who ever got anything out of them, save heart-burning and degradation?" (V, 373). Michael later agrees with his father-in-law. When he passes MacGown's face he thinks: "Grim! It wasn't the word. No one had got any change out of that affair. *Multum ex parvo! Parvum ex multo!* That was the modern comedy!" (V, 547). Galsworthy takes great pleasure in supporting these judgments of Soames and Michael in his description of the actual presentation of the case to the

Honourable Court. The very names of the witnesses are suggestive of the quality of their testimony; who could take anything seriously when it comes from a Mrs. Ralph Ppynrrryn?

The main event then in The Silver Spoon is a contest of trivia, and the message the contest is meant to convey, that there is little of real worth in modernity and its art, is repetitive. But at least the great court battle has been conducted in logical terms. Since, in The White Monkey, we have already seen that there is no substance to modern "accomplishments," any subsequent dealings with modernity can only be a picking over of such trivial components as those of the Ferrar case. One other success of the Forsyte-Ferrar plot should be noted. Its conclusion is emphatic; Fleur feels herself utterly destroyed, as one would expect after she has failed either to be modern successfully, or to be pseudo-Victorian and happy. The events of Swan Song are now inevitable. From the first the problem of Marjorie Ferrar upsets Fleur more than anything else which has yet occurred in her married life. Immediately after Soames has shown Marjorie out of his daughter's house, Fleur cries, something she never does. "Michael had never heard Fleur cry, and to see her, flung down across the bed, smothering her sobs in the quilt, gave him a feeling akin to panic" (V, 333). The final rout at Mrs. Magussie's has a certain amount of pathos to it.

In this high society duel Marjorie and Fleur attempt a public gauge of their popularity; each tries to attract greater numbers of admirers into her presence as she stands, making small talk, a small room's length from her adversary.

In this struggle

tide seemed at balance, not moving in or out. And then, with the slow implacability of tides, the water moved away from Fleur and lapped round her rival. Michael chattered, Mr. Blythe goggled, using the impersonal pronoun with a sort of passion; Fleur smiled, talked, twisted the flower. And, over there, Marjorie Ferrar seemed to hold a little Court (V, 524-5).

Fleur seems increasingly brittle as she fails in this public display. After the tears and the loss of face, the reader can appreciate the seriousness of Fleur's description of herself--she is "'a dead failure'" (V, 527). When Fleur comes to this conclusion, the stage is set for Swan Song.

Fleur is not the only piece of flotsam in the seas of The Silver Spoon. She has Francis Wilmot for company. The main plot of The Silver Spoon has shown that reliance on an old-fashioned morality leads to defeat; this message is reinforced by the sub-plot built around Francis Wilmot's encounter with Marjorie Ferrar. It is not a sub-plot with a lot of substance to it. Francis Wilmot is never anything but a one-dimensional cardboard character; one has discovered everything about him when one has identified him as the believer in a naively optimistic Victorianism. Michael has no difficulty placing his guest. "To

Francis Wilmot, he felt, the world was young, and life running on good tires to some desirable destination. In England--!" (V, 318). Mr. Wilmot is comfortably oblivious of all twentieth-century existential doubts; he is "a countryman, with a tradition of good manners, work, and simple living" (V, 352). Young Wilmot's Victorianism is most obvious in his attitudes towards women. He does not realize that all shingled young ladies foxtrotted off their pedestals long before his arrival in England. Marjorie Ferrar is well aware of her new lover's antiquated ideals. "Often on the point of saying 'Wait until I'm married,' the look on his face had always deterred her. He was primitive; would never understand her ideal: Perfection, as wife, mistress, and mother, all at once" (V, 398). Indeed, Mr. Wilmot is so primitive that he does not understand the exact nature of the skeletons in the Ferrar closet; he is able to believe that his platonic interest in her has made her silent in Court.

Francis does bring a certain amount of pathos to The Silver Spoon, and of course he once again illustrates the difficulties involved in the out-of-date morality. His appearance in London is also a nice presentiment of Jon's return to England in Swan Song. This however is as much as can be said for the Ferrar-Wilmot sub-plot. It seems tacked on to the action as a whole.

However unsatisfactory the story of Francis Wilmot

seems, it has more interest than Galsworthy's final subplot for The Silver Spoon, which revolves around Michael and his Foggartism. Galsworthy devotes far too much time and space to the theory of Foggartism, which one suspects is Galsworthy's pet plan for the saving of England. The Foggartist believes in "the security of Britain through the enlargement of...Air defences; the development of home agriculture; the elimination of unemployment through increased emigration to the Dominions; and the improvement of the national health particularly through the abatement of slums and smoke" (V, 375). Michael tries a practical experiment in applied Foggartism in this volume when he founds a colony of down-and-outs on his father's estate. The colony was to raise chickens, but the whole project comes to nothing through the pessimism of the workers, one of whom finally hangs himself. In The White Monkey Galsworthy has already dealt with the condition of the poor through the adventures of the Bickets, so that the descriptions of the perspective poultry farmers seem repetitive. Also, none of the agriculturists in this venture has the complexity of character of Tony Bicket and his wife. All of the workers whom Michael recruits remain dull and faceless, and even the hanging does not have any particular drama to it.

Of course Galsworthy has nominally tied in the concerns of Foggartism with the concerns of the rest of the

volume. Fleur is spoiled, Kit may become spoiled, and Michael believes that an England which remains impervious to the wisdom of Foggartism, is spoiled. Also Michael's efforts for Foggartism have at least a tentative connection with Beauty. He has not lost all consciousness of Beauty's desirability, despite the numbers of letters, petitions, and Blue Books which his new career in Parliament involves. He feels though that he cannot go public with his interest in such an intangible, even when visits to the poorer areas bring it to mind. While he walks on the Surrey side he does not see just the raw material of statistics, but "ugly houses, ugly shops, ugly pubs! No, that wouldn't do! Keep Beauty out of it; Beauty never went down in 'the House'! No sentiment went down!"

(V, 536). Unfortunately this is as far as Michael allows himself to go in this line, so that his adventure with the poultry farmers lacks the involvement with Art and Beauty which added depth to the story of the Bickets, and there is nothing to his enthusiasm for Foggartism except a militant didacticism. If the Ferrar-Wilmot sub-plot seems tacked on, the space devoted to Foggartism seems a complete fabrication.

Since The Silver Spoon is burdened by two lame-duck sub-plots, and since its main plot suffers from repetitiveness, this volume of A Modern Comedy does not have nearly the impact of The White Monkey. Both books,

however, still function as a pair--their overall structures are similar. Both document Fleur's efforts to "'fly fast and far enough.'" In this, as it turns out, hopeless quest she tries to satisfy her possessive instincts by discovering a Property which has as much appeal to her as Beauty, in the shape of Jon, had. In her attempts to live happily without Jon the failures of England in the 1920s have been exposed. Neither the social order nor the art of the Twenties is worth preserving, and anything which approaches true artistic value cannot fit into the world of shingled flappers. Fleur is only too well aware that all her attempts have ended in failure, and she tries her best to turn the bandwagon around, even at the last moment. The White Monkey culminates with Kit's birth, and the next volume with a world tour, but neither ending really makes it up to Fleur. Michael's renewed optimism as Kit is born is not convincing, and the world tour is merely a harbinger of difficulties yet to come, for while abroad Michael and Soames collide with Jon, his wife, and his mother.

Now that it seems Fleur has tried everything possible without Jon, it seems logical to see what she can do when Jon is once again on the scene. There are many questions around Young Jon. Surely, one thinks, he must be the solution. He must have been underrated before, while Irene was so busy fetching his biscuits and hot milk. As an adult there may be much more to Jon, so that his arrival

will bring a Beauty which is able to transcend the phoney world of Sibley Swan and Marjorie Ferrar. Of course one should be able to do great things with the instrument of such transcendence. Or are great things, if they exist, to be found elsewhere?

However it will all turn out, certainly Fleur has earned the right to one last effort, even if she is now Mrs. Mont, and Jon is married to an American.³

CHAPTER IV

With the opening of Swan Song we see that there have been no magical solutions to Fleur's problems. She is still sifting through vacuous (or worse) layers of modernity in an attempt to find meaning. The beliefs of previous centuries are no help to her. She tells Michael that St. Francis d'Assisi is "'just a curiosity. All those great spiritual figures are curiosities. Look at Tolstoi now, or Christ, for that matter!'" (VI, 572). Fleur is so completely disillusioned that she grasps at anyone with any conviction--even at the "complicated and unpractical, meditative and secret" (VI, 567) Indian students she now hosts in her "'bimetallic parlour'" (VI, 567). They at least believe they are serving a greater cause in India.

Both Fleur and Michael find that greater causes tend to evaporate when confronted by such modern phenomena as the Charleston. Michael finds such dancing "'the limit of vacuity'" (VI, 754) and does not understand its attraction. He cannot believe "'that this represents our Age--no beauty, no joy, no skill, not even devil--just look a fool and wobble your knees'" (VI, 755). Fleur has no such self-assurance, however. She believes that "'one can always become more vacuous'" (VI, 754). Unfortunately

for Fleur an already empty modernity cannot help her towards any shred of belief or conviction.

Vacuity is in fact the least of modernity's problems. In The White Monkey Elderson's departure exposed the rot which had crept into Soames's world of clubs and boardrooms. By Swan Song rot has taken an even greater hold on the world of gentlemen. Elderson was at least dishonest on a large scale; Stainford has been reduced to petty thievery. Soames finds Stainford and the disappearance of the snuffbox shocking. "Sneak thief! A gentleman to come to that! The Elderson affair had been bad, but somehow not pitiful like this. The whitened seams of the excellent suit, the traversing creases in the once admirable shoes, the faded tie exactly tied, were evidences of form preserved, day by day, from hand to mouth" (VI, 608). As the novel progresses Stainford debases himself still further with his excursions into bribery and forgery. The Age seems not only empty, but in decline, making any solution for Fleur's crisis of confidence all the more remote.

It is no wonder then that Fleur is dazzled by the reappearance of Jon. He seems to offer so much. Conviction is not a problem for him, and Fleur realizes this at once. "He still had his sunny look; he still believed in things" (VI, 627). It is easy for Jon to find worthwhile work, especially when the General Strike is on. He stokes an engine, and feels that there is "extraordinary pleasure

in being up against it--being in England again, doing something for England!" (VI, 598). Jon's usual business is farming; he has not written poetry since his love affair with Fleur. Yet there is still the aura of an artist about him. He is not attractive to Fleur because of a muscled torso or any amount of brawniness; what he offers is almost ethereal. When Fleur thinks of a late elopement with Jon, or at least an affair, she knows that she would be jeopardizing all "for the sake of a smile, and a scent of honeysuckle" (VI, 595). Fleur's obsession with Jon leads her back to Nature, the breeding-ground of poets. When she goes to the park she notices that "spring had not smelled so good for years. A longing for the country seized on Fleur. Grass and trees and water--her hours with Jon had been passed among them..." (VI, 623).

Jon's connections with the artistic glide into promises of still more vital forces which seem to be fulfilled in him alone. Soames cannot understand the significance of Fleur's passion because "it did not occur to him that Fleur's longing for Jon might also symbolise the craving in her blood for life, the whole of life, and nothing but life; that Jon had represented her first serious defeat in the struggle for the fulness of perfection; a defeat that might yet be wiped out" (VI, 692). This life that Jon offers would not be that of the frenetic and empty 1920s. Fleur is sure that the possession of Jon "would give

her calm and continuity" (VI, 753). In other words, Jon is the answer to the problem of vacuity.

Since Jon offers so much, and Fleur has already striven fruitlessly through two novels, The White Monkey and The Silver Spoon, some readers will feel that she is perfectly justified in running after Jon. Galsworthy, however, paints Fleur in a consistently unflattering light throughout most of Swan Song, so that all readers at some point find themselves weighing pros and cons in an attempt to make a decision about Fleur. It certainly seems easiest to take sides against her. Her obsession with Jon brings out the worst in Fleur in her dealings with other people. She unhesitatingly uses and abuses June in her quest for Jon. She visits the woman who tried to comfort her on her wedding day, because she needs any information about Jon which June may have. When she discovers that Jon is actually staying in June's house so that he and Anne may have their portraits done, she decides to try and find him while June is out of the house on an errand. "Couldn't she see him somehow just for a minute alone! That little one-eyed fanatic--for so in her thoughts Fleur looked on June--would be back directly" (VI, 751). After she succeeds in obtaining a view of Anne and Jon as they pose--they don't see her--she decides not to wait for June's return, but to leave. "Mounting to the top of her 'bus, she saw June skimming round a

corner, and thought with malicious pleasure of her disappointment--when one had been hurt, one wanted to hurt somebody" (VI, 752). Michael gets no better treatment from Fleur at this time. She is the entirely proper hostess at one of his slum meetings on the day before she plans to make her ultimate play for Jon. And she thinks: "What she willed would be accomplished, but none should know of it! And, handing her cups, she smiled, pitying the ignorance of these wise old men. They should not know, nor anyone else, least of all the young man who last night had held her in his arms" (VI, 802). Surprisingly enough, Fleur is not even very nice to Jon at times in her pursuit of him. When she meets him at Ascot she says:

'Don't talk like a pamphlet, Jon. Did you expect to see me here?'

'Yes.'

'And it didn't keep you away? How brave!'" (VI, 672).

Once Fleur believes she is winning in her quest for Jon she reveals a number of unpleasant characteristics to the reader. She finds time to show Jon around her rest house, and "she showed him the house in such a way that he might get the impression that she considered to some purpose the comfort of others....Jon went away with a tingling in his palm, and the thought: 'She likes to make herself out a butterfly, but at heart--!'" (VI, 789). After the actual act of adultery Fleur looks even less

attractive. She thinks:

He must and would conform to the one course possible--secrecy. Infidelity had been achieved--one act or many, what did it matter? Ah! But she would make up to him for the loss of self-respect with her love, and with her wisdom. She would make him a success. In spite of that American chit he should succeed with his farming, become important to his county, to his country, perhaps (VI, 819).

Even Galsworthy though does not have the heart to deny Fleur all of the reader's sympathy, especially after it becomes evident that, like June before her, she has lost her lover forever. Soames is deeply upset by Fleur's appearance when they drive together after Fleur has discovered her defeat. When she comes down to get into the car, Soames observes that "she had coated her face with powder and put salve on her lips; and again Soames was shocked by that white mask with compressed red line of mouth, and the live and tortured eyes" (VI, 841). To Soames "she looked almost old--so she would look, perhaps, when she was forty" (VI, 845). But at this point the most telling blow to any surreptitious sympathy one may have for Fleur has yet to come. In a matter of a few pages Fleur becomes responsible for her always self-sacrificing father's death. As his pictures are being evacuated from a gallery in which she inadvertently has started a fire, Soames realizes that his daughter wants to die from a blow on the head from a falling picture. He pushes her aside and takes a blow from The Vendimia--that incarnation of Fleur

in her pursuit of Jon--himself. This train of events may to many seem to drive the final nail into the coffin of the adulterous Fleur's worthlessness.

Galsworthy devotes much space to Fleur's development in Swan Song, even though it is actually Soames who must take his final departure with this volume. The book cannot suffer from even an extended focus on the Fleur-Jon difficulty, because this section of the story would have all the vigour of any conventional soap-opera, even if it had nothing else. This part of the book's plot does, however, have at least one other function besides providing a gripping Peyton Place drama. Earlier in the story of the Forsytes, in fact by the end of The Forsyte Saga, Property and Art have been linked. Where one goes, the other may follow. But these two quantities seem once again to be at odds upon examining Fleur's quest for Jon, that presumable embodiment of Art. Before she lets herself get caught up in a struggle for Jon, Fleur does have second thoughts. "Michael, Kit, her father; the solid security of virtue and possessions; the peace of mind into which she had passed of late! All jeopardised for the sake of a smile, and a scent of honeysuckle!" (VI, 595). Soames seems to see the matter in the same light. When he and Michael discuss the problem of Fleur and Jon, Soames advises his son-in-law not to have the thing out, and tries to reassure him by saying "'There's everything against it;

she knows which side her bread is buttered'" (VI, 765). When Jon arrives then, many forms of Property must go-- Kit, Soames, old friends, and a good name. It seems that Fleur's struggle to find meaning and conviction has set Property and Art at each other's throats once again, and matters are back to where they were in The Man of Property.

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Just as Fleur is seeking a remedy for the problems of Modernity in Jon, others feel the need to attack these same problems, though in different ways. Michael, June, and Soames all have their own particular approach. Michael the Parliamentarian puts his faith in social action of course--he takes on the slums. Unfortunately his slum clearance activities smack of didacticism, just as his earlier concentration on Foggartism did. Despite the liveliness of Michael's Uncle Hilary, Michael's slumming cannot hold the attention of a great number of readers.

June's activities seem more promising. Her involvement with the Rafaelite is at least on the sidelines of the Fleur and Jon confrontations, so that the reader's interest in these may tend to spill over and include June and her new artist. June is subject to new artists of course, and Galsworthy does not usually credit her with much common sense, but at this point in the story it does seem that there might be something to this latest obsession of June's. The White Monkey and The Silver Spoon

have proven to the reader that there is no substance in modern art, and this lesson (for once) has not escaped June. Her priorities seem to be in all the right places as she sings the praises of her Rafaelite. She is sure that "'he's the only man who's giving us the old values; he rediscovered them'" (VI, 645). When Michael asks June why everyone is against her artist, she tells him that it is "'because he's been through all these empty modern crazes, and come back to pure form and colour. They think he's a traitor, and call him academic'" (VI, 646). If it is still difficult to credit what June says, one can at least rely on Soames's opinion of the Rafaelite's work:

In truth he was not unfavourably impressed. The work had turned its back on modernity. The surfaces were smooth, the drawing in perspective, and the colouring full. He perceived a new note, or rather the definite revival of an old one (VI, 772).

When the Rafaelite speaks for himself he lives up to the confidence which June and Soames have placed in him. He has much perception, about both modern society at large and about those segments of modern society which pose for him. He speaks frankly with Fleur on his views of contemporary artists: "'I met a man last night who told me he'd spent four years writing twenty-two lines of poetry that nobody can understand. How's that for bathos?'" (VI, 778). Little seems to get by the Rafaelite. He tells Fleur that conscience is the platitude which will shine

through Jon's portrait; he also tells her that women are after souls. In the end he does as well with Fleur's portrait as he does with Jon's--though Fleur might not be in agreement with the final result. She tells Soames that she does not know if she approves of the face in her picture. "Something avid had come into the face as if the Rafaelite had sensed the hardening of resolve within her" (VI, 807).

There is much to be said, then, for June's latest artist. However, Galsworthy is not uncritical in his presentation of the Rafaelite. When Michael first meets him, he is not overly impressed. "The young man...rose and stood before Michael, square, somewhat lowering, with a dun-coloured complexion and heavily charged eyes" (VI, 644). When Michael takes a second look, he finds that "he did not like the face, but it had a certain epileptic quality" (VI, 645). June herself is also fair game for Galsworthy's mild disapproval. Michael does not like the Rafaelite's face, and he finds that June's face is "still young from misjudged enthusiasm" (VI, 648). It seems that June has made a valiant stab at a solution to Modernity's feeble art, but her approach is not the one Galsworthy favours.

It is Soames who will do better than either Michael or June. He has not been the reader's central concern throughout The White Monkey or The Silver Spoon, and he does not at first play a dominant role in Swan Song. He

merely takes up where he left off. By To Let he had become a slightly fussy character, very much like his austere but lovable father. He is as cranky as ever in Swan Song. When he is trying to drive through one of the mini-mob disturbances brought on by the newly initiated General Strike "the words, 'Look at the blighted plutocrat!' assailed his ears; and in attempting to see the plutocrat in question, he became aware that it was himself" (VI, 586). And this is only the beginning of his problems. An actress asks him if he can give her a lift into town. While his chauffeur grins, Soames says he can take her to Leicester Square:

Great Scott!

The young woman seemed to sense his emotion. 'You see,' she said, 'I got to get something to eat before my show.'

Moreover, she was getting in! Soames nearly got out (VI, 587).

Soames manages to restrain himself however, and even tries to make a little uncomfortable conversation. Matters go from bad to worse.

The young lady was powdering her nose now, and touching up her lips, with an almost staggering frankness.

'Suppose anyone sees me?' thought Soames. And he would never know whether anyone had or not (VI, 589).

Her exit brings Soames mixed relief.

The car moved on. Soames did not look back; in his mind the thought formed like a bubble on the surface of water: 'In the old days anyone who looked and talked like that would have left me her address.' And she hadn't! He could not decide whether or no this marked an advance (VI, 590).

Soames takes the same rather wry approach towards women even when he is on familiar ground. By Swan Song he and Annette have evolved a pleasant status quo.

To say that Soames preferred his house by the river when his wife was not there, would be a crude way of expressing a far from simple equation. He was glad to be still married to a handsome woman and a very good housekeeper, who really could not help being French and twenty-five years younger than himself. But the fact was, that when she was away from him, he could see her good points so much better than when she was not (VI, 650).

The Soames of Swan Song is not just a repeat performance of the Soames of To Let. By To Let Soames has become a decent man--his appearance is pleasant, his sense of law and order innate, and he is able to behave well around women, even Irene. He has a completely selfless love for both his father and his daughter. Such characteristics are all very creditable of course, but the Soames of Swan Song leaves them far behind as he takes a quantum leap forward. Suddenly Soames has new priorities. He finds that "with age one suffered from the feeling that one might have enjoyed things more. Cows, for instance, and rooks, and good smells. Curious how the country grew on you as you got older!" (VI, 759). Along with these new priorities, Soames begins to show signs of possessing a large understanding, an understanding that ranges beyond himself to include, besides members of his own family, people in general, and even the age. As one might expect, Fleur very soon reaps the benefits of Soames's larger

outlook. Even when she comes down to visit him at Mapledurham he does not really expect her full attention. When he finds that "her eyes looked beyond him" (VI, 656), he merely decides: "'She's not thinking of me--why should she? She's young'" (VI, 656). The Soames of Swan Song is self-sufficient enough that he does not need anyone's constant attention. He is now philosopher enough that the habits of humanity at large give him more than sufficient food for thought. While at a hotel alone he remembers

the epoch when he had been living down the disgrace of being deserted by his first wife. Curious how the injured party was always the one in disgrace! People admired immorality, however much they said they didn't. The deserted husband, the deserted wife, were looked on as poor things. Was it due to some thing still wild in human nature, or merely to reaction against the salaried morality of judges and parsons, and so forth?...The fact was, people took the protection of the law and secretly disliked it because it was protective. The same thing with taxes--you couldn't do without them, but you avoided paying them when you could (VI, 758).

There is little bitterness in this rumination. If Soames had allowed his sensibilities to be curdled, he could never rise to the height of making an astute judgment on the Age itself.¹ At one point Soames wonders why Fleur has changed the style of her drawing room:

Just for the sake of change, he supposed. These young people had no continuity; some microbe in the blood--of the 'idle rich,' and the 'idle poor,' and everybody else, so far as he could see. Nobody could be got to stay anywhere--not even in their graves, judging by all those seances. If only people would attend quietly to their business, even to that of being dead! They had such an appetite for living, that they had no life (VI, 677).

To some extent these evidences of Soames's wide understanding prepare the reader for the last phase of Soames's quantum leap forward, which is his visit to the Forsytes' ancestral lands. It is during this visit that he finds ultimate understanding and peace of mind. The site of the old house begins to work on him at once.

Had his forbears themselves built the house there in this lonely place--been the first to seat themselves on this bit of windswept soil? And something moved in him, as if the salty independence of that lonely spot were still in his bones. Old Jolyon and his own father and the rest of his uncles--no wonder they'd been independent, with this air and loneliness in their blood; and crabbed with the pickling of it--unable to give up, to let go, to die. For a moment he seemed to understand even himself (VI, 829).

He imagines life as it was for the primeval Forsytes.

There'd be the church and your Bible, he supposed, and the market some miles away, and you'd work and eat and sleep and breathe the air and drink your cider and embrace your wife and watch your children, from June to June; and a good thing, too! What more did you do now that brought you any satisfaction? 'Change, it's all on the surface,' thought Soames; 'the roots are the same. You can't get beyond them--try as you will!' (VI, 830).

The effect of Soames's vision of life's essentials is immediately evident. He is now calm enough that, unlike any other true Forsyte, he is able to face his own death. When he visits Winchester cathedral soon after his effort at probing Forsyte origins, he decides

There was continuity, but it was always changing. That was why it seemed to him extremely unlikely that he would live after he was dead. He had read somewhere ...that life was just animated shape, and that when shape was broken it was no longer animated. Death broke your shape and there you were, he supposed. The

fact was, people couldn't bear their own ends; they tried to dodge them with soft sawder. They were weak-minded (VI, 834).

An integral part of this metamorphosis which Soames has undergone is his stripping of life to its essentials. When he decides that it might be enough just to breathe the air, work, and watch your children, he has in effect turned his back on Victorian Materialism--the cause which inspired his uncles to such labours--and embraced a Wordsworthian primitivism as an ideal existence which offers answers to the quandries of Modernity in its search for meaning. While a particular lifestyle is never, in itself, Art, surely Soames's new ideal life is conducive to Art. Soames, then, has found his solution to the frenzy of post-war existence in an aesthetic and classically simple way of life.

Perhaps part of the reason that Michael's socialist activities in the slums seem nothing but didactic, and so much dead wood in the total context of Swan Song, is that Michael cannot include art in his answer to the problems of the masses. He can give his slum dwellers comfortable quarters, but he cannot give them a sense of Beauty. Michael's Uncle Hilary annually sees that "twenty little Augustinians... are taken in a covered motor van for a fortnight among flowers in a state of nature" (VI, 681). But, as Michael's Aunt May explains to him, Hilary's efforts to show his parishioners the country, are wasted.

'And d'you know what they'll say when they come back after their fortnight? "Oh! yes, we liked it all very much, thank you, but it was rather slow. We like the streets better." Every year it's the same' (VI, 682).

June, like Hilary, is a crusader for Beauty. She has myriads of good intentions, but perhaps the reason that Galsworthy does not favour her Rafaelite as the answer is that June does not have Soames's discrimination. Throughout his life Soames has always known what art to collect, and the very end of his life is a triumphant affirmation of the value of selectivity, when he realizes the value of "eat and sleep and breathe the air and drink your cider and embrace your wife". It is doubtful if the helter-skelter June, who was as warmly appreciative of Vospovitch's "Jupiter" (that "lamppost bent by collision with a motor omnibus" (III, 637)) as she is of her Rafaelite's work--it is doubtful if June will ever have the insight necessary to arrive at Soames's appreciation of simplicity.

Soames, then, has the real trump card when it comes to the quandaries of Modernity. It is worth noting that Soames has come to his ultimate answer to Modernity through one form of Property at least--through the "bit of windswept soil" which was the site of the oldest Forsyte homestead. Also, the simple life which Soames envisions his ancestors carrying on, would not have been possible if the old Forsytes had not had their own freehold.

Soames's experience is the exact opposite of his daughter's, it seems. In Fleur's struggle for Jon, she has found that Property is the adversary of Art. She cannot have Jon and her son, her father, her friends, and her good name. Either Soames or Fleur must be operating under false premises. Somewhere there is a mistake.

*

It is Fleur who has made the mistake. She never was able to see every aspect of Jon. In To Let she was infatuated with him--despite his overdone naivete and a mother who coddled him. Even in To Let it was clear to the reader that Jon probably could not become a successful artist in the modern era. He lacked the necessary originality and strength of mind. None of these failings were obvious to Fleur though. As far as she was concerned, Jon would always be perfection incarnate. This initial mistaken perception leads Fleur to make the great error of A Modern Comedy. By Swan Song she is convinced that all will become magically right in her life if she can only seduce Jon. The act of love with him will be bliss in itself, and must lead to still better things.

Of course the great seduction scene is nothing but a disappointment to Fleur. After Jon has "like one demented, rushed back into the coppice" (VI, 811) and abandoned her, "Fleur still sat there, numbed. This--fulfilment! The fulfilment she had dreamed of? A few moments of hasty and

delirious passion--and this!" (VI, 812). So viewed in the short term, the seduction is manifestly a failure. It is as much a failure in the long run. Despite Fleur's best efforts, Jon's last letter explains: "'I have promised...not to see you again. Forgive me and forget me, as I must forget you'" (VI, 822).

Why is it that the seduction does not meet Fleur's expectations? One could argue that it is because of Jon's conscience, or because of the astute dealings of Anne. But Galsworthy does not award a great deal of space to Jon and his presumable heart searchings in Swan Song. He chooses instead to concentrate on Fleur, so much so that Jon almost cannot be considered a fully rounded character. He is just the brass ring which motivates Fleur's actions, and can a brass ring have the infinite qualms of conscience of which Jon is supposed to be capable? Perhaps it is Anne then, who spoils Fleur's game. But she does not rate any great amount of space from Galsworthy either, and what we do see of her seems rather dull. In this crisis of her marriage she does not contemplate any dramatic confrontations with Fleur. Instead she is out of commission because of a cold. "Her cold was in the bronchial stage, so that she was still upstairs, and tense from lack of occupation" (VI, 785). As one critic notes, Anne's one effort at drama, her announcement of her pregnancy, falls rather flat.² It is not Anne, or Jon's conscience, that

rocks the boat for Fleur.

Surely Fleur's problem with her great seduction is that Jon is not what she thinks he is. She may want "life, the whole of life, and nothing but life" (VI, 692), but Jon cannot give her something so large. He is too narrow and circumscribed a "character" in Swan Song to provide Fleur with anything on a grand scale. He is far too limited to be the embodiment of all Art. Fleur has fallen in love with her own mistaken perceptions of Jon, not with a real man. There is no solution to a turbulent Modernity in Jon, and if he was never Art, Property and Art were never adversaries. Soames's experience, in which a "bit of windswept soil" has led him to life's aesthetic essentials, is not therefore founded on any mistaken premise such as deluded Fleur. It is Soames then, the once despised Man of Property, who is closer to Beauty than any other character by the end of Swan Song--he is closer than Michael, June, or even his own daughter.

And it seems that this additional degree of enlightenment carries with it its own responsibilities. Fleur has risked everything in her quest for Jon--her stable life with Michael and Kit, her various salons and social activities, and most of all her peace of mind. And, although she cannot in the end possess Jon, by Swan Song's conclusion she stands a very good chance, if someone does not intervene, of suffering all the penalties of actual

possession. Soames sees that her "adventure" has reduced her to a "white mask with compressed red line of mouth, and...live and tortured eyes" (VI, 841)--clearly her failure has already cost her all of the inner contentment she had so carefully tried to develop during the years that Jon spent in America. Indeed this final setback has devastated her more than her initial affair with Jon in To Let was ever able to do. Her father realizes this on the night of the fire when he sees her stand motionless beneath a picture which must fall--"it flashed through Soames that she wanted to be killed" (VI, 853). Although it is not as obvious at this moment, whether or not Fleur will stay married to Michael, remain mother of Kit, and will ever again act as hostess at South Square, is as much in doubt as whether she can live with a cracked skull. Michael is too perceptive a Parliamentarian not to realize, when he next sees his wife, that something has gone on. He has already suffered much from Fleur's tendencies to infidelity, and why should he suffer more? There is no reason for further suffering in silence until Soames has given his life for his daughter.

Michael has more than enough innate decency to ensure that Soames's sacrifice for Fleur will not be in vain. Even when he has discovered the facts of Fleur's affair from Holly, Michael does not feel outraged or vengeful.

He had got his second wind. Whether he would have, but for Soames's death, he did not know. It was as if, by lying in that shadowy corner under a crab-apple tree, 'old Forsyte' were still protecting his beloved. For her, Michael felt nothing but compassion. The bird had been shot with both barrels, and still lived; no one with any sporting instinct could hurt it further. Nothing for it but to pick her up and mend the wings as best he could. (VI, 871).

Fleur is as affected by her father's accident as is Michael, and in a similarly beneficial way. The accident has finally cured her of her obsession for Jon. "Passion and fever had quite died out of her. It was as if, with his infallible instinct where she was concerned, Soames had taken the one step that could rid her of the fire which had been consuming her" (VI, 863). Things even look hopeful now for Fleur. When Michael tells his father that he's worried about Fleur, because something has broken, Bart replies:

'That happens to most of us, before we're thirty. Some spring or other goes; but presently we get our second winds. It's what happened to the Age--something broke and it hasn't yet got its second wind. But it's getting it, and so will she' (VI, 867).

Soames has lived up to the challenge and managed to save the day, not only for Fleur, but possibly for the Age. Soames has proven to be a good steward of the Beauty to which he earned a proximity.

Of course there is still the question of whether or not Fleur and her Age are worth redeeming. Fleur especially has looked particularly bad in Swan Song. In this volume she has used and deceived those around her; she has also been hypocritical and ambitious. Yet there

may be more in Fleur than the man-chasing Socialite. It is interesting that her efforts towards acquiring Jon seem to materialize either as art itself, or as something connected to art. When she is in purdah over her son's case of measles her longing for Jon grows as she remains inactive. She wonders:

Were they never to eat of the golden apple--she and Jon? Was it to hang there, always out of reach--amid dark, lustrous leaves, quite unlike an apple-tree's? She took out her old water-colour box...and coloured a fantastic tree with large golden fruits (VI, 696).

Michael does not see the connection between Fleur's water-colour and Jon, but Soames is more astute. He sees the painting in Michael's study, and is both impressed and worried.

Really he had no idea that she could use water-colour as well as that! She was a clever little thing! And he put the drawing up on end where he could see it better! Apple? Passion-fruit, he would have said, of an exaggerated size. Thoroughly uneatable--they had a glow like lanterns. Forbidden fruit! Eve might have given them to Adam. Was this thing symbolic? Did it fancifully reveal her thoughts? (VI, 738).

This is not the only connection which Fleur's quest for Jon has with art. Fleur has worn her Goya dress for Jon before her marriage--and she wears it once more as a married woman when she attends the fancy dress ball at the Nettlefold hotel. Unknown to her, Soames is also present, and is as observant as ever.

What! Over there! Fleur! Fleur in her Goya dress, grape-coloured--'La Vendimia--the Vintage'--floating

out from her knees, with her face close to the face of a sheik, and his face close to hers (VI, 761).

Imitating her Goya look-alike seems to be a necessary part of Fleur's pursuit of Jon.

Finally it is Soames himself who blunders into the equation of Fleur and the century's current artists. When he is searching desperately for conversation to cover the void of Fleur's defeat, he begins to declaim on the state of modern painting. He says that the war brought in ugliness.

'I won't say,' continued Soames, 'that it hadn't begun before. I remember the first shows in London of those post-impressionists and early Cubist chaps. But they ran riot with the war, catching at things they couldn't get.'

He stopped. It was exactly what she--! (VI, 845-6).

Fleur is not just a frustrated Socialite then. She, not Jon, is the Artist, and surely the Artist is worth redeeming. Fleur, like the earlier Soames of The Forsyte Saga, has consistently been underestimated.

CONCLUSION

Hopefully this detailed analysis of The Forsyte Saga and A Modern Comedy has completely dispelled any negative impressions of Soames. By Swan Song the villain of The Man of Property has become the Saviour, and Soames has accomplished more than Wilfred Desert, Aubrey Greene or any of June's arty proteges. The Soames of Swan Song has long ago eclipsed Young Jolyon, the one-time rival, and has become infinitely more selfless than Irene, the one-time wife.

The beloved object of Soames's new self-sacrificing endeavours, Fleur, also looks better as the Saga marches on. In To Let she is condemned as possessing a "having" nature, yet it turns out that such a temperament is not necessarily antithetical to Beauty. By The White Monkey and The Silver Spoon Fleur has become the chief focal point of the Saga, and she does well in the spotlight. Despite her frivolous and dead-end surroundings she is a survivor, and surely she earns her second chance at Jon, no matter how adulterous circumstances force her to be. Adulteress or not, by Swan Song Fleur has become the Artist, and has finally, through her father's efforts, been purged of her obsession for Jon.

As Soames's and his daughter's stars have risen,

the place of property and possessiveness has become more and more admirable. At the start of the six novels Property, through its devoted agent Soames, was the oppressor of everything artistic. But as the novels wear on, it is evident that Beauty, Art, and Property are actually partners--only as a team can all three survive in a fluctuating Modernity inhabited by such creatures as Elderson and Stainford.

Modernity would have looked turbulent enough, even if Galsworthy had confined himself to chronicling the ramifications of "such factors as the invention of bicycle, motor-car, and flying-machine; the arrival of a cheap Press; the decline of country life and increase of the towns; the birth of the Cinema."¹ As Galsworthy notes though, he had "no scientific study of a period"² in mind. Instead, he had more difficult aims to fulfil. His Forsyte novels trace the moral decline of the entire English panorama after the War. Such symptoms as Elderson and Stainford are harder to confront than the twentieth-century influx of cars, newspapers, and movies, no matter how noisy the latter.

In the end, then, Galsworthy has managed to have his cake and eat it too. He was sure that man's artistic urges would lead him to harmony--and by Swan Song it is apparent that this harmony need not exclude the comfortable Forsyte world to which Galsworthy was used. The Artist must

not starve in a garret, eschewing Forsyte orderliness and prosperity. The true Artist should take his stand in the ranks of what few Forsytes remain to face the post-war world, and all should stand shoulder to shoulder if there is to be any hope of staying afloat in the flux of Cubism, Poundism, Dadaism, and such other assorted currents. Perhaps some will argue that Galsworthy wanted to convince himself that Property and Art were such agreeable companions--he could ill afford to have them get along in any other way.

At any rate, by the last pages of Swan Song, Galsworthy seems, consciously or unconsciously, to have convinced himself that all was well in both the world of Property and of Art. It is a pity that he could not have died content at the end of Swan Song, with all forces resolved, instead of going on to repeat themes and introduce less powerful characters in End of the Chapter.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

¹For example Catherine Dupre says of The White Monkey: "The final result is a rather confused novel, with too many disconnected plots and ideas...messy and without direction...," John Galsworthy (London: Collins, 1976), p. 264. Similarly, Dupre characterizes The Silver Spoon as "the rather trivial adventures of Soames's daughter, Fleur," Ibid., p. 271.

²"The Forsyte Saga Reconsidered: The Case of the Common Reader Versus Literary Criticism," Western Humanities Review, XXIV (1970), 221-29.

³Virginia Woolf, who felt that the public would believe anything, is a prime example, "Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown," The Captain's Death Bed and Other Essays (London: Hogarth Press, 1950), pp. 90-111.

⁴"Galsworthy: The Paradox of Realism," English Literature in Transition, XIII (1970), 288-95.

⁵John Galsworthy, p. 246.

⁶Culture and Anarchy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), pp. 146-7.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

¹Quotation taken from David L. Higdon, "John Galsworthy's The Man of Property: 'Now in the Natural Course of Things,'" English Literature in Transition, XXI (1971), 154.

²A passage from Dorothy Easton's Unpublished Memoir of John Galsworthy suggests that this process of change may have been unconscious: "He [Soames] came to life, and started changing in his [Galsworthy's] hands....I had to follow him," Galsworthy said. Quotation taken from C. Dupre, John Galsworthy, p. 251.

³John Galsworthy, The Forsyte Saga (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), p. 7. The Forsyte Saga includes numbers I, II and III of the Forsyte novels. A Modern Comedy (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956) includes numbers

IV, V and VI of the Forsyte novels. All subsequent quotations from the Forsyte novels will be cited in the text as book and page number.

⁴Probably Marchant would not agree that anything about Young Jolyon is positive, "The Forsyte Saga Reconsidered." Marchant is apparently one of Young Jolyon's most forthright critics.

⁵Dupre writes, "Young Jolyon, the good man, is a pale character. He was envisaged at this stage as a 'commentator' running through the trilogy which Galsworthy suggested in his letter to Garnett, and this indeed is his role in this first book of the sequence [i.e. The Man of Property, The Country House, Fraternity, The Patrician]," John Galsworthy, p. 112.

⁶Marchant notes Young Jolyon's pity for Bosinney, who is a total stranger to him, and his lack of sympathy for his own broken hearted daughter, "The Forsyte Saga Reconsidered," 226.

⁷D. H. Lawrence goes so far as to say that all cast members of the Forsyte novels are poseurs, "John Galsworthy," Selected Literary Criticism, ed. Anthony Beal (London: Mercury Books, 1964), p. 124.

⁸Marchant complains that Galsworthy's prose is often flabby and his imagery absurd. He takes particular exception to Galsworthy's personifications of Spring, with the attention paid to women's clothes, breasts, lips and scent, "The Forsyte Saga Reconsidered," 221.

⁹H. C. Duffin, "The Rehabilitation of Soames Forsyte," Cornhill Magazine, LXVIII (1930), 399.

¹⁰June M. Frazer goes into some detail on the "variety of curious devices" which Galsworthy uses to report the meetings of Bosinney and Irene, "Galsworthy's Narrative Technique in The Man of Property," English Literature in Transition, XIX (1971), 17.

¹¹For example, Marchant, "The Forsyte Saga Reconsidered," 225.

¹²Quotation taken from Dupre, John Galsworthy, p. 273.

¹³"The Forsyte Saga Reconsidered," 224.

¹⁴"Galsworthy: The Paradox of Realism," 288-9.

¹⁵Ibid., 293.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

¹It should be noted, incidently, that Galsworthy frequently makes use of canine imagery.

²Duffin attempts to extenuate Soames's actions in this connection, "The Rehabilitation of Soames Forsyte," 400.

³Duffin feels that "only a sentimentalist would have chosen otherwise," Ibid.

⁴See book III, p. 760.

⁵Dupre, John Galsworthy, p. 250.

⁶In his Preface to The Forsyte Saga for example, Galsworthy puts in several good words for Irene and Jolyon: A criticism one might pass on the last phase of the Saga is the complaint that Irene and Jolyon--those rebels against property--claim spiritual property in their son Jon. But it would be hypercriticism as the tale is told. No father and mother could have let the boy marry Fleur without knowledge of the facts; and the facts determine Jon, not the persuasion of his parents. Moreover, Jolyon's persuasion is not on his own account, but on Irene's, and Irene's persuasion becomes a reiterated: 'Don't think of me, think of yourself!' That Jon, knowing the facts, can realise his mother's feelings, can hardly with justice be held proof that she is, after all, a Forsyte (The Forsyte Saga, p. ix).

⁷Duffin notes this, "The Rehabilitation of Soames Forsyte," 401.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

¹Dupre for one, John Galsworthy, p. 264 and p. 271.

²See book IV, pp. 191-2.

³Duffin would disagree with my belief that Fleur is within her rights in pursuing the married Jon, "The Rehabilitation of Soames Forsyte," 402.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

¹Duffin notes this instance of Soames's abilities as a diagnostician, "The Rehabilitation of Soames Forsyte," 405.

²Ibid., 404.

NOTES TO CONCLUSION

¹The Forsyte Saga, p. viii.

²Ibid.

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