EPISTEMOLOGICAL PROVISIONALITY AS A GENERIC FEATURE

OF THE BRITISH NOVEL

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Abstract

This thesis attempts to identify a particular epistemological stance as a trans-historical generic feature of the British novel, seeking theoretical commonalities across readings of four novelistic texts. Drawing upon conventional critical reliance on realism as a definitive feature of the novel, chapter one examines the dialectical interplay of empiricism and scepticism in the intellectual climate and public discourse of eighteenth-century Britain as an influence on realistic literary modes and proposes that the novel as a genre is preoccupied with problems of epistemology. Chapter two considers Jane Barker's Galesia trilogy as an example of novelistic engagement with a common theme in the empiricism/scepticism dialectic: the epistemological complications entailed by individual subjectivity. Barker's thematic emphases on uncertainty, multiplicity, and fallenness coincide with a generically entrenched, and thus novelistic, orientation toward open-endedness and unfinalizability, as articulated in the work of Mikhail Bakhtin. Chapter three associates realism with mimesis, a figure whose tendency toward duplicity and reversibility align it with Jacques Derrida's concept of *pharmakon*. Mimesis-as-*pharmakon* is considered in the context of Tobias Smollett's *The Adventures of Roderick Random*. Chapter four shifts critical focus to contemporary fiction -- Martin Amis's *Money: A Suicide Note* -- and examines how postmodernist literary techniques, particularly the metafictional inclusion of an author figure, reiterate the novelistic portrayal and exemplification of epistemological provisionality that underlies eighteenth-century texts. Chapter five, with analysis of Ian McEwan's *Saturday* and reference to the philosophy of Iris Murdoch, suggests that the problems of knowledge entailed by situated individual subjectivity, as represented by the novel,

privilege a corresponding ethical posture of deference and openness to the other. In an afterword, these ethical implications are extended to suggest a possible political significance to the genre.

Acknowledgements

Whatever merit I might claim for this thesis I owe in part to the kind assistance of my supervisor, Dr Mark Robson, who, in addition to patiently executing the usual duties of such a position, was unrivalled in his ability to decipher what I meant when I could articulate nascent ideas with little more than mixed metaphors and wild gesticulations. I would also like to express my gratitude to my friends and colleagues at the University of Nottingham, in particular the academic and support staff and the postgraduate students of the Department of English Studies, whose generosity and scholarship have been reliable sources of encouragement and inspiration throughout my postgraduate studies. Further, I would like to recognize the contributions of the Conley and Anderson-McBride families, whose material, emotional, and intellectual support have been indispensable to this project. Above all I thank my wife, Elyse, for more than can be put into words.

Contents

Preface

The substance of this thesis is wide-ranging and somewhat eclectic, and so a remark on methodology is due. My aim is not to provide a complete image of the novel, a task better suited to a character from Borges, but rather to assemble a diverse collection of propositions about the novel in Britain and its contexts and to seek out connections, influences, and resemblances within that collection.[1] The underlying assumption of such a project is that the various historians, theoreticians, and philosophers whose work contributes to the study are all considering more or less the same thing. In other words, this thesis begins with a double leap of faith, presupposing that 'the novel' exists, and that when people talk about the novel, they are discussing either a coherent entity or at least complementary, overlapping concepts. These propositions are by no means certain, and to interrogate them is a worthy goal. Here, however, the existence and potential self-identity of the novel will be axiomatic.

This presumption of the novel's self-identity has also guided the selection of the fictional texts that come under analysis here as examples of novels. If these fictions *are* novels, they should be amenable to the application of the theoretical and descriptive frameworks that have been created with novels in mind. There is consequently a degree of arbitrariness in the selection of novels to be analyzed -- any novel, to the extent that it is a novel, should do. Nevertheless, the limited length of the thesis, not to mention the limited research capacity of a lone postgraduate, requires a small sample of texts, and so the diversity of

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[1] It is beyond the remit of this study to take into account the traditions of Continental novels, which involve distinct but not altogether independent interactions with their respective social, intellectual, and historical contexts.

such a sample is its principal strength. As such, the four novels considered here are distinct from each other both in technique and historical context. All of them resist, to some extent, definitions of the novel drawn from a nineteenth-century Realist template. A hostile critic could excommunicate them all: the first is strictly not a single text at all; the second could be considered a European-style picaresque; the third is an unrealistic assemblage of postmodernist wordplay; and the fourth, with its spare characterization and genre-fiction plot, is an overgrown short story. However, precisely because of the pressures they exert on prescriptive definitions, these texts provide useful instantiations of the novel, or -- as I will resort to writing many times in the coming pages in order to dissociate genre from form -- the 'novelistic' mode.[2]

This is why I have made the decision to overlook the nineteenth-century novel. The fictions I have selected function as outliers, helping to establish the perimeter of the novelistic field, as it were, in a way that an indisputably prototypical novel might not. This is not to claim that nineteenth-century fiction is irrelevant to the theorization of the novel, quite the contrary. The majority of the critical and theoretical materials on the novel that support this thesis rely, whether explicitly or implicitly, on nineteenth-century models. In this thesis, therefore, I am interested in how well those conceptions of the novel might be applied beyond their prototypical foundations. Again, to the extent that the fictions under consideration *are* novels, such theorizations should apply. The emphases and continuities that arise in the course of this application are the focus of the thesis.

The secondary sources are themselves a diverse collection, but their diversity is not intended to suggest seamless integration. No single

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[2] Further comment on the instrumentality of these fictions to the overall aims of the thesis can be found in the opening paragraphs of the respective chapters.

field of academic endeavour is host to tranquil unanimity, and to make leaps between them as I do -- sampling, for example, literary historicism, post-structuralism, and ethical philosophy -- is undeniably to take liberties. However, the aim of my eclecticism is not to reconstruct these approaches, to contest them, to pit one against another, or even to claim to reconcile them. Instead I attempt to sketch a sort of cross-section of statements that can be made about the novel, constrained by a concern with generic identity and its epistemological consequences, and to extrapolate from this disparate composite a flexible generalization. As in the selection of literary sources, this method explores connections within variety rather than attempting comprehensiveness, with the objective of plausibility rather than certainty.

In sum, the method of this thesis is to seek out the entailments of a proposition: if we assume that the novel as it has been theorized is 'real', what might its presence reveal about the way humans understand experience (or perhaps experience understanding)? I hope, therefore, to make some small contribution to the ongoing dialogue about what the novel is, and in doing so perhaps also to make a gesture toward the importance of literary generic concerns in cultural currents that extend beyond literature.

Chapter 1

A real genre: Identifying the novel

As syntheses of prescription and description, definitions tend toward circularity. Such certainly is the case with definitions of the novel, which arise from the characteristics of the very texts they classify. To posit generic traits requires tracing the commonalities between particular novels, and so defining the novel begins only after some provisional drawing of boundaries is already in effect. (Indeed, using the definite article -- '*the* novel' -- already betrays such presumption.) The result is a pervasive sense that novels are always slightly beyond the scope of full delineation. *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, for example, introduces its entry for 'novel' with more qualification than definition: a novel is 'nearly always an extended fictional prose narrative, although some novels are very short, some are non-fictional, some have been written in verse, and some do not even tell a story'.[1]

While difficult to contest, such an inclusive formal designation, laden with caveats, allows a very broad swath of imaginative literature (two more problematic terms) to fall into the category of novel. However, by addressing the historical development of the genre, one may confront the perennial question of what the novel is with consideration of *why* the novel is.[2] This is the approach of Ian Watt in his now canonical examination of early English novels, *The Rise of the Novel*. Watt works to

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[1] Chris Baldick, 'Novel', in *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University, 2008). Marthe Robert discusses the problem of defining the novel with reference to dictionaries as well as criticism; see 'From *Origins of the Novel*', in *Theory of the Novel: A Historical Approach*, ed. by Michael McKeon (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, 2000), pp. 57-69.

[2] Another note on terminology: for the purposes of this study, novels -- or 'the novel' -- will be considered to constitute a 'genre'.

place the eighteenth-century English novel into its cultural context. He notes the burgeoning of the middle class in this era and an attendant shift in their lifestyles toward greater literacy and leisure time. Watt writes that this amounts to a 'change in the centre of gravity of the reading public' that, though checked to some degree by barriers of education, economy, and class, was in the eighteenth century broader and more interested than ever before in the sort of experience novel-reading offered.[3] Furthermore, Watt notes that as the stimulus for literary production shifted from patronage to the more enterprising tastes of booksellers, the novel's 'copious particularity of description and explanation' made it an attractive commodity, both to authors and to entrepreneurs.[4]

Perhaps more interesting from a theoretical standpoint is the congruence Watt finds between the early novel and the increasing rationalism and empiricism of European thought in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The work of Descartes and Locke, writes Watt, initiated a strain of 'philosophical realism' that provided the cultural and intellectual background against which novels began to take shape:

> The general temper of philosophical realism has been critical, anti-traditional and innovating; its method has been the study of the particulars of experience by the individual investigator, who, ideally at least, is free from the body of past assumptions and traditional beliefs; and it has given a peculiar importance to semantics, to the problem of the nature of the correspondence between words and reality.[5]

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[3] Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (London: Pimlico, 1957), p. 48. Unless otherwise specified, references to Watt pertain to this text.
[4] Watt, p. 56.
[5] Watt, p. 12.

(The concerns of philosophical realism will come under consideration again later in this chapter.) What is crucial to Watt's discussion is that this intellectual current manifests itself in a literary counterpart -- the 'formal realism' typical of the novel. Formal realism is an individual and particularized 'circumstantial view of life' aiming for 'a full and authentic report of human experience'.[6] Watt points out the penchant in earlier forms of prose fiction to identify characters with romantically exotic or blatantly typological labels, like Bunyan's Apollyon and Christian. By the eighteenth century, this practice had changed to favour ordinary proper names like Defoe's Robinson Crusoe. Naming characters this way indicates 'that they were to be regarded as particular individuals in the contemporary social environment'.[7] The settings in which these more particularized characters moved also reflected a similar trend. Watt writes that novels portray time with an organizing temporality more attuned to historicity and causality than the conception of time underlying earlier fiction.[8] Space, too, becomes particularized in novelistic fiction; Watt cites Defoe's 'solidity of setting', Richardson's descriptive detail, and Henry Fielding's topographical accuracy.[9] Emphasis on the particular arises within various literary traditions, but it is in eighteenth-century England, especially in the work of Defoe and Richardson, that Watt sees it become a stance consistent enough to identify the novel as a genre.

In his penultimate chapter, Watt makes a brief but significant mention of two subcategories of formal realism, differentiating between 'realism of presentation' and 'realism of assessment'. In the former, typified for Watt by Richardson's *Clarissa*, 'we shall be wholly immersed in the reality of the characters and their actions'; in the latter, for which Watt

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[6] Watt, p. 32.
[7] Watt, pp. 18-19.
[8] Watt, pp. 21-25.
[9] Watt, pp. 26-27.

praises Fielding's *Tom Jones*, the reader encounters 'a responsible wisdom about human affairs'.[10] In an article published just over a decade after *The Rise of the Novel*, Watt explains that considerations of length led him to omit a great deal of his discussion on realism of assessment, which originally was to serve as a counterpart to the material exactitude of realism of presentation.[11] In *The Rise of the Novel* as it stands, realism of presentation takes precedence as a feature of the novel; it is this trope which is 'typical of the novel genre as a whole'.[12] However, the inclusion, even as something of an auxiliary, of the more nebulous realism of assessment allows for a much more porously bounded genre than much of Watt's analysis implies. If a kind of sagacious insight into the human condition may constitute a species of literary realism, then Watt's formal realism is not necessarily the painstaking reportage of the minutiae of setting and character, but rather an ethos of faith to the reality of subjective experience, both social and individual.

Watt defines the novel by its characteristic process -- building an 'air of total authenticity' -- and as such, the identity of the novel hinges on an effect, something that it *does*.[13] In Watt's view, 'the novel's realism does not reside in the kind of life it presents but in the way it presents it'.[14] Locating a specifically novelistic class of realism not in textual features but in the impressions they may produce has important consequences. It makes the designation 'novel' into an interpretive judgment about the holistic effect of a given text, a qualitative and

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[10] Watt, p. 288. C.S. Lewis makes a similar, and roughly contemporary, distinction between realism of presentation, 'the art of bringing something close to us, making it palpable and vivid, by sharply observed or sharply imagined detail', and realism of content, the state of being 'probable or "true to life"'; see *An Experiment in Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1961; repr. 1965), pp. 57, 59.

[11] Ian Watt, 'Serious Reflections on *The Rise of the Novel*', *Novel*, 1.3 (1968), 205-218 (p. 207).

[12] Watt, p. 294.

[13] Watt, p. 32.

[14] Watt, p. 11.

hermeneutic evaluation rather than a quantitative tally of particular concepts, tropes, or idioms. The desire to faithfully portray reality might manifest in a meticulous representation of material detail -- Watt's realism of presentation -- but this is only one artistic outcome of such attempted faithfulness. That is to say, realism in general, which is ultimately an intentional or interpretive category, should not be equated unilaterally with Realism, which is a more restrictive category of artistic techniques. Watt sees the potential for such a fallacy, and more than once he distinguishes the formal realism that typifies the novel from its concentrated expression in nineteenth-century Realism and Naturalism. In Watt's view, the formal realism of the novel is not limited to one particular artistic movement, and resides 'as much in Joyce as in Zola'.[15]

So although the Modernism of the twentieth century relies upon different methods than those of a quintessentially Realist narrative, it nevertheless may culminate in a formally realistic, and by extension novelistic, result. Watt's account of the novel's 'rise' is, in essence, a retrospective consideration of the rise of realism as a central aesthetic in British prose fiction. It has proven to be a productive critical landmark against which subsequent generic discussions of the novel orientate themselves. Just a few years after *The Rise of the Novel*, Wayne C. Booth writes in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* of 'realisms', and he parallels Watt's realism of presentation and assessment with a fourfold subdivision of his own: realism of 'subject matter'; 'structure'; 'narrative technique'; and 'purpose or function or effect'.[16] The last of these four encompasses the work of those authors 'for whom realism is a means to other ends', presumably overlapping with Watt's realism of assessment.[17] Also like

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[15] Watt, p. 32.
[16] Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, 2nd edn (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 1983), pp. 55-57.
[17] Booth, p. 57.

Watt, Booth invokes Modernism as an example of how authors reach reality by diverse routes. The result is a 'mass of conflicting claims [...] clustering about the term "reality"'.[18] Though he acknowledges that Watt does not equate realism with artistic superiority, Booth warns that critical reliance upon a single general criterion can become inadvertently totalizing and prescriptive. He voices a popular opinion when he contends that 'Ian Watt's all-pervasive assumption is that "realism of presentation" is a good thing in itself', noting specifically Watt's apparent distaste for Fielding's narratorial interventions in *Tom Jones* and *Joseph Andrews*.[19] Booth seeks to resist the dogmatism that might creep into a theorization of genre, and consequently he avoids any overt statements of definition, allowing the novel to stand as an unformulated prototype of prose fiction in general.

Margaret Anne Doody, in *The True Story of the Novel*, expands the sense implied by Booth -- that is, that too strict an adherence to generic definitions leads to arbitrary critical restriction -- into an organizing critical principle in its own right. She asserts in her preface that 'the concept of "Romance" as distinct from "Novel" has outworn its usefulness, and that at its most useful it created limitations and encouraged blind spots'.[20] For Doody, a novel is simply 'forty or more pages' of prose fiction. To further broaden the field she adds, 'If anybody has called a work a novel at any time, that is sufficient'.[21] Consistent with such an expansive view, she dismisses realism as a generic marker; it 'has often prevented British and American critics from taking a good square look at the Novel'.[22] More than just an unfortunate narrowing of focus, the reliance upon realism of

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[18] Booth, p. 55.
[19] Booth, p. 41.
[20] Margaret Anne Doody, *The True Story of the Novel* (London: Fontana, 1998), p. xvii.
[21] Doody, p. 10. John Richetti remarks in a review that in Doody's reckoning a novel is 'any work she decides to call a novel'; *The American Historical Review*, 103.1 (1998) 137-138 (p. 137).
[22] Doody, p. 15.

presentation as a mark of artistic merit -- a practice Doody calls Prescriptive Realism -- is tantamount to a conspiracy of ignorance. It was 'invented by the English as an efficient excuse for shedding the tradition' of ancient Mediterranean narratives.[23] Realism is a 'trick', a mask for imperialism, misogyny, and ethnocentrism. In Doody's view it is a prop for 'asserting a manifest destiny to govern and exploit other peoples', and the theory of a 'rise of the novel' is integral to this scheme.[24]

At this point it should be stipulated that in *The Rise of the Novel* Watt does indeed distinguish between Realism as an artistic movement and a more general realism as a novelistic feature; however, he does so without great emphasis. This makes possible a reading of Watt as dogmatically and teleologically attached to realism of presentation, an interpretation that from Booth onward has aroused varying degrees of scorn among Watt's contemporaries and successors. Yet such a distinction is of only marginal importance to Watt's overall agenda; he need only define novelistic realism to the extent that its connections to the wider contexts of literary production and to modern understandings of the genre become clear. For Doody, whose own critical project calls for a virtually universal scope, such a distinction is indispensable, and thus it receives due emphasis. Still, in spite of her drastic revision of what constitutes the novel and her vigorous distrust of prescriptive definitions, Doody nevertheless sees in her own conception of the genre some of the same qualities that make it a worthwhile subject for Watt.

Novels, even in Doody's wide-ranging purview, are the literary medium of particularity. Doody writes that ancient prose fiction 'comes into being and flourishes during a period -- an extended period -- of self-

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[23] Doody, p. 288.
[24] Doody, p. 293.

consciousness and of value for the individual'.[25] Not unlike the fiction of

the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the ancient Mediterranean novel

as conceived by Doody reflects the shifting consciousness of the culture

that nourishes it. She explains this in strikingly Wattian terms: 'Ancient

novelists, like modern ones, are skilled in exhibiting the psychological

background of a particular character emerging in a particular instance'.[26]

The characters of novels have depth and individuality; they inhabit richly

described settings; they may speak vernacular, 'socially marked speech'.[27]

Such an elevation of particularity reveals these ancient fictions' kinship

with the modern novel, a connection Doody underscores with frequent

allusions to canonical novelists.

 Doody is not so much seeking a redefinition of the novel as a

limbering up of ossified classifications that will allow the genre to embrace

what she sees as its disregarded constituents. This is why she cannot

permit the works she considers to languish under the unwieldy mantle of

'extended prose fiction'. Designating them as novels is an interpretive act,

one which discovers in them traits -- novelistic traits -- that sustain

Doody's thesis: the novel is an assertion of human individuality, diversity,

and desire in the face of the oppressive, homogenizing pressures of what

she calls the 'Civic'.[28] Furthermore, that this open and transgressive class

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[25] Doody, p. 24.
[26] Doody, p. 131.
[27] Doody, p. 132.
[28] Doody refers throughout her text to a trans-historical 'sense of the civic', which emphasizes public, political involvement and citizenship, but also tends toward hierarchy, consolidation of power, and the subjugation of women, the poor, and marginal groups (pp. 226-232, 278). She begins using the initial capital -- i.e. the 'Civic' -- later in her study (p. 466). Following the example of reviewer James Grantham Turner, one could categorize the Civic together with 'the Attic, the classical, the imperial, the masculine, the didactic, the epic, the [prescriptively] realist' and in opposition to a counterpart grouping, the 'Alexandrian, polymorphous, individual fostering, rule bending, goddess nurturing' associations of the novelistic; *Modern Philology*, 96.3 (1999) 364-370 (p. 365).

of literary art has endured for millennia is evidence for, and a source of, its utopian resiliency:

> The Novel always does look to the future. Rooted in a deep past it may be, so it can withstand the winds of taste and fashion -- including icy blasts of disapproval -- but it always looks towards possibility, towards fulfillment when (and where) what is now grudging and meager may be full and generous. The Novel is the 'enemy' of the Civic because it is always imagining what the Civic might come to be. Thus it urges society on, impatient of order, precepts, and maxims of the past. The Novel is the repository of our hopes.[29]

For Doody, novelistic figures provide a mythic, almost mystical sustenance to vital aspects of human life that otherwise might wither in hegemony, xenophobia, and inhibition. This is possible, she suggests, because novels tread the boundary between public and private, real and imaginary, blurring the lines that would separate political, social, and individual life.

In this respect, Doody aligns with Watt. As much as the 'rise' that Watt envisions might obscure broader traditions of fiction, it nevertheless sheds light upon a dynamic interplay between literary art and the contingent, chaotic world of historical reality. If formal realism has served to open up, in Watt's words, 'the problematic nature of the relation between the individual and his environment', then, however restrictive Watt's methods (and pronouns) might be, his work is not necessarily at odds with Doody's.[30] Even Doody concedes that the novel is realistic 'in the sense that it deals with the tough experience of living and throws

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[29] Doody, p. 471.
[30] Watt, p. 295.

nothing away'.[31] The commonality between these two vastly different critical studies offers up the possibility that the novel, on whatever scale one chooses to view it, adumbrates its identity in its very resistance to definition. More than any one technique of the many it might employ, the novel is the genre of authenticity and faithfulness to human experience, of variability and openness, and of coming closer to the reader and the reader's world. As such, any account of the novel must deal with realism, however incomplete that feature might be as a condition of the genre, and even if the term itself, as Doody claims, smacks of an aggressive, Anglocentric presentism.

Treating a subjective and variable term like realism as the decisive characteristic of a literary genre is as inadequate an act of definition as singling out a few heavily qualified formal features. To declare a text as realistically informing on human experience is an interpretive, not a definitive, statement. And yet the goals and methods of the novel unavoidably involve some approach to the world of lived experience, the subjective here-and-now, as a means to truth (or at least to the sort of relevance and *raison d'être* that any intelligible text pragmatically implies). Erich Auerbach connects the novel to this kind of realistic authenticity in his extensive study *Mimesis*. His account in the following passage is amenable to any of the preceding views on the novel as a genre uniquely entangled with the real:

> The serious treatment of everyday reality, the rise of more
> extensive and socially inferior human groups to the position of
> subject matter for problematic-existential representation, on the
> one hand; on the other, the embedding of random persons and
> events in the general course of contemporary history, the fluid

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[31] Doody, p. 478.

historical background -- these, we believe, are the foundations of modern realism, and it is natural that the broad and elastic form of the novel should increasingly impose itself for a rendering comprising so many elements.[32]

If the novel resists definition, then its realism, so integral to conceptions of the novel, must be considered a site of that resistance. Henceforward the word 'realism', when used without qualification or capitalization, will designate the concept in a very broad sense, broad enough to be common to the disparate conceptions of the novel under review thus far. Pam Morris lays a foundation: 'literary realism [is] any writing that is based upon an implicit or explicit assumption that it is possible to communicate about a reality beyond the writing'.[33] This statement may be narrowed slightly with a layer of valuation: realism is furthermore the creative or interpretive technique of deriving a work's validity from its faithfulness to such a reality, however these concepts might be conceived. It is not a formal textual feature, but rather an active, interpretive, creative mode based on certain suppositions, and the concurrent predisposition to draw text and world closer together.

That the component terms of this definition are so gelatinous is an unavoidable concession to the flexibility and breadth of realism as a generic marker of the novel. Such laxity notwithstanding, as a critical schema this conception of realism is sufficient to focus attention on novelistic fiction as praxis, as activity rather than artefact, and so to raise the sort of questions that ought to attend the study of a process: what is it doing, how does it do it, and what are the possible consequences? As an

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[32] Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1953; repr. 2003), p. 491. Mimesis itself, an even more inclusive concept than realism, is discussed further in chapter three.
[33] Pam Morris, *Realism* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 6.

attempt at drawing boundaries, this definition sketches the most vague of silhouettes, but as an attempt at drawing open a portal, it suffices. If realism, broadly conceived as it must be, can stand as a generic feature of the novel, it is in this capacity serving as a way in to the novel too.

J. Paul Hunter's study, *Before Novels*, illustrates the complicated significance of realism in the theorization of novels. Hunter provides a list of ten 'features that […] characterize the species', which consistently inclines to a realistic engagement with the realm of human experience. Characteristics like 'contemporaneity', 'credibility and probability', and 'familiarity' align quite comfortably with a theory of the novel drawn from Watt's formal realism.[34] However, like Booth and Doody, Hunter criticizes an over-reliance on narrowly conceived realism as the definitive feature of novelistic discourse. The shortcoming of this approach, according to Hunter, is that it so readily enlists realism as a normative standard, 'so that novels tend to be judged qualitatively on the degree or amount of realism to be found in each, as if more is better'.[35]

In a chapter colourfully subtitled 'The Critical Tyranny of Formal Definition', Hunter discusses novelistic features that challenge the prescriptive, realism-centred conception of the novel. As an auxiliary to his list of ten conventionally novelistic features of fiction, he adds nine more features that have received insufficient critical attention 'because their presence in novels upsets formal generic notions', blurring the boundaries between novels and other forms of discourse.[36] In Hunter's view, features like didacticism, confessional exhibitionism, a fascination with social taboo, and an omnivorous and inclusive approach to genre are

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[34] J. Paul Hunter, *Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1992), p. 23. Lennard J. Davis similarly furnishes a list of nine ways in which the novel can be distinguished from the romance; see *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel* (New York: Columbia University, 1983), p. 40.
[35] Hunter, p. 32.
[36] Hunter, p. 30.

'blatant and ubiquitous', as much a part of the novel as is its self-conscious realism. Such affronts to formal categorization are to be found not only in early English novels; they can crop up, 'although sometimes disguised or metamorphosed, in novels of other times and cultures' as well.[37] They are thus bound to the genre, not to any one era of production.

This is not to claim that Hunter attempts an ahistorical account of the novel. However, whereas Doody seeks to expand the temporal range of critical categorizations of the novel, Hunter points out the permeability of the genre itself, even when constrained to a canon of modern, realistic prose fiction. His list of nine overlooked features of the novel challenges a formulaic approach to genre not by contradicting more conventional definitions, but by diluting them, expanding the scope of common novelistic features to include characteristics of other forms.

To take one example, an examination of didacticism underscores not the inadequacy of realism as a novelistic feature, but rather the inadequacy of a too-narrow conception of realism as such. Texts model reality in two ways: they copy the world, and they shape it as they do so. The overtly didactic spirit of the various forms of popular eighteenth-century print media places special emphasis on this latter capacity. With 'moralistic, lapel-gripping techniques', didactic texts of the time address the reader intensely and authoritatively, seeking a direct and personal influence upon their audience.[38] Compared to these unabashedly exhortatory texts, the instructive underpinnings of what are now called novels could manifest with more delicacy -- Hunter cites the ironies of Fielding and Sterne -- but even explicit didacticism was not out of place in the novel. Hunter points out that 'in most eighteenth-century novelists --

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[37] Ibid.
[38] Hunter, p. 226.

Defoe and Haywood, Smollett and Lennox, Godwin and Inchbald -- direct comment with plainly stated conclusions is almost as frequent as any forward motion of the novel's story'.[39]

A depiction is an example, and if the realistic detail of a narrative purports to describe the world as it is, so too does the cumulative effect of such description offer itself as a prototype from which to extrapolate far-reaching conclusions. What Watt calls realism of assessment is in essence a form of latent didacticism -- it has something to teach -- and Hunter's survey of the popular didactic writing current in the eighteenth century shows that this is a formal feature that was familiar and highly valued in the time when more conventional types of realism were beginning to distinguish the novel. Hunter sees novelistic didacticism as a challenge to the readers and theorists of today; however, it poses no threat to a conception of the novel as a realistic genre. Although the prim intrusiveness of didacticism might appear to be anything but realistic, it shares with conventional realism the presupposition of reflexivity between text and world. Certainly a reader, whether born in 1680 or 1980, could legitimately praise a novel for offering new insights into the nature of the real world. As Hunter writes, 'The novel today still pays homage to transcendental views of human life and emblematic ways of thinking'.[40] Perhaps contemporary tastes cannot abide preachy or proclamatory novelists; however, the notion that fiction is somehow edifying remains robust. Hence the peculiar realism of the novel varies because it springs from a diverse and inclusive background of extra-generic techniques and a wide range of cultural practices.

As befits a genre so entangled with the notion of the real, Hunter's investigation of these contexts elevates journalism to a position of great

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[39] Hunter, p. 232.
[40] Hunter, p. 229.

influence in the formation of the novel. Indeed, it should not be overlooked that some of the earliest texts to bear the name 'novel' are in fact printed news ballads.[41] In the late seventeenth century, news -- as the 'nearly instant replay of human experience' that print technology made possible -- becomes increasingly significant as an outgrowth of England's 'fixation on contemporaneity, part of its larger interest in discovery, enlightenment, and novelty'.[42] The unconventional novelistic features Hunter discusses are commonplace in the broadsheets, periodicals, pamphlets, and sundry paraliterary ephemera that circulated in, and drew their substance from, the garrulous coffeehouse culture that flourished in the early eighteenth century. In turn, this thriving journalistic activity helped to tailor the expectations of the writers and readers who would come to sustain the novel.

According to Hunter, a hunger for news merges two disparate social energies: 'intellectual curiosity and a desire to be *au courant*'.[43] In a 'culture of now', the present demands analysis and discussion; 'the stress on contemporaneity accelerated and intensified the public sense that the present times were all that mattered'.[44] Moreover, if it is imperative to understand current affairs, then the newness of the news is most compelling when coupled with vivid and evocative reportage. The goal is to reveal and make real that which might otherwise elude consideration. Reviewing specimens of news writing from the final years of the seventeenth century, Hunter notes that, 'The sense of filling in the details, helping to write the full history of the times and ultimately of reality itself, is prominent in most of these titles, however hurried on by sensationalism

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[41] Davis, pp. 45-46. Davis also considers the discourse of news to be a major formative factor in the development of the novel; see especially pp. 42-101.
[42] Hunter, p. 167.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Hunter, p. 177.

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or commercial greed'. These writings are pervaded by the notion that 'nothing could be known without a full account of events: that was where meaning lay'.[45] There is a striking similarity here to the 'full and authentic report of human experience' Watt sees as the ambition of formal, novelistic realism. It seems a sound conclusion to propose, as does Hunter, a link between the underlying ethos of journalistic narratives and the aims of the novels that follow closely on their heels:

> Telling the story of what life is like now and helping to explain how it got that way -- the literary job that novelists defined for themselves -- could hardly have come about without such a friendly everyday context, and an important aspect of what the novel came to do is a palpable result of the journalistic agenda.[46]

Michael McKeon, in *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740*, finds in the journalistic writing that preceded early British novels not just a force that tailored the expectations of readers and writers, but rather a model of the larger cultural current that would give conceptual form to the novel itself. From the end of the seventeenth century, news writing begins to solidify as a 'distinct discursive entity'.[47] In contradistinction to the recently typologized romance, which seemed only to speak about its own vanished historical moment, news writing becomes the place for objective truth, 'exploiting especially the techniques of authentication by firsthand and documentary witness that have developed during the late

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[45] Hunter, p. 185.
[46] Hunter, p. 194.
[47] Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel 1600-1740* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, 2002), p. 47.

medieval and early modern periods'.[48] This aligns neatly with the interest in novel and immediate news observed by Hunter.

Also like Hunter, McKeon observes the resultant elevation of the new to a position of importance in public discourse, bolstered by increasingly pronounced claims to empirical truth. Such pursuit of reproducible, quantitative truth-value is a reaction against the negative example of medieval romances, which establish their authenticity not through exhaustive empiricism but with the paratactic implication of 'an invisible principle, rhetorical or theological, the intuition of whose authoritative workings is necessary to render complete that which only appears partial'.[49] McKeon goes on, however, to point out a simultaneous and opposed attitude arising from the same contexts: in the contentious revolutionary atmosphere of the mid-1600s, 'the experience of comparing highly partisan and divergent "true accounts" of the same events induced a considerable skepticism regarding the ostentatious claims to historicity which had already become quite conventional'.[50] So the objective presence of print media endorses empirical approaches to recording the data of experience while at the same time allowing the critical scrutiny of those selfsame data.

What results is a discursive practice in which tales of remarkable events must defend themselves; writers increasingly insist upon their texts' historicity, so much so in fact that 'the old claim that a story is "strange but true" subtly modulates into something more like the

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[48] McKeon, pp. 46-47.
[49] McKeon, p. 38; Davis rightly cautions that 'the notion that all continuities are either a *reaction to* or an *influence of* another form is simplistic and all-encompassing' (p. 44). However, McKeon's dialectical schema does not necessarily disregard the nuance and complication of the interface between the medieval romance and the novel -- indeed, it can be a useful means of approaching this very subject.
[50] McKeon, p. 47.

paradoxical formula "strange, therefore true"'.[51] Naturally, such credulity

invites criticism, and by the first decades of the seventeenth century,

uneasiness about the honesty of news writers was universal enough to

surface thematically in the plays of Shakespeare and Jonson.[52] The

interplay of these two antithetical attitudes meant that novelty was at

once the mark of immediacy and relevance as well as the telltale sign of

superfluity and falsehood. As a generic marker, the word 'novel' carried

the same ambivalence as news writing's narration of novelties. In addition

to printed news accounts, other prose forms -- translations of Boccaccio,

for example -- had since the sixteenth century carried the designation

'novel' as well.[53]

    The irresolvable contention brought up by truth-claims in printed

news typifies the larger dialectical exchange between what McKeon terms

naive empiricism and extreme scepticism; a dialectic the effects of which

extend well beyond news discourse:

> The pattern marks the climax of the early modern revolution in
> narrative epistemology, and it is of fundamental importance in the
> origins of the English novel: the naive empiricism of the claim to
> historicity purports to document the authentic truth; the extreme
> skepticism of the opposing party demystifies this claim as mere
> 'romance'.[54]

Naive empiricism responds with suspicion to the idealism of medieval

romance, but in doing so it invites the interrogation of its own approach by

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[51] Ibid.
[52] McKeon cites Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* and Jonson's *The Staple of News* in particular (p. 48).
[53] Davis, p. 46; see also 'novel' in the *Oxford English Dictionary*.
[54] McKeon, p. 48.

a more intense degree of the same kind of doubt.[55] However, the components of this pattern are not discrete or mutually exclusive. In fact, both derive from the sceptical desire for falsifiability in allegedly true narratives, a demand that the truth of a narrative be sufficiently quantified through the documentary power of the printed word. For McKeon, the resulting attention to the difficulty and importance of conveying truth in narrative form is nothing less than revolutionary:

> When we speak of an epistemological 'revolution' in early modern England, we point to a categorical instability so acute that the condition of conceptual fluidity and process which characterizes all culture to some degree demands to be acknowledged by a special term.[56]

Debate over the means and possibility of mediating truth about the world, whether material or spiritual, falls into this dialectical cycle as much in printed news as it does in the publications of the Royal Society or arguments between philosophers, religious figures, and secularists. The diverse groups participating in this culture-wide controversy embark on a 'progression of skeptical thought from positivistic objectivity to solipsistic subjectivity', which they follow through to various stages. The result is a 'proliferation of epistemological reversals' which, rather than arriving at some final coherence, instead perpetuates the dialectic tension from which it arises.[57] In print journalism, the reversals inherent in this ongoing epistemological tension translate to a disbelieving sense of duplicitous novelty, in which newness suggests both revelation and fabrication. The 'strange, therefore true' topos is a further expression of this same

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[55] McKeon, p. 50.
[56] McKeon, p. 87.
[57] McKeon, pp. 87-88.

impasse; it reveals that, without the precondition of some uncritical willingness to believe, the mechanisms of empirical documentation in text operate as little more than rhetorical flourishes. Somewhere in the ostensibly universal objectivity of empiricism persists a latent deferral to individual subjectivity.

Print journalism therefore exemplifies a threefold consequence of the dialectic between naive empiricism and extreme scepticism. First, the reflexivity and inconclusiveness of the dialectic foster a fluidity of truth-value, in which markers of empirical authenticity serve also as grounds for falsification. In order to move beyond this otherwise immobilizing uncertainty, some extra factor must resist the cycle of reflexive doubt by transcending it. In seventeenth-century news narratives this comes in the form of the credulous readerly desire for wonder and exoticism that allows accounts of the strange to seem true by virtue of their very strangeness. In other contexts this desire takes other forms, but the empirical project always correlates with a grasping past boundaries, whether as the compulsion for discovery or as the nagging disbelief that any discovery might offer authentic truth. The final consequence of the dialectic between naive empiricism and extreme scepticism stems directly from this thirst for transcendence and wonder: a turn from empirical objectivity to the psychological subjectivity of the individual as authenticator. A would-be empirical text must in one way or another appeal to the belief of the reader, and it is precisely this paradoxical necessity which perpetuates the dialectic by allowing extreme scepticism a foothold for doubt. In various permutations these effects can be seen to attend narrative forms that seek to empirically document the truth, and they profoundly impact the development of the novel in Britain.

Reviewing the way narratives laid claim to truth in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries illuminates the influence of empiricism on literate

culture at large. In light of this connection, one indicated both by literary historians like Watt and by the narratives themselves, such a review warrants some remarks on the philosophy of empiricism. As McKeon has shown, the turmoil of the mid-seventeenth century in England lent itself to sceptical doubt.[58] Gary Remer proposes that Thomas Hobbes, reacting to the political climate of his time, was spurred to turn away from a humanist, rhetorical epistemology, seeking 'the certainty of scientific knowledge': 'Hobbes's experience with civil war led him to conclude that, if chaos was to be avoided, knowledge had to be based on unequivocal foundations'.[59] Pursuing such foundations in the opening chapter of *Leviathan*, Hobbes finds the senses to be the source of all human thought, and this leads him to the obstacle faced in one way or another by all empiricism: attentiveness to the objective world, when scrutinised, reveals itself to be instead attentiveness to the perceiving subject. For Hobbes this inescapable mediator takes the form of what he calls 'fancy':

> And though at some certain distance the real and very object seem invested with the fancy it begets in us, yet still the object is one thing, the image or fancy is another. So that sense in all cases, is nothing else but original fancy, caused (as I have said) by the pressure, that is, by the motion, of external things upon our eyes, ears, and other organs thereunto ordained.[60]

Between the human sensorium and the world there remains always a gap, and this gap, situated as it is at such a fundamental stage in human understanding, taints human endeavours with subjective uncertainty.

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[58] McKeon, p. 47; see above.
[59] Gary Remer, 'Hobbes, the Rhetorical Tradition, and Toleration', *The Review of Politics*, 54.1 (1992), 5-33 (pp. 5, 7).
[60] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. by Edwin Curley (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994), p. 7 [I.i.4].

Hobbes's theory of government attempts to minimize the danger of this epistemic flaw, granting to arbitrary authority a provisional certainty, since true certainty is unattainable. The implications of this flaw for truth in language -- and, by extension, in narrative -- are especially restrictive:

> No discourse whatsoever can end in absolute knowledge of fact, past or to come. For as for the knowledge of fact, it is originally sense, and ever after, memory. And for the knowledge of consequence, which I have said before is called science, it is not absolute, but conditional.[61]

For Hobbes, language contributes to knowledge only when derived from clearly delineated definitions and conventions. Thus, even when it succeeds, language speaks only about the quality of its own arbitrary premises; science reveals 'the consequences of names'.[62] Seeking to grasp the objective *a priori*, Hobbes is forced to make a concession to subjectivity, to arbitrariness.

This apparent inconsistency seems, even in the eyes of modern Hobbes scholars, to be something of a paradox. John Danford notes that Hobbes 'never satisfactorily resolves' the disjunction of definitions and truth.[63] Joel Leshen indicates a related lapse: Hobbes treats concepts, 'acts of reason', as if they '[reflect] the true nature of the universe'.[64] In the words of Victoria Silver, 'The source of all true statement and the criterion of self-evidence in *Leviathan* is its own terminology'; the anti-

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[61] Hobbes, p. 35 [I.vii.3].
[62] Hobbes, p. 25 [I.v.17].
[63] John W. Danford, 'The Problem of Language in Hobbes's Political Science', *The Journal of Politics* 42.1, (1980), 102-134 (p. 112).
[64] Joel Leshen 'Reason and Perception in Hobbes: An Inconsistency', *Noûs*, 19.3 (1985), 429-437 (p. 433).

rhetorical Hobbes in fact relies upon rhetorical effects.[65] It is interesting to note how readily critics of Hobbes's epistemological subjectivity employ the arguments of extreme scepticism, in which, inevitably, empirical practice proves insufficiently empirical.

After Hobbes, other philosophers of the British Enlightenment deal differently with the problems of subjectivity that lie at the heart of empirical understanding; however, the gap between world and mind always raises the spectre of epistemic confusion.[66] John Locke for example, after rejecting the Cartesian notion of innate ideas, finds experience and reflection to be 'the Fountains of Knowledge, from whence all the Ideas we have, or can naturally have, do spring'.[67] Thus, it follows that knowledge is 'nothing but the perception of the connexion and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our Ideas'.[68] Certainty is therefore confined to what Locke calls intuitive and demonstrative knowledge -- two forms of conceptual coherence that bear no connection to the exterior, material world.[69] Locke sets these out as the exclusive domain of certain knowledge:

> These two, (*viz.*) Intuition and Demonstration, are the degrees of
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> our Knowledge; whatever comes short of one of these, with what

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[65] Victoria Silver, 'The Fiction of Self-Evidence in Hobbes's *Leviathan*', *ELH*, 55.2 (1988), 351-379 (p. 366).

[66] For useful overviews of the work of Locke and Berkeley contextualized within the larger tradition of empirical philosophy, see Robert G. Meyers, *Understanding Empiricism* (Chesham: Acumen, 2006). Paul Goring surveys the intellectual contexts of eighteenth-century Britain with reference to Locke and suggests that 'Lockean thought provided an intellectual framework and an impetus for the proliferation of novels'; *Eighteenth-Century Literature and Culture* (London: Continuum, 2008), p. 42.

[67] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. by Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), p. 104 [II.i.2].

[68] Locke, p. 525 [IV.i.2].

[69] Locke, pp. 530-532 [IV.ii.1-2].

assurance soever embraced, is but Faith, or Opinion, but not Knowledge, at least in all general Truths.

However, this sceptical conclusion makes Locke uneasy. He immediately appends a compromise, one which explains his preceding concentration only on 'general Truths':

> There is, indeed, another Perception of the Mind, employ'd about the particular existence of finite Beings without us; which going beyond bare probability, and yet not reaching perfectly to either of the foregoing degrees of certainty, passes under the name of Knowledge.[70]

This third-rate understanding is what Locke refers to as sensitive knowledge -- trust in the sensory apprehension of one's surroundings. Locke supports this proposition with an appeal to his reader's own common sense, pointing out the obvious difference between, for example, seeing the sun in the daytime and recalling its image at night.[71] This is a concession to subjectivity both in philosophical content and in rhetorical form. Ultimately, it shifts standards of knowledge about the world away from certainty and into the realm of probability and judgement.[72]

Locke's sensitive knowledge is a step away from pure representationalism, but it is not enough to satisfy Bishop George Berkeley, for whom any materialism, however qualified, equates ultimately with unacceptable atheism.[73] Making his own appeal to the intuition of his

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[70] Locke, pp. 536-537 [IV.ii.14].
[71] Locke, p. 537 [IV.ii.14].
[72] Margaret J. Osler, 'John Locke and the Changing Ideal of Scientific Knowledge', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 31.1 (1970), 3-16 (p. 15).
[73] George Berkeley, 'A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge', in *The Works of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne*, ed. by A.

readership, Berkeley proposes that the existence of matter can never be verified, and so may as well be rejected:

> In short, if there were external bodies, it is impossible we should ever come to know it; and if there were not, we might have the very same reasons to think there were that we have now.[74]

For Berkeley, the redundancy of the question of matter's existence is important because belief in an autonomous material world requires some kind of mediation between ontological reality and the realm of phenomena, and this gap, this veil of perception, sustains scepticism. He explains:

> So long as men thought that real things subsisted without the mind, and that their knowledge was only so far forth *real* as it was conformable to *real things*, it follows, they could not be certain that they had any real knowledge at all.[75]

In this passage, Berkeley succinctly locates at least one source of the nagging doubt that perpetuates the dialectic between naive empiricism and extreme scepticism. And although the idealism he supplies as remedy may be less than unassailable, it is an instructive example of the troubling metaphysical questions raised by empiricism's epistemological postures.

As controversy about the value of news writing in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries demonstrates, problems of epistemology were relevant and urgent well beyond the confines of philosophy. When the

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A. Luce and T. E. Jessop, 9 vols (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1948-1957), II (1949), 81-82 [§ 92-96].
[74] Berkeley, p. 49 [§ 20].
[75] Berkeley, p. 78 [§ 86].

problematic mediation of truth takes the form of narrative rather than sensory perception, the same profound questions persist upon a different scale. In addition to journalistic narrative, other popular print media of the same time confront these issues as well. These sub-genres make up a complex and energetic preoccupation with truth, authenticity, and knowledge, which, for all its diversity, nevertheless takes on the structure and the consequences of the dialectic identified by McKeon.

In its concern with issues of objectivity and perception, the scientific revolution's empiricist pursuit of 'natural history' or 'natural philosophy' conforms to this kind of oscillation. According to McKeon, Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* and the work of the Royal Society typify the movement's 'optimistic faith' in the senses' power to comprehend experience, which is tempered by 'a wary skepticism of the evidence of the senses and its mediating capacity'.[76] If a text is to reveal truth with any degree of objectivity, it must somehow employ authenticating devices that support the factuality of whatever novelty it relates. The difficulty confronted in empiricist narratives, however, is that documenting wonders in narrative requires something uncomfortably similar to a romance miracle tale. After all, the promise of scientific investigation was to revise, perhaps refute, what had been accepted truth to the ancients, but if authority is no longer authoritative, the novelty of discovery assumes the same equivocal status as the novelty of news.[77] Thomas Sprat, in his 1667 history of the Royal Society, is careful to point out that accounts of marvels ought not to be discounted simply because they are marvellous:

> It is certain that many things, which now seem miraculous, would
> not be so, if once we come to be fully acquainted with their

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[76] McKeon, p. 68.
[77] McKeon, p. 69.

compositions, and operations. And it is also as true, that there are many Qualities, and Figures, and powers of things that break the common Laws, and transgress the standing Rules of Nature.[78]

Yet this quickly leads natural history to the same dilemma encountered by the questionable truth-value of printed news: truth may be as incredible as falsehood. How might the natural historian maintain the requisite accuracy? Sprat's remedy is strikingly subjective. He admonishes his readers only to read and record as amazing those events that are, in actual fact, amazing:

> It is not therefore an extravagance, to observe such productions, [as] are indeed admirable in themselves, if at the same time we do not strive to make those appear to be admirable, that are groundless, and false.[79]

And although Sprat adds that experimentation can help to corroborate incredible phenomena with 'real, and impartial Trials', the empiricism he describes nevertheless relies on an intuitive sense of probability and the good faith of its practitioners.[80] Morris presents the problem in stark terms when she writes that 'empiricism is based upon a logical contradiction that eventually undermines the notion of truth upon which objective scientific knowledge rests'.[81] Sprat's turn toward subjectivity is inevitable, for as useful as empirical mechanisms of authorization are, they can never fully overcome the ultimate relativity of the senses and the

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[78] Thomas Sprat, *The History of the Royal-Society of London, For the Improving of Natural Knowledge* (London: [n. pub.], 1667), p. 214; quoted in part in McKeon, p. 70.
[79] Sprat, p. 214.
[80] Sprat, p. 215.
[81] Morris, p. 133.

intellect, and so cannot indisputably put to rest the doubts of extreme scepticism.

The Society's accounts of faraway places receive the same treatment as do those of amazing occurrences. Travel narratives were composed like journals, and any retrospective narration they might require was to be carried out in as unobtrusive a manner as possible, so that the truth of the relation would manifest 'precisely because it is firsthand and immediate'.[82] Faced with the impossibility of confirming objectivity in text, travel narratives must attest to this factuality with an unembellished rhetorical style and the conspicuous absence of any unifying thematic agenda. Like descriptions of marvels, the travel narrative relies upon what McKeon calls 'the self-reflexive insistence on its own documentary candor, as well as on the historicity of the narrative it transparently mediates'.[83]

Though perhaps winning a more objective solidity than the comparable claims of 'strange, therefore true' journalism, the Royal Society's method of substantiation in travel narratives remains vulnerable to the same sceptical attacks as do broadsheets. Indeed, the relativity of travel narratives in general, 'one of whose cardinal conventions is to expect the unexpected,' means that the most whimsical flights of fancy demand little more than to be prefaced by an avowal of truth, so that a tale's veracity is a direct function of the trustworthiness of its individual teller.[84] Henry Stubbe points out this weakness in his 1670 criticism of the Royal Society's methods:

> That there are more parts of the world discovered and sailed unto
> then in Aristotles time, I grant. But what certainty shall we have of
> Narratives picked up from negligent, or un-accurate Merchants and

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[82] McKeon, p. 103.
[83] McKeon, p. 105.
[84] McKeon, p. 111.

Seamen? What judgement have these men of no reading, whereby to rectify or enlarge their Enquiries?[85]

The extreme sceptical critique drives naive empiricism ultimately to a paradoxical subjectivity.

Another of these epistemological reversals takes shape within Protestant thought and its relation to the empiricist problem of the mediation of truth. It is easy to foresee that religious belief, devoted as it is to an immaterial world, should employ materialist practices above all as a means to a spiritual end; its careful attention to the everyday world and its sensory apprehension is ultimately driven by a desire for transcendence -- epiphany, conversion, and salvation -- made possible through conscientiously refined methods of mediation. An empirical turn entails, in religion as elsewhere, a heightened interest in historicity and documentary evidence. It lays the groundwork not only for the Protestant advocacy of reading and literacy, but also for bibliolatry and literalism:

Rejecting what they took to be the corrupting idols of Roman Catholic devotion, the Reformers embraced instead what Bacon called 'the ideas of the divine,' the language of Scripture. The parallel with the Baconian program is not adventitious. The reliance of Protestant thought on the figurative language of the Bible as the one true sense and 'literal' Word of God is profoundly analogous to the new philosophical argument that in nature's book was to be found the register and signature of divine intent. Contemporaries certainly understood that the exegetical

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[85] Henry Stubbe, *A Specimen of Some Animadversions upon a Book, Entituled,* Plus Ultra, or, Modern Improvements of Useful Knowledge (London: [n. pub.], 1670), p. 21; quoted in part in McKeon, p. 114.

commitment to 'one sense of the Scripture, the literal sense,' was informed by a commitment to the evidence of the senses.[86]

As in natural history, the interplay between naive empiricism and extreme scepticism in biblical literalism makes for a contradictory double status. An empirically inflected attachment to the letter of scripture, motivated by the desire to better mediate its truths, can provoke resistance among those who find that the kind of transcendent truth they seek is no longer mediated at all. The contrarian response is therefore to turn from text as mediator of spiritual truth in favour of individual revelation. William Dell lends unintended emphasis to the dialectical nature of this controversy when, in decrying bibliolatry in his 1653 'The Trial of Spirits', he declares outwardly objective literalism to be, in fact, deeply flawed by idiosyncratic subjectivity:

> They who preach the outward letter of the word, though never so truly, without the Spirit, do [...] under the outward letter of the word, preach their own mind, and not Christ's mind; and do make all the scriptures serve their own turns, even their own worldly ends and advantages, and nothing else.[87]

Furthermore, investing the Bible with authority by casting it as a historical document entails similar reversals; such a tactic 'simultaneously celebrated it by the highest standards and opened it to the most damaging of assaults'.[88] The naive empiricist attitude embraces the substantiating potential of treating scripture as documentary history, but if the Bible is a

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[86] McKeon, p. 75.
[87] William Dell, 'The Trial of Spirits, both in Teachers and Hearers', in *Select Works of William Dell, Formerly Master of Gonvil and Caius College in Cambridge*, (London: John Kendall, 1773), pp. 411-485 (pp. 438-439).
[88] McKeon, p. 77.

history, it must be subject to all the shortcomings of any historical account. It may be biased, incomplete, adulterated, or simply misunderstood; it becomes mere hearsay in text. In turn, this extreme sceptical response lends itself to a diversity of religious agendas. Mistrust of the textual mediation of truth may be invoked, for instance, to declare the precedence of individual intuitive revelation as easily as it may be used to assert the vital importance of a Roman Catholic priesthood.[89] In any event, what was intended as 'a sophisticated weapon against atheism' proves its utility as 'its supremely powerful ally'.[90] Just as in the case of news journalism, the devices of empirical authentication initiate a dialectical oscillation that can encompass two antithetical attitudes; religious empiricism invites both literalist enthusiasm and freethinking atheism. Here can be seen, as in other attempts to narrativize empirical authentication, reversibility and its attendant shift toward subjectivity as integral components of the empiricism/scepticism dialectic.

In conjunction with this tendency toward paradox and circularity, the emphasis on transcendence in the pious conscription of naive empiricism informs upon the larger process of which it is a part. True to its dialectical genesis, the empiricism that seeks to correct the deficiencies of romance idealism retains something of the very mindset it seems to resist. As much as scepticism drives belief away from the miracles of medieval romance and their claims upon the imagination, there remains in the culture of empiricism an underlying desire for the inexplicable wonders and mystical unifying patterns of romance metaphysics. That such a preoccupation inheres in Christian applications of naive empiricism may seem quite natural, but McKeon remarks that the Baconian scientific method itself integrates the longstanding notion of the material world as

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[89] McKeon, pp. 78-79.
[90] McKeon, p. 87.

'God's other book'; this presupposition 'permits Bacon to retain the notion of the universe as a great sign system, and to conceive of the scientist as one who reads in material reality the contingent signifiers of God's great signifieds'.[91] The Baconian project of 'natural history', as an expression of early modern empiricism, betrays a pervasive faith that the mundane harbours heretofore unrecognized wonders, which are all the more wonderful for their verifiable realness, and for their eventual contribution to a unifying, transcendent understanding.

Hunter writes that, in seventeenth-century journalism, the older exegetical tradition of treating major events as indicative of God's plan for mankind (or at least for England) shifted to a more individualized and subjective scale.[92] Rather than wars or natural disasters, the humble and immediate events of a single human life could reflect the nature of the world. What persisted through this alteration of scale was the sense that experience was interpretable, meaningful beyond its outward manifestation. And as, in Scriptural exegesis, an inward and individual turn sought to surpass the shortcomings of literalist reading, so too did there arise a similar sense that a more true understanding of the world itself could be achieved through individual means. In a Protestant religious context, personal reflection upon lived experiences could be a means to salvation. As Hunter explains, 'the light of the individual consciousness brought results superior to those of any controlled, communal, or handed-down method, and [...] individual judgement was finally the only route to understanding'.[93] Whereas scientifically orientated writing seeks to downplay its reliance upon the individual, emphasizing instead its impersonal historicity, religious narrative reverses this relation,

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[91] McKeon, p. 66.
[92] Hunter, p. 193.
[93] Hunter, p. 199.

treating the collection of material data as a means of cultivating individual revelation.

If the divine order of the world is believed to manifest in its mundane details, then it follows that a desire for individual spiritual epiphany should focus attention on the everyday. With diary-keeping and reflective written meditations, Puritans and those they influenced developed this conviction in painstaking personal writing, in a method (which Hunter cannot resist likening to New Criticism) that required no formal training, only 'close observation -- a close reading -- of even the smallest and most trivial things encountered in daily life'.[94] In such a practice, it is the recording and reviewing, under hermeneutic pressure, of the commonplace that draws forth profound truths. The ambition of the spiritual autobiographer was 'an accumulation of discontinuous historical facts which, with the grace of God, would generate its own chastening and countervailing order'.[95] This is significant because it deploys an empirical emphasis on documented historicity as a means to subjective immediacy. In other words, the meaningfulness of the narrative was a function of its faithfulness to material reality -- its realism.

Not unlike Bacon's scientific method, this reflexive approach aims to glean wisdom from experience, accumulating scores of observations in the hope of their contributing to some larger, unitary truth. But in the case of spiritual autobiography, this truth is authenticated not in spite of, but because of, its individual subjectivity. Hunter observes that the diarist's assiduous self-reflections 'sought to extend the realm of fact and the mode of realism into areas characterized by uncertainty or mind-neutral familiarity'.[96] There is a crucial turn of phrase in this passage; the 'mode of realism' Hunter finds in the meditations of diarists announces a

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[94] Hunter, p. 202.
[95] McKeon, p. 96.
[96] Hunter, p. 208.

relevance to literary form that underlies other contemporaneous empirically-inflected narrative forms as well -- journalism, scientific and travel writing, and religious narrative among them.

Distinct from Realism as a strictly conceived literary technique, realism in this sense is effectively the conceptual posture that prose which richly evokes the experiential world can accurately represent the real, and that this rendering is not only interesting for its own sake, but also useful as a gauge of broader circumstances and a cipher of deeper truths. From a literary perspective this species of realism is a conceptual antecedent to novelistic realism, for it aspires to achieve not only a faithful textual relation of the phenomenal world, but also a means to a more comprehensive understanding of general truths and underlying ontological patterns. Meanwhile, it relies (reluctantly, in the case of scientific writing, but less so in other forms) on a concession to subjective particularity to attain this goal.

As McKeon points out, this struggle between quantitative and qualitative authenticity -- between the impossibility of an exhaustive completeness of detail and a more attainable (but less defensible) sufficiency of detail -- begins to pose the sort of questions that later, more concertedly literary, realism will seek to answer:

> Once the claim to historicity is systematically acknowledged to be not an absolute but a relative claim, once writers and readers are obliged to address themselves seriously to the question of how much documentation, what sort of detail, is needed to satisfy the demands of 'true history,' competing theories of 'realism' in the modern sense of the term are firmly in the ascendant.[97]

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[97] McKeon, p. 93.

McKeon is quick to add, however, that before such a turn to the aesthetic can take place, 'True history must cease to find its justification in the mediation of "other" truths, whether spiritual or moral'.[98]

What unites the several popular forms of narrative examined to this point is that, to whatever extent they might celebrate individual agency in the observation of the world, it is ultimately the world, existing independently and prior to the observer, which they seek to apprehend. They unanimously resist intentional fabrications of the imagination as obstacles to this approach. Whether religious or secular, empiricist narrative practices equate the imaginary with irrelevance or outright falsehood:

> In fact it is of some interest to note the surprising alliance between the Protestant and the empirical distrust of traditional modes of mediation, which for a while threw up a joint bulwark against the inexorable validation of human creativity in early modern culture.[99]

To admit creativity into this process, one that otherwise pursues a positivistic quest after absolute truths, fundamentally alters its substance. It is a shift from the realism of empirical narrative, which ultimately must be factual to be functional, to fictional realism, which need not be. However, in terms of praxis, perhaps a shift in emphasis from the real to the realistic is not a great leap. Persistent appeals to subjective verification -- whether in histories, 'strange, therefore true' news stories, or the austere rhetoric of Royal Society travel narratives -- demonstrate that when empirical certainty hovers out of reach, the semblance of truthfulness will fill the vacuum.

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[98] Ibid.
[99] McKeon, p. 123.

Robert Mayer, tracing changes in the discourse of history, affirms a late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century hostility toward 'biased or credulous historians', but also toward 'the "scientific" methods of the antiquarians', who could be accused of compiling mere 'compendia of mostly useless facts'. Mayer continues:

> Fiction was not the poor relation of history, tolerated but always depreciated; it was simply one of the means used by writers of history who embraced the Baconian dictum that all forms of knowledge should be 'for the benefit and use of life' as a literal statement of historiography's end.[100]

Barbara Shapiro provides a corresponding example, describing the reorientation of travel writing from fact to fiction as an easy progression:

> Fact-oriented travel reports, surveys, and descriptions became so familiar that literary men began to create fictional matters of fact in imitation of real narratives or mixed such reports with invented materials.[101]

The possibility of 'fictional matters of fact' is not as much of a paradox as it might seem if the subjective determination of utility is considered to be a form of validation as relevant as documentary proof.

The ambiguity of the term 'invention' is itself an apt emblem for the indistinct frontier between the factual and the fictional. In the eighteenth century, 'invention' was a more ambiguous term than it is in modern

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[100] Robert Mayer, *History and the Early English Novel: Matters of Fact from Bacon to Defoe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1997), p. 137.
[101] Barbara J. Shapiro, *A Culture of Fact: England, 1550-1720* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 2000), p. 200.

usage. Johnson's *Dictionary* offers as synonyms the words 'Fiction', 'Discovery', 'Excogitation', and even 'Forgery'.[102] Multiple senses of the word seem salient in comments which appear in a 1710 issue of Addison and Steele's *Tatler.* Pointing out that travel narratives afford 'the writer an opportunity of showing his parts, without any danger of being examined or contradicted', the article claims that in describing his adventures, 'Sir John Mandeville has distinguished himself by the copiousness of his invention, and greatness of his genius'.[103] The works of Mandeville, along with those of Ferdinand Mendez Pinto, are said to provoke 'as much astonishment as the travels of Ulysses in Homer, or of the Red-Cross Knight in Spenser. All is enchanted ground, and fairy land'.[104] The allusions to epic and romance, especially as they follow a direct reference to the impossibility of any fact-checking, indicate that it is well-wrought fiction that receives the praise here. However, when the article mentions some unpublished writings of 'these two eminent authors', the apparent celebration of Mandeville and Pinto's creativity in fiction suddenly reverses, emphasizing their reliability as reporters of fact:

> Were they not so well attested, [these manuscripts] would appear altogether improbable. I am apt to think, the ingenious authors did not publish them with the rest of their works, lest they should pass for fictions and fables: a caution not unnecessary, when the reputation of their veracity was not yet established in the world.[105]

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[102] Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 2 vols (London: W. Strahan et al., 1755), I. See also *Oxford English Dictionary*.
[103] Joseph Addison, 'No. 254. Thursday, November 23. 1710.', in *The Tatler* (Glasgow: Robert Urie, 1754), pp. 220-224 (p. 220).
[104] Addison, p. 221.
[105] Ibid.

Invention is obviously desirable, but whether it is more praiseworthy when uncovering the empirical world or constructing an imaginative world is not so straightforward. Distinguishing between engrossing facts and well-wrought fictions is part of the practice of reading seemingly real narratives, but, as the dialectic of scepticism makes plain, it cannot be carried to a conclusive end. Sooner or later, then, evaluation must be waived and the business of reading continued. Pragmatism dictates that validation cannot fully or finally eclipse the appeal of effective invention.

Writers of prose fiction in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries also seem attuned to the ambiguity of invention. They confront problems of narrative truth in ways that engage directly with the dialectic effects already under discussion. The front matter of their books is full of strident truth-claims, and yet those claims are consistently complicated by the stories which follow them.[106] Taken collectively, these quasi-critical texts document the efforts of writers who are consciously developing theories of realism and fiction, shaping the conventions of what would become the novel.

In the dedication to Lord Maitland that precedes *Oroonoko*, published in 1688, Aphra Behn assures her patron that her narrative 'is a true story', however incredible it might appear:

If there be any thing that seems Romantick, I beseech your Lordship to consider, these Countries do, in all things, so far differ from ours, that they produce unconceivable Wonders; at least, they appear so to us, because New and Strange. What I have mention'd

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[106] Some of these works are discussed below; for a list of others, see Mayer, p. 3.

> I have taken care shou'd be Truth, let the Critical Reader judge as
>
> he pleases.[107]

Behn directly assures her readership, too, that the 'History' she relates has 'enough of Reality to support it, and to render it diverting, without the addition of Invention'.[108] Interestingly, after such promises, *Oroonoko* is frequently driven by idealized love, miraculous coincidence, exotic settings, and the title character's superhuman virtue and strength. Most striking of all about Behn's truth-claims, in light of the narrative's enduring 'Romantick' intrigues, is that the tale is not only purported to be true, but to be 'diverting' precisely because of its truth. It is, in Davis's phrase, 'a double discourse based on contradictory assertions'.[109] Of course declaring that all the amazing events described in *Oroonoko* are real is, in a literal sense, a lie. But far more important than the literal sense is the literary sense: Behn's avowal of truth is a device to heighten narrative effect, and it is that effect which lays claim to a kind of truth. Its blend of two modes of authentication offers an instance of what Paul Goring refers to as a 'generic struggle'.[110] The tension between text and paratext reveals that the condition of veracity in narrative has slipped away from a solid epistemological category and become a rhetorical strategy.

Whereas *Oroonoko* is subtitled *A True History*, the title page of William Congreve's 1692 narrative *Incognita* declares it to be a novel. Although *Incognita* does not fall neatly into this category by modern standards, Congreve's preface supplies a prescient discussion of the novel as a genre distinguishable from romance by virtue of its realism. Unlike Behn, he makes no claim to truth, only to believability:

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[107] Aphra Behn, *Oroonoko: Or, The Royal Slave. A True History* (London: William Canning, 1688), front matter.
[108] Behn, pp. 1-2.
[109] Davis, p. 107.
[110] Goring, p. 98.

> Novels are of a more familiar nature [than romances]; Come near
> us, and represent to us Intrigues in practice, delight us with
> Accidents and odd Events, but not such as are wholly unusual or
> unpresidented, such which not being so distant from our Belief
> bring also the pleasure nearer us.[111]

Congreve makes explicit what Behn implies: being true to life is more important to the reader's experience than being true. This comes in the form of an approach to the reader, both in representing events that are less 'distant from our belief' and, as Brean Hammond and Shaun Regan point out, in a 'flexible, approachable tone', creating the novelistic effect of 'a reader who is in league with the narrator'.[112]

There is another critical facet to Congreve's preface. In lieu of the 'miraculous Contingencies' of romance, he aims to 'imitate *Dramatick Writing*, namely, in the Design, Contexture and Result of the Plot'.[113] To support realism, which he casts as the hallmark of an innovative genre, he enlists a compositional element from an older, and thoroughly canonical, literary mode. The novel, as conceived in the preface to *Incognita*, is not simply a new, more realistic, type of fictional narrative; it is an adaptive, flexible genre, responding to and drawing upon literary precedent.

The prefatory address 'To the Reader' in the 1705 novel *The Secret History of Queen Zarah* provides relatively detailed practical advice for writers of fiction, advocating realism in setting, characterization, dialogue,

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[111] William Congreve, *Incognita: or, Love and Duty Reconcil'd. A Novel* (London: Peter Buck, 1691/1692), front matter; reprinted in Ioan Williams, ed. *Novel and Romance 1700-1800: A Documentary Record* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), pp. 27-28 (p. 27). See also Goring, pp. 95-96.
[112] Brean Hammond and Shaun Regan, *Making the Novel: Fiction and Society in Britain, 1660-1789* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 30-31.
[113] Congreve, front matter; Williams, p. 28.

and plot.[114] The author points out that, compared to purely factual accounts, realistic fiction requires of the author a more meticulous attention to the principles that govern real life, 'For there are Truths that are not always probable':

> He that writes a True History ought to place the Accidents as they Naturally happen [...] because he is not obliged to answer for their Probability; but he that composes a History to his Fancy, gives his Heroes what Characters he pleases, and places the Accidents as he thinks fit, without believing he shall be contradicted by other Historians, therefore he is obliged to Write nothing that is improbable.[115]

Probability for the author of the preface means adhering not only to what is physically possible, but also to what is morally acceptable, 'For example, 'tis an allowed Truth in the Roman History that Nero put his mother to Death, but 'tis a Thing against all Reason and Probability'.[116] To borrow Congreve's phrase, the fiction theorized by the preface to *Queen Zarah* seeks to 'come near' readers by appealing to their propriety as well as their scepticism, encouraging them to engage more directly with the

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[114] This novel, along with its preface, is commonly attributed to Delarivier Manley. John L. Sutton Jr has shown, however, that the preface to *Queen Zarah* is in fact a direct translation (by Manley, Sutton believes) of an essay composed in French by Morvan de Bellegarde, published in the 1702 volume *Lettres Curieuses de Littérature et de Morale.* This essay, in turn, derives from an earlier text, the 1683 *Sentimens sur les Lettres et sur l'Histoire* by a writer known as the sieur du Plaisir. J. A. Downie proposes, with considerable evidence, that Manley had no part in the narrative at all. See John L. Sutton Jr, 'The Source of Mrs. Manley's Preface to *Queen Zarah*', *Modern Philology*, 82.2, (1984), 167-172; and J. A. Downie, 'What if Delarivier Manley Did *Not* Write *The Secret History of Queen Zarah*?', *The Library*, 5.3 (2004) 247-264.

[115] Delarivier Manley [attrib.], *The Secret History, of Queen Zarah, and the Zarazians; Being a Looking-Glass for ____ _____ in the Kingdom of Albigion.* (Albigion [London]: [n.pub.], 1705), front matter; reprinted in Williams, pp. 33-39 (p. 34).

[116] Manley [attrib.], front matter; Williams, p. 34.

characters, so that 'all the World will find themselves represented'.[117] The sort of writing described here is different from that composed by a historian of fact, and it requires different techniques of production and reception.[118] The ideal readers of this kind of fiction need not believe the narrative, but they should at least find themselves willing to believe, and so the writer must be carefully attuned to their expectations. The preface to *Queen Zarah* gives an account of literary conventions in flux, adapting to accommodate a new genre and discover its function.

In 1719, Daniel Defoe's *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* was published. The title page attributes authorship to Crusoe himself and supplies a long biographical subtitle, making a truth claim similar to Behn's in regard to *Oroonoko*. However, the preface treats the issue of truth more obscurely:

> The Editor believes the thing to be a just History of Fact; neither is there any Appearance of Fiction in it: And however thinks, because all such things are dispatch'd, that the Improvement of it, as well to the Diversion, as to the Instruction of the Reader, will be the same.[119]

Michael Shinagel glosses this to mean 'that such works are read cursorily, and, therefore, it matters little to the entertainment or instruction of the reader if the story be truth or fiction'.[120] Thus, as in the theory of fiction presented in the preface to *Queen Zarah*, what matters is ultimately not

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[117] Manley [attrib.], front matter; and Williams, p. 36.

[118] Davis suggests that the apparent 'paradox' of moralistic probability in the preface to *Queen Zarah* in fact reveals two 'contradictory types of verisimilitude', tied to respective 'types or varieties of truth' (p. 111).

[119] Daniel Defoe, 'The Preface.', in *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, Of York, Mariner* […] (London: W. Taylor, 1719), front matter. Reprinted in Williams, p. 56.

[120] Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, ed. by Michael Shinagel, 2nd edn (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994), p. 3.

the truth of a narrative but its realism, its potential to impact -- and thereby to improve -- the reader.

Charles Gildon attacks *Robinson Crusoe* and its sequel in a pamphlet published in the same year. Gildon seems motivated in part by a personal resentment toward Defoe; he begins with a satirical dialogue in which Defoe's characters revenge themselves upon their 'father' by force-feeding him pages from his own books until he soils himself.[121] Still, Gildon's more reasoned objections hinge upon a conception of moral probability similar to that in the preface to *Queen Zarah*. However, unlike the prefator of *Queen Zarah*, Gildon does not go so far as to trust readers of fiction to see through rhetorical truth-claims and adopt a new receptive posture. He imagines that readers will approach this new form of fiction as they do a much older form -- biblical parables -- and so he presumes fiction to have a powerfully direct didactic influence. Gildon believes, for example, that it is 'against a publick Good' to portray an economic and military necessity like seafaring as perilous or unpleasant, because it might 'deter all People from going to Sea'.[122] He worries, too, that depicting young Crusoe's disregard for his father's advice as a defiance severe enough to provoke Providential storms promotes a filial obedience so draconian that to enforce it 'would in effect be to make the Children of Freemen absolute Slaves'.[123] Alongside this hyper-allegorical reading, Gildon also finds innumerable details of Defoe's narrative to be unacceptably improbable: Crusoe is too irrational and comes too easily into money; Xury's English is too good and Crusoe's Arabic too poor; it is unlikely that Crusoe could measure wave crests as accurately as he claims; and it is impossible that a man could fit any biscuits into the

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[121] Charles Gildon, *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Mr. D--- de F--, of London, Hosier* (London: J. Roberts, 1719), pp. v-xviii.
[122] Gildon, pp. 2, 3; excerpted in Williams, pp. 57, 58.
[123] Gildon, p. 4; Williams, p. 58.

pockets of his breeches.[124] For Gildon, *Crusoe* is a collection of irresponsible lies.

Gildon's indignity appears to be somewhat at odds with itself, however, for he insists both that *Robinson Crusoe* is too absurd to be believed and that it is a dangerously anti-patriotic and irreligious model for behaviour. Much of Gildon's apparent confusion, though, is not his own. In effect, he is carrying out a *reductio ad absurdum* of the tenets of moral probability -- any text's claims to be both allegorically and factually sound could likewise dissolve under a hostile gaze. The paradox in Gildon's pamphlet is a symptom of the mutable literary conventions of his contemporaries.

Consequently, Defoe's remarks at the beginning of his third volume on Crusoe can do little more than restate Gildon's central complaint from a more defensive posture. Indeed, assuming the guise of a living, factual Crusoe, Defoe accuses his detractors of the identical crime of which he claims innocence -- moral laxity and factual inaccuracy:

> I Robinson Crusoe being at this time in perfect and sound Mind and Memory, Thanks be to God therefore; do hereby declare, their Objection is an Invention scandalous in Design, and false in Fact; and do affirm, that the Story, though Allegorical, is also Historical.[125]

The precariousness of both men's contentions, and the ease with which their rationale can undermine the very conclusions it advances, reveals more than the irrationality of these writers' mutual antipathy. The

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[124] Gildon, pp. 6-16.

[125] Daniel Defoe, 'Robinson Crusoe's Preface', in *Serious Reflections During the Life and Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe: With His Vision of the Angelick World.* (London: W. Taylor, 1720), front matter. Reprinted in Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, ed. by Michael Shinagel, pp. 240-243 (p. 240).

substance of Gildon and Defoe's quarrel is the precarious epistemic status of novelistic fiction itself. Neither of these authors is certain how to determine the value or the quality of truth in novelistic fiction, and the fact that their arguments mirror each other shows that a final value judgement can only be approximated with a rhetorical, aesthetic, or baldly emotional appeal.[126] This quandary is another instance of the epistemological uncertainty underlying discourses of fact more generally. It reveals the familiar consequences of the dialectic interplay between naive empiricism and extreme scepticism: the means of establishing truth-value fall into obscurity, and the result is a final appeal to the subject.

To conceive, after McKeon, of the dynamism of early novelistic fiction as dialectical is useful, because it circumvents the reductive teleology that haunts the organizing conceits of evolution, refinement, and progression in literary form. Instead, it lends emphasis to the equivocal consequences of empiricism for narrative accounts of reality: reversibility and a move toward transcending the conditions of objectivity. It teases out the connection between broad cultural alterations in understanding and the development of novelistic fiction:

> This model of conflict defines the terms in which the crucial 'questions of truth' are debated in the Restoration and the early eighteenth century, and the epistemological boundaries within which 'the novel' as we know it coalesces during that period.[127]

If realism is to be considered a generic marker of novelistic prose, then the dialectical relation between naive empiricism and extreme scepticism -

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[126] For a more thorough exploration of the reception of *Robinson Crusoe* and the controversy between Defoe and Gildon, see Mayer, pp. 1-2, 181-206.

[127] McKeon, p. 88.

- and its variable consequences -- must be bound up in the identity of the novel as a genre.

Furthermore, since realism inevitably plays on problematic and indeterminate notions of knowledge, this conception of the novel highlights, along with social, economic, and religious influences, the empirico-philosophical undercurrent of the novel as essential to its identity. The above review of novelistic paratexts reveals that writers in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries were consciously dealing with these issues, if not from a critical stance, then certainly from a practical one. It therefore follows that eighteenth-century novelistic fiction should demonstrate provisional strategies to account for problems of empiricism and epistemology, and so should reward critical inquiry concerned with these themes.

Chapter 2

'Discoveries of our own Ignorance': Jane Barker's Galesia fictions

As the preceding chapter demonstrates, eighteenth-century writers and modern literary historians ascribe the novel's generic identity to its deployment of some kind of fictional realism. While in no time has such a definition been complete or unanimous, it is a dominant enough convention that its implications merit consideration. Realism is a literary feature that responds to and reformulates problems of veracity, authenticity, and knowledge. Whether considered historically in the context of related textual practices or theoretically as an enlargement of the questions raised by empiricist philosophy and scientific scholarship, the novel's realism denotes a concomitant orientation toward epistemology. However, the mechanisms and implications of this entailment remain somewhat obscure. The inquiry that follows will therefore explore how these two realms of intellectual and cultural activity interact within specific literary texts -- Jane Barker's Galesia trilogy: *Love Intrigues: Or, The History of the Amours of Bosvil and Galesia* (1713), *A Patch-Work Screen for the Ladies* (1723), and *The Lining of the Patch-Work Screen* (1726).

Barker wrote at a time when British culture at large was concerned with human understanding of the world and, by extension, with the power of text, especially print, to demonstrate and convey such understanding. As an educated Briton born in the seventeenth century, Barker would have felt the influence of these concerns. She stands out, though, because she used the terms of the culture-wide epistemological debate of her time to articulate her own unique identity against the reigning assumptions of the larger population.

She was a Catholic and a Jacobite, and her works bear out these convictions with the polemical, defensive individualism of one who perceives a world going awry.[1] In the description of Kathryn R. King, when 'read in relation to their own political moment, these narratives emerge as complex elegiac responses to the declining fortunes of the exiled Stuarts and their followers in England'.[2] Barker's intellectual self-determination and critical insight on issues of gender also make her of special interest to feminist critics, whose work has, according to Sarah Prescott in a review of Wilson's edition of the Galesia fictions, 'recently revived' Barker as a focus of academic interest.[3]   Indeed, Marilyn L. Williamson and Josephine Donovan cast Barker herself as an early feminist.[4] But what makes Barker's work particularly relevant to a discussion of the novel is the way in which her principles shaped her

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[1] Toni Bowers calls Barker 'One of the most dyed-in-the-wool and unequivocal of Jacobites', and claims her poetry adds complexity and nuance to modern conceptions of Jacobite identity; 'Jacobite Difference and the Poetry of Jane Barker', *ELH*, 64.4 (1997), 857-869 (p. 860).
[2] Kathryn R. King, *Jane Barker, Exile: A Literary Career, 1675-1725* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000) p. 147. Unless otherwise noted, subsequent citations of King refer to this text.
[3] Sarah Prescott, 'Resolv'd to Espouse a Book', *Times Literary Supplement*, 9 January 1998, p. 21.
[4] Williamson, while not explicitly labelling Barker a 'feminist', clearly places her in this category in *Raising Their Voices: British Women Writers, 1650-1750* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University, 1990); see for example pp. 15, 104-107, 244-251. Donovan does employ the label, clarifying her position with a definition: 'By *feminism* I mean affirmation of female agency and subjectivity; recognition of patterns of domination and abuse of women by men; and, most importantly, the perception of women as a class that has common interests'; *Women and the Rise of the Novel, 1405-1726*, p. ix. See also Josephine Donovan, 'Women and the Framed-Novelle: A Tradition of Their Own', *Signs*, 22.4 (1997) 947-980 (p. 947). Audrey Bilger writes of Barker's *A Patch-Work Screen* that it offers 'one of the earliest examples of a female, if not feminist, aesthetics'; see '"A History Reduc'd into Patches": Patchwork and the Woman Novelist', in *Quilt Culture: Tracing the Pattern*, ed. by Cheryl B. Torsney and Judy Elsley (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri, 1994), pp. 18-32 (p. 32). Similarly, Ros Ballaster links Barker to the 'feminist philosophy of Mary Astell'; see *Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction from 1684 to 1740* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), p. 33. King, while taking account of these prominent themes in her readings of Barker, also cautions against the reductive distortions risked by 'feminocentric paradigms' of criticism (p. 233); see also pp. 18-23, 218.

prose. With an interest in asserting beliefs both staunchly traditional and highly -- even dangerously -- controversial, Barker, whom King dubs '*Janus* Barker', crafted texts that attempt to encompass both conservatism and revolution, tradition and innovation.[5] Furthermore, and significantly for her status as novelist, Barker seeks to map the impact of such contrasting impulses upon the elusive and shifting ground of subjective individual experience.

Barker's literary work was not very commercially successful, and until recently the critical consensus was that her works were little more than uninspired Jacobite propaganda and moralistic finger-wagging.[6] It is true that Barker's sense of moral rectitude is almost constantly on display in her texts, and her literary ambition might at times seem to exceed her ability, but what is artistically flawed is not necessarily insignificant. It is often precisely in Barker's stylistic lapses where the theoretical currents animating her work become most visible. Her work holds a marginal (some would insist 'marginalized') place in the conventional literary canon; however, considering the historical situation from which they spring, and the formal and generic experimentation they perform, Barker's fictions have a great deal to say about the characteristics and capacities of

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[5] King, p. 181.

[6] King, p. 7. John J. Richetti finds an 'aggressive moralizing tone' in Barker's work, labelling her novels 'pious polemics'; see *Popular Fiction Before Richardson: Narrative Patterns 1700-1739* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), pp. 231, 239. James Grantham Turner, considering Barker's *Exilius*, refers to her as a 'severe moralist' in his essay 'The Erotics of the Novel', in *A Companion to the Eighteenth-Century English Novel and Culture*, ed. by Paula R. Backscheider and Catherine Ingrassia (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 214-234 (p. 222). Jerry C. Beasley discerns in Barker's fictions little more than a 'sober didactic purpose'; see 'Politics and Moral Idealism: The Achievement of Some Early Women Novelists', in *Fetter'd or Free?: British Women Novelists, 1670-1815*, ed. by Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski (Athens, OH: Ohio University, 1986), pp. 216-236 (p. 229). Bridget G. MacCarthy, in her history of female writers, devotes a single amusingly irritable paragraph to Barker, in which she announces that Barker's 'heroines are all righteous, matter-of-fact prigs', and her writing 'not in the least original'; *The Female Pen: Women Writers, Their Contribution to the English Novel, 1621-1744* (Oxford: Cork University, 1944), p. 252.

realistic -- and hence novelistic -- prose fiction. Sometimes, as Barker herself certainly believed, a view from the periphery has much to offer.

Barker's prose works are commonly referred to as novels; however, in spite of the boldface declaration 'a NOVEL' on its title page, Barker's first published fiction, *Love Intrigues*, bears stylistic and thematic echoes of the romance[7]. Richetti calls it 'a short cautionary or exemplary tale of the kind popular since the seventeenth century'.[8] In terms of plot, *Love Intrigues* shares much with the amatory fiction of writers like Aphra Behn -- it is essentially the tale of an innocent young woman placed in peril by a man's amorous advances.[9] Josephine Donovan notes the similarity of one pivotal scene to what she calls 'the Violenta novella', a tale, recurring in various forms since the Middle Ages, and later in the work of Manley and Haywood, in which a woman takes bloody revenge upon a suitor who wrongs her.[10]

However, though it shows the influence of romance and amatory formulae, Barker's text complicates their conventions. Kathryn King writes that *Love Intrigues* 'bears an interestingly ironic relation' to women's amatory fiction and that it 'possesses an immediacy and psychological realism seldom felt in the narratives of Behn, Manley, and Haywood'.[11] A semi-autobiographical persona, Galesia is the story's teller and central character, and in both roles she is dynamic and self-conscious, too self-

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[7] Of course Barker's (or bookseller Edmund Curll's) choice of the term 'novel' should not be construed as a critical declaration of the genre under discussion here. The label is accurate enough in the contemporaneous sense documented by Johnson's *Dictionary* a few decades later: 'a small tale, generally of love'; *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 2 vols (London: W. Strahan et al., 1755), II. See also Paula R. Backscheider and John J. Richetti, eds, *Popular Fiction by Women, 1660-1730: an Anthology* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), p. xi.
[8] Richetti, p. 230.
[9] Williamson, p. 245; see also King, pp. 190-191.
[10] Donovan, *Women and the Rise of the Novel*, pp. 95, 103, 107, 164.
[11] King, p. 190.

aware and unpredictable to be a two-dimensional romance type.[12] As the young protagonist of the tale, Galesia is both proud and self-critical; her struggles to comprehend her own motives and the erratic behaviour of Bosvil, her cruelly irresolute suitor and cousin, contribute to the narrative's sustained fascination with subjective interiority. As the narrator, speaking long after the events of the plot, Galesia's retrospection provides additional facets to her character. Referring to this ironizing complexity, Donovan claims that the 'realist tradition in English women's prose', which she traces from the middle of the seventeenth century, 'culminated in the works of Jane Barker'.[13] Even the otherwise unimpressed Richetti concedes to 'an attractive psychological verisimilitude' in Galesia.[14] Title page declarations notwithstanding, this widely cited psychological particularity is the most conspicuous invitation to treat the text as novelistic, to read it with a critical emphasis on the interrelation of psychological realism and epistemology.

Galesia's emotional turmoil is the obvious point of overlap for these elements. The episode in which Barker seems to rework the Violenta tale elaborates considerably upon Galesia's tumultuous feelings, so that this conventional romance scenario in fact highlights the most novelistic aspects of *Love Intrigues*. In this passage, Galesia, after concealing her anger with Bosvil in her father's presence, explodes into murderous wrath when she is left to herself:

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[12] Jean B. Kern, remarking on Barker's 'intense portrayal of pent-up emotion', writes that 'the words of Galesia have the authentic ring of autobiography'; see 'The Old Maid, or "To Grow Old, and Be Poor, and Laughed at"', in *Fetter'd or Free?: British Women Novelists, 1670-1815*, ed. by Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski (Athens, OH: Ohio University, 1986), pp. 201-214 (p. 205).
[13] Donovan, *Women and the Rise of the Novel*, p. 79.
[14] Richetti, p. 231.

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I cannot tell you what I suffer'd when I was alone; Rage and Madness seiz'd me, Revenge and Malice was all I thought upon; inspir'd by an evil Genius, I resolv'd his Death, and pleas'd myself in the Fancy of a barbarous Revenge, and delighted myself to think I saw his Blood pour out of his false Heart. In order to accomplish this detestable Freak, I snatch'd up a Steel Rapier, which stood in the Hall, and walk'd away towards the Place of his Abode, saying to myself, The false Bosvil shall disquiet me no more, nor any other of my Sex; in him I will end his Race; no more of them shall come to disturb or affront Womankind.[15]

Recounted by a more estranged narrator, Galesia's anger could easily diminish into a caricature of feminine hysteria -- a smirking account of the 'woman scorned'. Instead, the episode is related by Galesia herself, directly quoting her own enraged speech, and when the tormented Galesia seizes a weapon her thirst for revenge is possessed of a self-aware, gendered agency. Bosvil is not only a threat to her own happiness; he represents an entire 'Race' of men who prey upon women. Galesia's sense of persecution announces both her subjective individuality and her conscious categorical identification with the standpoint of disempowered women in general.[16] The intimate narrative point of view offers a striking

[15] Jane Barker, *The Galesia Trilogy and Selected Manuscript Poems of Jane Barker*, ed. by Carol Shiner Wilson (New York: Oxford University, 1997), p. 31. Subsequent references to this edition of Barker's fictions will appear in the text. Wilson's text of *Love Intrigues* is based on the revised text first published in *The Entertaining Novels of Mrs. Jane Barker*, 2 vols (London: A. Bettesworth and E. Curll, 1719), II. The earliest published version of the text, which King notes was probably 'never intended for public consumption' (p. 185), contains virtually the same passage, except that it portrays the rapier as imaginary. See Barker, *Love Intrigues: Or, The History of the Amours of Bosvil and Galesia, as Related to Lucasia, in St. Germains Garden. A Novel* (London: E. Curll, 1713), p. 43; reprinted in Backscheider and Richetti, pp. 82-111, (p. 100).
[16] Donovan, with reference to Hegel, Marx, and Lukács, provides further discussion of standpoint theory as it relates to early modern women's

rendering of Galesia's experience as an autonomous individual grappling with cultural expectations.

The alternative perspective offered by the older Galesia's frank description is similarly involved. As she evokes the interior complexities and contradictions of her youth, the narrating Galesia must be correspondingly dynamic. She sympathizes, of course, but not without censure, and time and experience create a reflective tone that allows her coolly to interpose poetic meditations and didactic commentary. These interjections foster an ironic distance that, once established, complicates the text's melodramatic tendencies, even where no explicit commentary appears. As the passage excerpted above continues, Galesia's 'Rage and Madness' give way to self-aggrandizement verging on the ridiculous:

> This only Son shall die by the Hands of me an only Daughter; and however the World may call it Cruelty, or Barbarity, I am sure our Sex will have Reason to thank me, and keep an annual Festival, in which a Criminal so foul is taken out of their Way. The Example, perhaps, may deter others, and secure many from the Wrongs of such false Traytors, and I be magnify'd in future Times. For it was for ridding the World of Monsters that Hercules was made so great a Hero, and George a Saint; then sure I shall be rank'd in the Catalogue of Heroines, for such a Service done to my Sex; for certainly, the Deserts of Arabia never produc'd so formidable a Monster as this unaccountable Bosvil. (p. 31)

Galesia's anger and self-pity have become an inadvertent mock-heroic. It should not be overlooked here that the sense of having been wronged not

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writing in *Women and the Rise of the Novel*, pp. 14-15. See also 'Women and the Rise of the Novel: A Feminist-Marxist Theory', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 16.3 (1991), 441-462, (pp. 445-451).

only as an individual but also as a woman, which a few lines before was a visible mark of her conscious subjectivity, is what leads the teenaged Galesia to indulgent self-aggrandizement. The narrator voices her own scepticism in a coda:

Behold what Sophisms one can find to justify any Attempt, tho' never so mad or desperate; and even affront, if not quite reverse the Laws of Nature: That if the Feebleness of our Hands did not moderate the Fury of our Heads, Women sometimes would exceed the fiercest Savages, especially when affronted in their Amours; which brings into my Mind a Verse or two on such an Occasion.

A slighted Woman, oft a Fury grows,

And, for Revenge, quits her baptismal Vows,

Becomes a Witch, and does a Fiend espouse. (pp. 31-32)

The 'woman scorned' axiom has shown itself after all -- and in rhymed iambic pentameter, no less, as if to provide in form as well as content an ironic counterpoint to the disorder of young Galesia's emotional state. As Jane Spencer writes, the narrator's attribution of the crisis to female weakness 'undercuts the former Galesia's heroic stance and ranks her rather with the ridiculed cast-off mistresses of Restoration comedy who fail in their attempts to attack their ex-lovers'.[17] Thus, Barker's variable narrative voice challenges both the literary conventions of romance and the social conventions of gender, but then proceeds to deflate those challenges with an appeal to the very norms she has interrogated.

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[17] Jane Spencer, 'Creating the Woman Writer: The Autobiographical Works of Jane Barker', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 2.2 (1983), 165-181, (p. 171).

Yet all is not so neatly settled. Patricia M. Spacks has noted that eighteenth-century 'female novelists, upholding the established system, find images and actions to express profound ambivalence'.[18] In this case, the narrator's curt aphorism seems conspicuously glib after a scene of such intensity. As Spencer's comment implies, the critique of Galesia's desperation seems to rely on a relatively formulaic sexism, something perhaps more representative of Galesia's anxieties than of her own opinion. Similarly, the accompanying admonition in verse lacks the immediacy of the action which precedes it. Inset and italicized, quoted from memory, it is an orphan commentary piped in from beyond the frame. The degree of irony or authority Barker (or Galesia) invests in the poetic fragment is uncertain. Though presented as if in summary, it does little to resolve the tensions developed in the preceding lines, serving instead only to add another voice to the dialogue.

The two principal voices of the episode act to some extent as archetypes of youth and experience; however, the young Galesia is more than just an unsophisticated child in need of correction. Though prone to flights of anger and fancy, she is nevertheless intelligent and outstandingly determined. True, shortly after her fit of anger she pens maudlin poetry and tearfully wishes for death, but then she also takes to managing her father's business affairs with the authority of 'the great Turk over his Subjects' and reads extensively on medicine, all while maintaining the presence of mind to carry out a vengeful prank on Bosvil (pp. 35-38). Galesia is more remarkable for her ability than her instability. More importantly, even when Galesia's behaviour is at its most bathetic, the cause of her outrage is never made ridiculous. Bosvil's actions are unquestionably dishonourable. To whatever extent Galesia's volatility

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[18] Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Imagining a Self: Autobiography and Novel in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1976), p. 63.

might deserve reproach, Bosvil's own inconsistency is presented as more fully contemptible. It is more public, and therefore more dangerous to others, and it is impossible to adequately explain. Although Galesia's vow to renounce the marriage market, 'to espouse a Book, and spend my Days in Study', is repeatedly characterized as an act of impetuous pride, it appears to be a reasonable attempt at self-preservation (p. 15).

At one point, Barker indicates that Bosvil might have another side of the tale to tell. An unnamed 'Confidant' tells Galesia that Bosvil does indeed love her, and that he has stayed away only because, in Galesia's paraphrase, 'all my Conduct had been with Caution and Circumspection, quite different from Passion or Tenderness' (p. 45). Galesia cannot disprove the claim, but neither can she ignore her doubts:

> How far this was sincere or pretended, I know not, but I rather think he set it up as a Screen to his own Falsehood; for the meerest Dunce in the School of Love could not but spell Affection in all these three Years Transactions. (p. 45)

Galesia's admission, 'I know not', is ever present in Barker's texts, and it draws attention to the interpretive stress taking shape in this passage. Galesia, faced with a stranger's second-hand justification of Bosvil's conduct, must weigh it against her own estimation of his ability to 'spell Affection' in her previous actions. Forced to judge at such a remove from the situation, Galesia opts for the most conservative response: continued inaction.

The elder Galesia, though often disapproving, never quite achieves the wise judicial status that her ironic tone implies. Her reflective tone effectively undermines the younger Galesia's tendency toward self-indulgent dramatizing, but when, after the 'Violenta' episode, she supplies

little more than a rhymed platitude as a proverbial truth, she signals her own equal frustration. After Bosvil's maddening inscrutability and her brave struggle to maintain propriety, it seems unlikely that Galesia -- at either age -- could be satisfied with such a pat cliché. The formal and typographical separateness of the poetic fragment compounds the distance of its voice from Galesia's actual circumstances. What seems at first glance to be a dismissal of Galesia's anger is in fact a token of the inapplicability of shallow stereotypes, and is, in Spencer's phrase, 'an implicit criticism of the conventions governing women'.[19] The fragment, the voice of convention, responds to Galesia's very particular problem quite uselessly with assured and simplistic generality. Conventional wisdom has little to offer.

When the elder Galesia speaks in her own voice, she claims no more insight than her younger self into Bosvil's motives or the response his behaviour requires. In the framing fiction she confesses to her interlocutor, Lucasia, 'how far I may stand justify'd or condemn'd in your Thoughts I know not', and adds, 'I believe wiser Heads than mine wou'd have been puzled in so difficult a Case' (p. 46). Further, the position from which she speaks, that of a learned, financially independent spinster, vindicates the younger Galesia's withdrawal into scholarship, however prideful her motives. In all the intervening years that separate Galesia's two voices, no better option than isolated autonomy has presented itself for dealing with the deception and double standards of amorous entanglements. Neither narrator nor protagonist can determine exactly what to make of the tale, and the blurry boundary between Galesia and Barker implies that the author herself withholds final judgement.

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[19] Spencer, p. 171.

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Consequently, the text ends without resolution, refusing the standard binary of seduction versus marriage.[20] In the final pages, Galesia touts pious fatalism as the only appropriate strategy for young women, as if her own self-sufficiency has in fact been meek compliance with the 'Hand of Providence' all along (pp. 46-47). Still, like her deflation of the younger Galesia's violent anger, this moralizing dénouement can only partially redact the ideological stance offered by the narration that comes before it. Barker's tonal ambiguity places the narrator's praise of passivity in uncertain relation to her coexisting denunciation of the social order that demands such passivity. Kathryn R. King sees a socially critical stance imbedded in this ambivalence:

> The effect of Barker's subversive narrative -- and in this instance that overworked adjective seems about right -- is to expose feminine modesty and prudence as forms of self-suppression as likely to breed shame and humiliation as to ensure personal happiness and a well-ordered household.[21]

Just as the narrator's overt criticism of Galesia's feverish emotions adumbrates a deeper condemnation of Bosvil's callousness, so too does this withdrawal from prescribed social roles place implicit blame on the demands of society itself. If the conventions of gender relations are so absurd as to allow a man like Bosvil to behave as he does, then the conventions themselves cannot be observed safely. The only option remaining is to withdraw altogether in an attempt to maintain 'Vertue' in the face of irresolvable ambiguity (p. 47). Yet such a withdrawal is purely

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[20] Spencer, p. 169.
[21] King, p. 192.

reactive; it is a strategy for defence, not success. As a result, Galesia is never fully satisfied that she has made the right decision.

Galesia's final retreat, whatever its ideological cast, is an act of incomprehension. As King points out, this is subversive because it reveals the inefficacy of socially prescribed gender relations. Even when a young woman does everything she ought to do, she cannot be assured of her safety and happiness. Still more potentially subversive is the uncertainty of that 'ought'. It is not only the indeterminate outcome of her choices that worries Galesia, but the hazy propriety of those choices themselves. The repressive potential of feminine codes of behaviour is the occasion of Galesia's quandary, but its substance is the opacity of individual experience in general. Galesia seeks to make a moral choice, but finds no moral certainties to confirm her decision. In spite of her intelligence, determination, high social standing, and strong grasp of cultural mores, she cannot make fully informed choices. Her final appeal to providence shows that she could never determine the truth of her circumstances, and it implies that any individual in a similar position would face such inevitable uncertainty.

Barker thus establishes Galesia's particularity of character by rendering the dual subjectivity of her experience. First, she is a thinking, perceiving subject rather than a passive object of narration; she behaves idiosyncratically, not according to type, and this unpredictability results from her self-aware and self-critical encounter with the events of her life. Correlating with this is a second, related, type of subjectivity, stemming from Galesia's position as a single individual: her understanding is confined to the finite scope of her own experience. Each of these subjectivities informs the other, so that Galesia's struggle to live virtuously involves a lifelong awareness of the inadequacy of her knowledge. This is true of the younger as well as the elder Galesia; both are characterized by

introspection into the uncertainty of their condition. Galesia, like any human subject, must live by guesswork, and even retrospectively she cannot be sure she has made the best choices.

The interpolated quotations in *Love Intrigues* contribute to the sense that Galesia's point of view is informed by, but distinct from, a multitude of possible views available to her. Some are clearly inadequate, even when derived from verses Galesia attributes to her own hand, as in the case of the verse commentary concluding the Violenta scene (p. 32; see above). Other poetic self-quotations serve to detail internal psychological processes like decisions, thoughts, and dreams (pp. 14, 17, 20, 25-26, 32, 40-41). In addition to verses written ostensibly by Galesia, the narrative is punctuated by quotations from Abraham Cowley and Ovid (pp. 29, 45; p. 36), as well as lyrics from an anonymous popular song (p. 30). Even the fickle Bosvil appears as a quoted source -- Barker includes the text of a letter he sends to Galesia (p. 34). These quotations are placed against a backdrop of allusion and intertextuality that, along with frequent use of 'proverbs' and classical mythology, directly references Roger Bacon (p. 12); Francis Bacon (p. 14); Katherine Philips (pp. 14-15); Sappho (p. 15); Aesop (pp. 16, 20-21, 37); the book of Ecclesiastes (p. 34); William Harvey (p. 37); John Wilmot, earl of Rochester (p. 39); Lucretius (p. 40); and Chaucer (or perhaps Boccaccio, p. 45). Galesia is influenced by these external points of view, even partly constituted by them, and yet she remains one among many, the boundedness of her subjectivity emphasized by the variety of its contrasting background.

The realism of *Love Intrigues* derives from Barker's interest in the psychological life of her heroine. Such an emphasis on the inward makes possible a concentration on problems of understanding as they impinge upon the experiences of a single individual, set against a backdrop of various and variable alternatives. Indeed, it demands such a

concentration, because a defining feature of subjecthood is such a distinct, situated access to knowledge. Part of creating realistic characters is therefore to depict them as dependent upon, that is, as subject to, their own finite experience of the world around them. Galesia can be called realistic because her particularity -- with its attendant epistemic crises -- is a fundamental aspect of her characterization.

The preceding chapter posits that literary realism is in some way engaged with epistemology. Barker's *Love Intrigues* provides an example of how a specific realistic technique -- portraying psychological particularity of character -- constitutes a depiction of subjectivity, which entails a specific set of epistemological difficulties. In this respect, political, feminist, and autobiographical readings of the text align, because the content of these interpretations maps effectively onto the most basic dilemma exemplified by the text, that of the self-aware subject attempting to comprehend a world that defies full comprehension. Furthermore, Barker's partial reliance upon extra-textual references to develop this subjectivity is significant. It indicates that one potential feature of a psychologically realistic text is the salience of a character's point of view as set off against multiple other possibilities. Considered alongside the variability of Galesia and the discursive structure of the narrative frame, *Love Intrigues* can be said to be pervaded by an aesthetic of epistemologically-charged multiplicity of voice.

Labelling features of Barker's work 'realistic' is somewhat anachronistic, but it is nonetheless useful because it highlights the way in which a literary preoccupation with problems of knowledge invites a characteristically novelistic technique -- establishing a character as a particularized individual. The aesthetic of multiplicity which Barker employs to achieve this subjectivity thus merits further consideration, not least because it is an effect she uses much more self-consciously than her

overlapping, and more critically remarked, realism. In *Love Intrigues* multiplicity of voice is prominent; in the latter two Galesia fictions it becomes altogether the dominant organizing and aesthetic strategy. The relevance of this multiplicity to the generic identity of the novel at large derives from its epistemological underpinnings as a rendering of individual subjectivity. In other words, to carry on the proposition of the preceding chapter, if the novel is a genre of extended prose fiction shaped by epistemological problems, then examining the construction of subjectivity via multiplicity in prose fiction can help solidify an understanding of the capacity and identity of the novel.

The work of twentieth-century critic Mikhail Bakhtin contends that an irreducible multiplicity of languages -- heteroglossia -- is the essential mode of the novel. In the essay 'Discourse in the Novel', he defines the novel as 'a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized'.[22] In other words, the novel's language diversity may assume the form of the languages of nations, of social or professional groups, and of the specific idiolects of individuals. In Bakhtin's terminology, any of these can be considered a voice, because all of them must originate from a particular context -- a certain ideological position. As Caryl Emerson writes, Bakhtin conceives of each voice as 'a "semantic position", a point of view on the world[;] it is one personality orienting itself among other personalities within a limited field'.[23]

Analogous to the kind of subjective particularity highlighted by psychological realism, novelistic heteroglossia situates the individual voice dialogically -- as one among many in an ongoing dialogue, shaped by its

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[22] Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, TX: University of Texas, 1981), p. 262.

[23] Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. by Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 1984), p. xxxvi.

constant interaction with others at multiple, overlapping scales. For Bakhtin, such an 'internal stratification' of language 'is the indispensable prerequisite for the novel as a genre'.[24] This does not mean, however, that the novel holds a monopoly on heteroglossia. Any utterance includes an element of multiplicity, since language must straddle individual impulse and mass convention in order to function. If they are to be intelligible, one's words cannot be exclusively one's own. The utterance is always, according to Bakhtin, 'a contradiction-ridden, tension-filled unity of two embattled tendencies in the life of language', what he calls 'centrifugal' and 'centripetal' impulses.[25]

The novel is the genre of heteroglossia, then, not because it is heteroglossia's sole domain, but because in the novel 'speech diversity and language stratification […] serve as the basis for style'.[26] Heteroglossia is essential to the novel, whereas in other literary genres it is incidental or even detrimental.[27] Like realism in the discussion above, it is a definitive, though not exclusive, feature of the novel. Moreover, and in another parallel with realism as a novelistic feature, heteroglossia helps to frame the epistemological implications of a multiply perceived, multiply understood world. Bakhtin claims that epic and novel are respectively motivated by 'memory' and 'knowledge'. Whereas the epic draws from a 'valorized', 'absolute', and monolithic conception of the past, 'the novel, by contrast, is determined by experience, knowledge, and practice (the future).' Hence Bakhtin's declaration, 'When the novel becomes the

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[24] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 263; see also p. 300.
[25] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 272.
[26] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 315.
[27] Stylistically heteroglot poetry, claims Bakhtin, would be in 'a prosaic key […,] turning the poet into a writer of prose' (*The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 285). The term 'poetry' here serves an abstract taxonomic purpose; shortly after this remark, Bakhtin grants in a footnote that 'in concrete examples of poetic works it is possible to find features fundamental to prose, and numerous hybrids of generic types exist' (*The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 287).

dominant genre, epistemology becomes the dominant discipline'.[28] The critical vocabulary set forth by Bakhtin is therefore a practical tool for continuing exploration of the interrelatedness of problems of knowledge and literary technique in the Galesia fictions.[29]

As has already been mentioned, after *Love Intrigues*, Barker published two more narratives organized around the experiences of Galesia: *A Patch-Work Screen for the Ladies* in 1723 and *The Lining of the Patch-Work Screen* in 1726. As their titles indicate, these texts are framed narratives incorporating such heterogeneous 'patches' as short tales, poems, song lyrics, essays, and recipes. King describes Barker's patchwork approach as a means for bringing together textual forms and accounts of subjective experience that would normally remain obscure:

> [Barker] uses a technique which might be compared to collage and assemblage -- a patching together of scraps of inherited forms so as to accommodate within the confines of a single female-centred narrative kinds of experience traditionally excluded from popular fiction, resulting in a 'patchwork' of modes, manners, voices, and genres.[30]

Such a structure shows Barker's interest in further cultivating the aesthetic of multiplicity that distinguishes *Love Intrigues*. *A Patch-Work Screen* begins with a prefatory note in which Barker portrays the patchwork as a conflation of women's intellectual and domestic productivity, setting out 'to

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[28] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 15.
[29] For a brief consideration of Bakhtin's relevance to the study of the early British novel, see Brean Hammond and Shaun Regan, *Making the Novel: Fiction and Society in Britain, 1660-1789* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 18-22. While Hammond and Regan do not detect a high degree of Bakhtinian dialogism in eighteenth-century novels, they do apply 'Bakhtin's rubric of "novelization"' to the 'altering standards of plausibility' in the fiction of the time (p. 22).
[30] King, pp. 194-195.

say something in Favour of Patch-Work, the better to recommend it to my Female Readers, as well in their Discourse, as their Needle-Work' (p. 51).

Cecilia Macheski explains the significance of needlework as an emblem of the common experiences of eighteenth-century women. It was an activity that was exclusively female, but practised in one form or another by women of every social rank:

> From the spinners and silk winders who worked in Spitalfields for as little as three shillings a week to wealthy women and their servants who employed idle hours embroidering silk flowers on waistcoats and firescreens, the needle was a common denominator.[31]

Expanding upon this commonality, Barker represents patchwork as a feminine model for unity at the religious, political, social, and even atomic level:

> Whenever one sees a Set of Ladies together, their Sentiments are as differently mix'd as the Patches in their Work: To wit, Whigs and Tories, High-Church and Low-Church, Jacobites and Williamites, and many more Distinctions, which they divide and sub-divide, 'till at last they make this Dis-union meet in an harmonious Tea-Table Entertainment. This puts me in mind of what I have heard some Philosophers assert, about the Clashing of Atoms, which at last united to compose this glorious Fabrick of the Universe. (p. 52)

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[31] Cecilia Macheski, 'Penelope's Daughters: Images of Needlework in Eighteenth-Century Literature', in *Fetter'd or Free?: British Women Novelists, 1670-1815*, ed. by Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski (Athens, OH: Ohio University, 1986), pp. 85-100 (p. 86). See also Kathryn R. King, 'Of Needles and Pens and Women's Work', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 14.1 (1995), 77-93.

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Barker furthermore positions her literary patchwork as an alternative to the linear 'Histories at Large' of Defoe.[32] Returning to her textile motif, she goes on to present patchwork as an improvement upon the older and more tedious fashion of 'the working of Point, and curious Embroidery' (p. 54). Audrey Bilger sees in this extended metaphor a rejection of the romance in favour of the novel, for 'whereas the "higher" genres, like elaborate embroidery, deal with lofty themes and fantastic events, the novel, like patchwork, takes its cues from daily life'. In Bilger's reading, Barker is claiming 'that the novel, which concerns itself with life's ordinary details, is a favorable genre for women'.[33] King, however, finds an 'ambiguously rueful tone' in the patchwork-as-writing metaphor, revealing what might be 'nostalgia at lost delicacy' along with enthusiasm for new freedoms.[34] Bilger's interpretation that Barker is celebrating the novel in particular is complicated further by Barker's oppositional reference to the works of Defoe, not to mention her unabashed use of the fantastic in both of the patchwork fictions. Nevertheless, Bilger makes a valid observation of the way Barker poses the patchwork as a creative technique grounded in diverse but commonplace female experience, and with apparent aspirations to a utopian universalism.

For Donovan, Barker's preface to *A Patch-Work Screen* places her work in ironic contradistinction to the patriarchal, elevated register of the

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[32] Barker specifically mentions three of Defoe's works: *Robinson Crusoe*, *Moll Flanders*, and *Colonel Jack* (p. 51). As Donovan points out, Barker's comment indicates her attentiveness to the style of her literary contemporaries (*Women and the Rise of the Novel*, p. 55). King provides a useful reminder that, 'except for *Robinson Crusoe*, Defoe's authorship of these narratives was unknown at this time', reinforcing the notion that Barker is in this instance critiquing a style rather than an author (p. 197).

[33] Bilger, p. 24.

[34] King, 'Of Needles and Pens and Women's Work', p. 82.

epic, what Bakhtin deemed to be 'the word of the fathers'.[35] Of

patchwork, Donovan writes, 'Not only is such a creation quintessentially

women's work; it also exhibits the "unofficial," random, folk character that

Bakhtin saw as essential to the novel's dialogic discourse'.[36] Carol Shiner

Wilson, in her introduction to the Galesia trilogy, describes a similar

capacity when she commends 'Barker's manipulation of the female

quotidian, women's sewn work, as an artistic and political vehicle worthy

to explore the complexities of human experience' (p. xxxix). Wilson, like

Bilger, reads this image of patchwork as representing a utopian 'work in

progress':

> The women in Barker's preface are more reasonable than men.
> Rather than creating conflict, they try to create communities that
> strive for harmony, taking the disparate patches of bitterly
> oppositional politics and religion of the day -- Whigs, Tories,
> Jacobites, Williamites, and so forth -- and sewing them together to
> 'compose this glorious Fabrick of the Universe'. (p. xl)

Though she does not use the phrase, Wilson's description of Barker's

patchwork aesthetic -- open-ended, collective, occupied with everyday

experience -- is an apt characterization of the novelistic 'zone of contact'

proposed by Bakhtin.

In Bakhtin's view, the novel is situated in 'living contact with

unfinished, still-evolving contemporary reality'.[37] The conversational

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[35] Donovan, 'Women and the Rise of the Novel', p. 452; Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 342.

[36] Donovan, 'Women and the Rise of the Novel', p. 453.

[37] This novelistic trait finds expression at the level of language -- Bakhtin attributes to it 'a certain semantic openendedness' -- but derives ultimately from generic status: 'The novel is the only developing genre and therefore it reflects more deeply, more essentially, more sensitively and rapidly, reality itself in the process of its unfolding' (p. 7).

dynamic Barker seems to ascribe to her patchwork style is a key to her fictions' novelistic status because it situates her fiction squarely in this zone of contact. Compounded within the 'everydayness' of a tea-table conversation is both the prosaic normalcy of a commonplace event and the collective, amendable condition of something contemplated informally. A casual conversation does not conclude with a gavel strike; no minutes are taken. Any consensus is potentially open for future revision and interpretation. An everyday event, after all, is likely to happen again, and harmony need not compel unanimity anyway. Novelistic fiction, nudged by realism into the realm of the here-and-now, of domesticity and material detail, takes on the same unofficial status and is exposed to the same attendant epistemological provisionality as Barker's emblematic tea-table discourse. The everydayness of the novelistic zone of contact with life is, for Bakhtin, a mark of the novel's difference from older, more ossified genres like epic, and it illustrates the clear overlap between realism and heteroglossia, as well as their common epistemological consequences.

One such consequence is that 'the novel has a new and quite specific problematicalness: characteristic for it is an eternal re-thinking and re-evaluating'.[38] The interpretive uncertainty suffered by Galesia in *Love Intrigues* thus has its textual, hermeneutic equivalent: no reading can be authoritative when the text itself, discursive and informal, disallows the finality of an official explanation. For example King, responding to Wilson, proposes a deeper level of irony in Barker's vision of 'an harmonious Tea-Table Entertainment' that complicates its reception as a scene of amicable diversity. King notes that the political factions listed by Barker would, at the time of publication, 'point away from the present to the recent past', to a time before 'the Whig ascendance of 1714, which saw the proscription of the Tories from office and renewed suppression of

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[38] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 31.

both Catholics and Jacobites'.[39] She finds it significant that the women at Barker's tea-table have learned to harmonize their diverse ideologies in a domestic context, where they reproduce 'the tensions and divisions of the supposedly masculine public world'.[40] The scene thus satirizes the contemporaneously ascendant notion that private and public are diametrically opposed -- that domesticity, and hence femininity, compels political disempowerment:

> The scene might, then, be said to represent an oblique (and jaundiced) glance at the newly fashionable definitions of femininity that drained women of their political identities while relegating them to cosy protected spaces invoked by metonymic tea-tables.[41]

In this light, the harmony Barker envisions is not so much utopian as it is defensive -- cooperation under duress -- and the fact that the women's political ideas are somewhat dated hints at the intellectual impoverishment that follows from their enforced isolation from public discourse.

King's suggestion raises the additional question of whether the segregated women of the tea-table actually have managed to preserve their ideological orientation at all. Sealed off from the public realm, their political and religious loyalties can have no bearing on the world beyond the home. They are decorative opinions, fodder for idle conversation. When Barker writes, 'at last they make this Dis-union meet', the word 'meet' can be taken as either verb or adjective. Do the women make their disunion join together or do they instead make it appropriate, acceptable? It is uncertain whether these allegorical women have achieved unity in diversity, or tame propriety -- or perhaps some hybrid of the two. As a

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[39] King, p. 201.
[40] King, p. 202.
[41] Ibid.

text of the novelistic here-and-now, the tea-table scene allows for interpretive uncertainty because of the uncertainty of its historical moment. If the novel, as Bakhtin claims, 'comes into contact with the spontaneity of the inconclusive present', then it supports a correlative type of interpretation that is both spontaneous and inconclusive.[42] In this respect, immediacy precludes finality.

As she does with the Violenta episode in *Love Intrigues*, Barker presents a subject in such a way that more than one perspective, and thus more than one degree of ironic distance, is available. The tea-table is emblematic of the patchwork aesthetic. Barker integrates perspectives within the fictional construct of the text (in this case a women's social gathering) in a manner that allows a multiplicity of perspectives (in this case social, political, and literary-generic stances) to co-mingle in an interpretive cloud around the narrative. The result is that the text cannot be entirely assimilated to the position of one of its voices. Any one orientation is insufficient to characterize the whole composite, because its character arises through the interaction of multiple viewpoints.

Spacks describes this capacity of novelistic prose to speak to more than one purpose, and ties it to the portrayal of subjective experience:

> Even in its more amateurish manifestations, it seems, the novel
> can contain and express through its patterns of action complexities
> of feeling that it nowhere directly acknowledges: complexities,
> indeed, often contradicted by its explicit, moralistic statements.[43]

Barker's literary skill notwithstanding, her fragmented perspective cannot comfortably be dismissed as the incidental ambiguity of an inexpert writer.

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[42] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 27.
[43] Spacks, *Imagining a Self*, p. 63.

Rather, this effect is a sustained aesthetic and theoretical motif that dominates the Galesia trilogy, especially the patchwork fictions, from start to finish. It is also a creative model that is conducive to the Bakhtinian stratification and 'refraction' of voice that marks novelistic discourse.[44]

Barker's patchworks are stratified most obviously at the level of narrative structure. They are, as mentioned previously, framework narratives which tie together various sub-narratives and fragments, literary and non-literary alike. But the patchwork fictions are not simply digressive; they are deeply and recursively multiple. They create frames within frames, often at so many removes and with such hazy boundaries that it becomes difficult for the reader to disentangle the overlapping degrees of quotation. Indeed, such disentanglement is not only difficult; it is for the most part unnecessary. Like the intertextuality of *Love Intrigues*, the patchwork aesthetic of Barker's later fictions serves more to create a texture of allusion and heteroglossia than to establish a complex interweaving of sub-plots.

A Patch-Work Screen, for example, begins with the preface quoted above, which Barker addresses directly to the reader and signs with her own name. Yet it serves not just as an introduction of the patchwork aesthetic, but also as a framing fiction to the text that follows. In addition to the tea-table metaphor, it contains other digressive, and rather cryptic, allegorical material, included in which is a remark on a meeting between

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[44] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 299-300. Donovan claims that Bakhtin's theory of novelistic dialogism is weakened by his inattention to the 'framed-novelle', which she considers to be a separate genre that is, because of its structure, more amenable to dialogism and subversiveness than the novel proper. However, Donovan's argument, while valid, downplays the fact that, as she herself writes, 'Bakhtin's concept of the dialogic is […] more thematic than structural' (*Women and the Rise of the Novel*, p. 31; see also p. 139). Since structural dialogism can be assumed typically to contribute to thematic dialogism, the former may be considered one means of achieving the latter. It is this assumption that allows the present study to apply Bakhtin's theory -- and indeed to class Barker's framework narratives as novelistic in the first place.

the narrating 'Jane Barker' persona and Galesia. This, explains Barker, is how she 'came to know all this story of her [i.e. Galesia's] Patch-Work' (pp. 53-54). The text thus contains a story of its own dialectical creation, which is essentially an exchange between two projections of the same person.

Where one ends and the other begins is indefinite; Barker suggests as much when, after informing her reader that Galesia and company are still at work on a sequel, she closes her allegorical preface with a very worldly request: 'But I will inquire against the next Edition: therefore, be sure to buy these Patches up quickly, if you intend to know the Secret' (p. 54). These are the words of the narrator, 'Jane Barker', who will seek out another meeting with Galesia to discover the sequel to *A Patch-Work Screen*. They are also the words of Galesia, who alone could know that the forthcoming sequel will disclose a 'Secret'. Finally, the exhortation to buy comes from another, much more material, Jane Barker -- a septuagenarian woman seated at her writing table, hoping to earn an income from her pen. So before the narrative begins, it is already founded in a blur of manifold genre and voice.

Within this outermost frame, in which a partly fictionalized 'Jane Barker' narrates, are situated the two most prominent framing devices of *A Patch-Work Screen*. In the first, Galesia undertakes a coach journey from London. The passengers entertain each other with stories, and sometimes stories within stories, of crime and deception. In this many-voiced context, the inset tales are themselves advanced dialogically, with digressions and asides, and with comments from either Galesia or the narrator. When all the passengers but Galesia disembark, her coach begins racing against another, with the result that Galesia's vehicle crashes into a river. No explanation for this impromptu competition is given; the narrator provides only an idle conjecture and a textual shrug:

'Whether the Bounty of the Passengers had over-filled the Heads of the Coach men, or what other Freak, is unknown' (p. 71). Beyond its rather transparent utility as a plot device, the coach accident signals an important element of Barker's patchwork technique: events occur in paratactic succession with no overt indication of their relation -- either to each other or to any overarching theme. At the narrative level the result is, in the words of Spacks, 'an almost incoherent melange of happenings related to one another only by the often peripheral involvement of the heroine'.[45] Donovan sees in this technique a source of heteroglossia that is less prominent in more rigidly structured novels, a tension between 'cohesion and eclecticism (or what Bakhtin calls "centripetal" and "centrifugal" forces)'.[46] Events occur incidentally, without implying a clear structure or narrative purpose.

The accident is Barker's means of conveying Galesia to the house of an unnamed 'Lady', in which she finds the titular screen and the conversations that comprise the second main framing device, which organizes the rest of the book. The screen itself is a piece of furniture in a room decorated throughout with patchworks of 'rich Silks, and Silver and Gold Brocades'. At the urging of her hostess, Galesia decorates this screen with texts from her collection, 'Pieces of Romances, Poems, Love-Letters, and the like', in lieu of fabric pieces (pp. 73, 74). These swatches make up some of the material in the screen sequence, but much of the text is narrated by Galesia, with significant contributions from the 'Jane Barker' persona and other frame characters. The screen framework is further divided into four 'leaves', which are somewhat haphazardly subdivided in turn by titles and headings, so that it is often unclear

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[45] Spacks, *Imagining a Self*, p. 66.
[46] Donovan, *Women and the Rise of the Novel*, p. 55; see also Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 272. Donovan devotes a chapter of her study to possibility that parataxis in general and the 'framed-novelle' in particular are feminine, potentially subversive, modes (pp. 129-143).

whether a given passage represents spoken dialogue or a written patch for the screen or, since Barker's characters often read aloud, both.

In both secondary frames -- coach and screen -- the narrative duties are dispersed among speakers who occupy disparate times and places. For example, the fifth tale told in the coach, concerning the clever use of disguises in a 'Transaction' between a pair of unfortunate lovers, is related by a young woman who seems to have witnessed it all with omniscient discernment. She even reads out copies of the lovers' letters, which she happens to have carried along. The tale is thus narrated at four degrees of quotation: the narrating persona first introduced in the preface relates Galesia's account of the young lady's account of a cavalier and his love's account of themselves.[47] The result is a rather blurry chorus of voices sounding from various narrative removes.

Later, amongst the tales in the screen framework, Galesia relates events from her own past, punctuating her narrative with poems and other intertextual asides. She is occasionally interrupted by the narrator of the exterior frame, but is usually left to supply her own commentary and digressions on the stories of other characters. Galesia narrates some of these inset tales in the first person, assuming the voice of her subject, as in the untitled tale of a nurse's forced marriage and again in 'The Story of Belinda' (pp. 119, 129). By contrast, the inset 'History of Lysander' is told in detached, omniscient third person (p. 134). Given that the whole of the text is purportedly transcribed from memory after Galesia retells it to the

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[47] One could add a fifth, intertextual level of quotation if, as Donovan believes, this tale is 'a retake of the *Portuguese Letters*' first published in French in 1669 by Claude Barbin (*Women and the Rise of the Novel*, p. 55). The resemblance in this case does not extend much beyond the basic premise of a nun corresponding with her lover; however, Donovan's hypothesis acquires a bit more plausibility when Barker later references the 'letters' directly in *The Lining of the Patch-Work Screen*. See *The Galesia Trilogy*, pp. 222-223.

'Jane Barker' persona, *A Patch-Work Screen* seems to be a patchwork of ventriloquized impersonations.

Galesia relates another of her sub-narratives, the story of her being courted by the rakish Mr. Bellair, in the third person as well, but in this instance she relies on dialogue to carry the plot. Much of this material is set off with quotation marks, yet is for the most part phrased as indirectly reported speech. When Galesia's father approves of a proposed match between his daughter and Bellair, his speech is strangely disembodied at first, shifting into direct discourse well after the quotation marks indicate:

> My Father making him a grateful Acknowledgment, told him, 'He wou'd propose it to my Mother and me; and added, That his Daughter having been always dutiful and tenderly observant, he resolv'd to be indulgent, and impose nothing contrary to her Inclinations. Her Mother also, continu'd he, has been a Person of that Prudence and Vertue, that I should not render the Justice due to her Merit, if I did any thing of this kind, without her Approbation'.[48] (p. 102)

If this kind of indistinct delineation of speakers is an error, it is an omnipresent one for Barker. Some spoken dialogue, like the above, is punctuated with speech marks; some is italicized; most is marked only by attributions or syntactic subordination. Of course, eighteenth-century conventions for representing speech in text were far from standardized, and publisher Edmund Curll certainly had priorities other than assiduous editorial policy. However, while it is perhaps not a deliberate strategy for

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[48] In the 1723 edition, the identical punctuation appears, along with a column of double quotation marks in the left-hand margin beside lines of dialogue, further emphasizing their spoken quality; Barker, *A Patch-Work Screen for the Ladies*, pp. 35-36.

encoding an ironic subtext, its near ubiquity indicates that it is a feature of Barker's style with which she was comfortable. In a text that so consistently highlights vocal multiplicity, the peculiar diffraction of Barker's dialogue should not be casually dismissed.

Citing the passage quoted above, Donovan writes that Galesia's dual role as listener and reporter, as demonstrated by Barker's use of indirect speech, lends a Bakhtinian ironic detachment to her father's words, 'And so the literal word of the fathers [...] is undercut or rendered problematic'.[49] Galesia believes that Bellair is too roguish to marry, and that 'often those Beau Rakes, have the Cunning and Assurance to make Parents on both sides, Steps to their Childrens Disgrace' (p. 103). Donovan's interpretation (and Galesia's misgiving) has the support of the plot; within a few paragraphs Bellair has committed highway robbery as a 'Frolick' and been executed (p. 104). How could a hint of irony not creep in as Galesia recounts her father's words, so earnest and yet so wrong? Context highlights how entrenched the man is in his own views; it objectifies his words and reveals what Bakhtin terms their 'brute materiality'.[50] Galesia's father's views are dialogized by the very fact that Galesia reports them. No explicit editorializing is necessary when a little inconsistency in pronouns indicates Galesia's alternative perspective.

Beyond whatever ironic content it might disclose, Barker's apparent imprecision in designating speech is also aesthetically consistent with her compound framing structure. In its overlapping frameworks, the text emanates from a variety of sources and in a variety of narrative modes; the voices of the characters themselves reinforce this heterogeneous profusion on a smaller scale. In *The Lining of the Patch-Work Screen*, Barker continues to use the reverberations of telling and re-telling as a

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[49] Donovan, 'Women and the Rise of the Novel', p. 461.
[50] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 340.

structural (or rather an anti-structural) device. The framed tales of *The Lining* are longer than the 'patches' of her previous book -- in her prefatory note, Barker calls the text a 'Pane-work' -- and are for the most part delivered to Galesia by other characters, who usually claim to be repeating the tales of still other characters at second hand (p. 177).

In 'The History of Dorinda', for example, the narrative action is related to Galesia by an unnamed gentleman friend who assumes the first-person voice of Dorinda and yet makes occasional asides in his own voice. When Dorinda's young son enters the plot, his tale is set off by a separate title, 'The Story of Young Jack Mechant', but the gentleman continues to narrate, now speaking as the young Jack. This leads to an inset tale -- a sub-sub-narrative? -- in which a girl shares her story with Jack. Like *A Patch-Work Screen*, *The Lining* is framed in its introduction as the words of Galesia passed on to the authorial persona, which means that part of this text filters through no less than five layers of quotation: the girl speaks to Jack; Jack speaks to the gentleman; the gentleman speaks to Galesia; Galesia speaks to 'Jane Barker'; and 'Jane Barker' speaks to the reader. As in the marriage arrangement scene excerpted above, much of the text emanates from a strikingly overdetermined provenance. Any single utterance, as it appears on the page, can be read as the words of -- and in the voice of -- several characters with several different ideological inflections.

Determining who speaks these matryoshka-doll lines is unnecessary for the reader's comprehension of the plot, but their multi-located, choral quality is impossible to ignore. As a component of Barker's literary patchwork, the vague assignation of speech and narrative duties reiterates the unifying themes of indeterminate multiplicity.[51] It is at one

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[51] The impressionistic sense of ideological multiplicity produced by Barker's frames-within-frames may have a cognitive basis. Lisa Zunshine cites a

level a formally realistic rendering of social interaction, depicting what Bakhtin calls 'conversational hurly-burly', in which 'everything often fuses into one big "he says…you say…I say…"'.[52] At another level, it establishes the multivalent, variously grasped phenomenal world that encloses such a social reality. Since reported speech is 'always subject to semantic changes', the multiple speaking voices of Barker's text are a sign of mutually influential plurality.[53] That this plural structure is, in fact, built in to the narrative form itself is further evidence for the patchwork aesthetic's status as a reflection of epistemological as well as social conditions. For the patchwork fictions' aesthetic constitution, who speaks is less important than the impression that many people speak through and over each other's voices.

The inset texts of *A Patch-Work Screen*, some of which make up the 'patches' proper, evoke this same impressionistic sense of multiplicity. Most represent Galesia's poetic reactions to her experiences. In this way they provide a sort of window to Galesia's youth, more immediate and yet more formal. The narrating Galesia who sits with her hostess, presumably reading the poems aloud, distances herself from the young poet who composed them. Commenting on her landscape poem 'The Grove', she suspects that to her hostess it 'must needs be as insipid as a Breakfast of Water-gruel' (p. 79). The sequel to this poem is 'The Rivulet', which Galesia introduces as an attempt at a Pindaric ode. She remarks that she chose the form 'I suppose, out of Curiosity; for I neither love to read nor hear that kind of Verse' (pp. 79-80). Galesia's self-deprecation has a

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recent study indicating 'people have marked difficulties processing stories that involve mind-reading above the fourth level'. In other words, a reader confronted with more than four layers of embedded intentionality in a narrative cannot be expected to track each layer; *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University, 2006), p. 27.

[52] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 338.

[53] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 340.

splitting effect on the voice of her texts-within-the-text. She disapproves of them on artistic terms, indicating that she is of a different mind on such themes than she once was. She also points out that the poems' styles are an affectation, a youthful experiment with poetic form. So as she voices the poems, Galesia is quoting her younger self, but that younger Galesia is herself making a quotation of a sort, imitating other stylistic models, taking on the voices of others.

Indeed, though Barker frequently uses Galesia's writing as a characterization device, the verse that appears throughout the patchworks always discloses some degree of distance from its author. Galesia is keen to poeticize any concept. For instance, 'A Receipt for French Soup', a 'Prophesy' foreseeing the financial debacle of the South Sea Bubble, and a bitter lament 'On the Follies of Human-Life' all appear within just a few pages (pp. 151-154). Galesia also writes letters, records a dream, and composes a ballad, all in verse. As an enthusiastic literary experimenter, Galesia writes in a variety of modes, on subjects both high and low. This adds some complexity to her character, and it also complicates the relation between Galesia's inner, psychological life and the textual artefacts it produces. If Galesia can assume such a variety of authorial voices, then none can be regarded as the 'real' Galesia. By depicting Galesia 'trying on' different stylistic and generic voices, Barker provides more than one perspective on her heroine, which both enriches and blurs her character. More voices mean more interpretive possibilities but less ground for confirmation or denial.

At the root of Barker's omnivorous use of genre, and underlying its capacity to complicate Galesia as a character, is a parodic sense of generic form's relation to the world it evokes. Bakhtin describes the way 'the novel gets on poorly with other genres':

> The novel parodies other genres (precisely in their role as genres);
> it exposes the conventionality of their forms and their language; it
> squeezes out some genres and incorporates others into its own
> peculiar structure, reformulating and re-accentuating them.[54]

Galesia's verses on everything from bereavement to cookery have a parodic effect not in that they seek to make either their form or content ridiculous (though there are burlesque overtones in some poems), but rather in that they attest to the artificiality of form in general. The poems are objectified by the narrative action that frames them.[55] They are quite literally objects that Galesia pulls from her trunk, reads, and critiques. As the frame narrative makes clear by its very presence, Galesia is separate from these pieces; she cannot be reduced to a composite of the speakers of her poems. And yet those speakers certainly play their part in developing her listener's (and reader's) conception of her identity. Bakhtin claims that classical parody 'shows that a given straightforward generic word -- epic or tragic -- is one-sided, bounded, incapable of exhausting the object'.[56] The effect in this case is similar; both Galesia and the world she inhabits are indicated only partially and inexactly by the generic languages she adopts.

In her 'patches', Galesia modulates her poetic voice according to her intended audience. Some poems, like the aforementioned landscape, take on a declamatory posture, impersonal and imitative of a classical literary mode. But often, Galesia's taste for literary experimentation leads to poems with a roving, compound register. 'Anatomy', for example, is introduced in classicist terms but soon moves to a more hybrid register.

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[54] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 5.
[55] Bakhtin expands briefly upon the novel's potential to 'objectify' the genres it incorporates; see *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 320-323.
[56] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 55.

Galesia tells her hostess that she was inspired by Ovid to poeticize what she had learned of medical science, and in a preamble entitled 'An Invocation of her Muse' she alludes to Apollo's patronage of both medicine and poetry (pp. 85-86). Once 'Anatomy' is underway, classical literary figures and biblical allusions feature alongside domestic imagery and the names -- as well as the voices -- of medical pioneers. The physicians Thomas Willis and William Harvey play the part of Dante's Virgil, leading the speaker through a vast anatomical model of the body in which poetic licence alternates with precision in a Latinate hybrid. Here the trio tour the digestive tract:

> We viewed the Kitchen call'd Ventriculus;
>
> Then pass'd we through the Space call'd Pylorus;
>
> And to the Dining-Room we came at last,
>
> Where the Lacteans take their sweet Repast. (pp. 87-88)

Galesia is keen to display the intellectual maturity that develops as she proceeds in her studies, yet she is careful to do so in such a way that it never eclipses her humility. Though self-educated, she is well read, and comfortable enough with her knowledge to attempt some literary innovation, even to speak in the voices of medical masters. However, she does not do so without qualification, citing classical inspiration and in fact apologizing for presuming to learn at all.

When she first encounters Willis and Harvey she is in the midst of expounding on women's preordained ignorance by citing the biblical Fall: 'And 'cause our Sex precipitated first,/ To Pains, and Ignorance we since are curs'd' (p. 87). Only after the men 'bid' her to follow them does Galesia obediently break off her sermon. Congruent with this juxtaposition of aptitude and deference is Galesia's sense of wonder as she

discovers a new field of knowledge. 'Bless me!' she exclaims at one point, 'what Rarities are here!' (p. 88). The speaker of the poem narrates (for the poem is a narrative, too) as a thoroughly educated poet, an eager pupil, and yet also a conscientiously self-effacing woman. In the framing fiction, Galesia reads 'Anatomy' aloud to her hostess as an autobiographical anecdote, and one imagines it to be a strenuous performance. She must actively modulate her own voice not only to accommodate the other speaking characters in the poem, but also to communicate the almost contradictory modes which together characterize the speaker herself.

With an air of textbook rigour, Barker (or Galesia) also supplies footnotes to the poem, most in abbreviated medical Latin. Thus, mingling with the emphatic display of art, science, pride, and humility is an implicit aspiration to professionalism. Through the course of the poem, the speaker changes from a receptive witness to a contributing participant -- her interaction with her guides becomes more dialogic. King reads this change as 'a decisive transformation in the speaker-student's relation to male pedagogical authority', noting the way her language becomes 'more expansive, metaphorical, even a bit whimsical' and inclines toward using the pronoun 'we' in place of the initial, more reverent binary of 'they' and 'me'.[57] In addition to reinforcing Galesia's subjecthood, this display of intellectual agency draws attention to the dialogic, consensus-driven aspect of scientific understanding. The medical guides who attend Galesia in her tour are chronological successors, so, as King observes, the poem rehearses 'the displacement of the Galenic "ancients" by the scientific "moderns"'.[58] She further suggests that an inconsistency in the poem's medical model -- a portrayal of liver function that would have been

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[57] King, p. 88.
[58] King, p. 87.

obviously outdated to Barker's educated contemporaries -- 'may represent a strategy for dramatizing the struggle to accommodate new scientific findings to older conceptual models belonging to the classical Galenic tradition'.[59] King supports this hypothesis with evidence from the poem's editorial history and Barker's otherwise solid understanding of contemporary medicine. Although, as King admits, 'this possibility assumes a more subtle and artistically deliberative Barker than most critics would now grant', it is a conception of scientific convention that meshes well with Barker's corresponding portrayal of individual understanding as a dialogic and many-layered composite.[60]

Galesia's intellectual and emotional being appear to enact a similar struggle of mutual influence in the poem. This becomes most clear when, in the closing lines, Richard Lower, another eminent physician but also a distant relation of Barker's, laments the death of the speaker's brother:

> But ah, alas! So short was his Life's Date,
>
> As makes us since, almost, our Practice hate;
>
> Since we cou'd find out nought in all our Art,
>
> That cou'd prolong the Motion of his Heart. (p. 90)

Though it comes at the end of the poem, this personal, emotional turn places the preceding material in a new light. The poem was written, Galesia says, after poring over medical texts owned by her recently dead brother, and when the culmination of 'Anatomy' laments that very death, the preceding fanciful imagery, intellectual confidence, and budding professionalism seem in hindsight to signify a more private subtext -- Galesia's struggle with grief. Lower voices what Galesia had been feeling

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[59] King, p. 94.
[60] King, pp. 93-94.

all along. This turn is instrumental in the larger narrative as a means of establishing Galesia's intimacy with her hostess. It is also an extension of Galesia's (as both the literal and literary speaker of the poem) apologetic self-deprecation. Whatever confidence or virtuosity she displays can be attributed to her underlying emotional state, and thereby made to conform to the culturally imposed strictures of feminine tenderness. And yet these strictures are simultaneously challenged, for the confidence remains, and the display of intellectual accomplishment remains, and the emotional turn itself comes in the voice of Lower, not that of the speaker.

Of course the sadness in the lines spoken by Lower is Galesia's too; she affirms as much to the Lady immediately after finishing the poem (p. 90). However, delivering the poem's final lines in quotation allows for some distance between the emotional undercurrent they admit and the already established scholarly and imaginative work such emotion appears to have inspired. The Galesia of the poem never mentions her feelings about her brother's death. When she reacts to the anatomist's dream-world she tours, her reaction is a calculated artefact of the poem: intellectual engagement, at first cautious and then increasingly assured. But Galesia the poet has scripted Lower's words, and as she reads aloud she speaks them as well -- his 'alas!' is doubly hers. To the extent that the poet-Galesia's authorial voice invests the voice of the speaker-Galesia, the latter's enthusiasm encodes the former's filial love and grief. In other words, two distinct voices inflect Galesia's words. In a single utterance are the voices of an increasingly self-assured scholar of medicine and a bereaved sister seeking comfort in pursuing her late brother's interests.

This is a more fraught overlap than the speaker's juxtaposed confidence and caution, which, though superficially at odds, interact to temper rather than contradict each other. But for Galesia's words to embody both that tempered confidence as well as filial grief is a more

complicated feat. As a testament of her love for her brother, Galesia continues the education he had provided her while alive. She immerses herself in his textbooks as a way to feel closer to him. Had he been a student of finance, say, or astronomy, then these subjects would have drawn her in with equal force. However, if Galesia is to be considered a gifted healer in her own right, as she clearly expects, the subject itself cannot be merely incidental. Science must have its own appeal.

Through almost the entirety of the poem, Galesia's sense of wonder, her poeticizing attentions to the anatomical scenes before her, are not an emotional support in her time of loss; instead they are expressions of her intellectual aptitude and professional potential. When Lower interjects his emotional aside, and when Galesia acknowledges her grief outside the boundaries of the poem, that emotional tenor inflects the words of Galesia in the poem without her (as poetic speaker) actually revealing her grief. In Bakhtinian terminology, this is 'double-voiced and internally dialogized' discourse:

> It serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author.[61]

The listening hostess, along with the reader, is offered a cross-section of Galesia's motivations in which both selfless grief and assertive optimism can appear without clashing, because they inflect independent voices that speak in synchrony. This is a feature not of the poem, but of the

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[61] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 324. Sue Vice points out that Bakhtin often conflates author and narrator in his terminology; *Introducing Bakhtin* (Manchester: Manchester University, 1997), p. 126. Of course, in the case of Galesia's inset poem, these roles are indistinct anyway.

novelistic scene in which the poem is voiced -- not in 'Anatomy', but in the contextualized reading of 'Anatomy' depicted by the narrative. Though speaker and author are voices of the same character, they advance two distinct purposes in the selfsame utterances.

The multiplicity Barker invests in the language of 'Anatomy' can therefore be seen to draw upon the potential interaction between various voices, voices that interact with their contexts by subdividing and multiplying. The substance of this type of text lies not only in the summed content of all of its voices, but also in the interstitial tensions that arise between them, in which one utterance can run counter to another without negating it. This need not come in the form of conflict or challenge; one voice can respond to another simply by virtue of its difference. The voice of Lower in 'Anatomy' is a case in point, supplying the possibility of other inflections, other layers in the voice to which it responds.

The words Galesia supplies for her imagined version of Lower compound the heteroglossia of 'Anatomy' not by amounting to another distinct voice, but rather by further revealing the voice of Galesia to be manifold, a patchwork of differing purposes. This is a recurring mechanism throughout the Galesia tales. Scenes like the Violenta episode and the tea-table conversation, discussed above, also develop in this way. Through the interaction of their constituent voices in a medial space, these scenes reveal one utterance to harbour more than one intention, and so each voice signifies by virtue of its context, by virtue of being a voice among voices. In Barker's fiction and Galesia's poetry, meaning arises dialogically.

A great deal of Galesia's psychological realism stems from her explicit consciousness of the partial, *ad hoc*, and context-dependent state of her own understanding. Figuratively and literally, she is continually attempting to read her own language in order to tease out clues to the

reality of her self and her surroundings. So the identity, the particularity of Galesia is dialogic, because she is partly constituted against a 'dialogizing background', interacting with others, and always in progress, always subject to change.[62]

Many of Galesia's 'patches' project a similar background of variety by directly addressing others. A number of them are fragments of a correspondence with an unnamed 'Kinsman' and another male friend, both students at Cambridge (p. 92). Re-presented as they are to Galesia's interlocutor, to the authorial narrator, and to the reader, these letters in verse are a sort of sanctioned eavesdropping. At each of these removes, different contexts colour the already hybrid voice of ladylike propriety and subversive irony Galesia broadcasts to her Cambridge friends, and the attitude of each respective recipient informs the messages' meaning differently. This state of affairs foregrounds a characteristic of real-world language that Bakhtin calls 'internal dialogism'.[63] Essentially, this is the result of every utterance, every word, being a part of a larger fabric of ongoing language use. No utterance can be isolated:

> Forming itself in an atmosphere of the already spoken, the word is at the same time determined by that which has not yet been said but which is needed and in fact anticipated by the answering word.[64]

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[62] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 332.

[63] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 280. The language of Galesia's correspondence with her Cambridge friends is particularly 'real-world' in that it reproduces Jane Barker's own letters in verse to her friends at the university. See King, pp. 29-67; and, also by King, 'Jane Barker, Poetical Recreations, and the Sociable Text', *ELH*, 61.3 (1994), 551-570 (pp. 551-558).

[64] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 280.

Bakhtin states internal dialogism to be an ever-present condition of language, but in a novelistic text it is stylistically acknowledged; it 'becomes one of the most fundamental aspects of prose style and undergoes a specific artistic elaboration'.[65] The heteroglot text, the novel, integrates dialogism into its aesthetic substance. More so than the heteroglossia of 'Anatomy', the variability of Galesia's voice in her correspondence poems capitalizes on this type of dialogism.

Galesia's verse letters are presented as active responses, which in turn prompt more reactions. However, nearly all of this interchange is inaccessible to the reader. With the exception of some vague paraphrasing and one reprinted note, the Cambridge side of the interchange is invisible.[66] The status of these poems as fragments of a larger, ongoing dialogue means that there is always something else said beyond the eavesdropper's ken. All the auditors of the conversation, from Galesia's Cambridge friends to the implied reader addressed by the authorial persona, must reconstruct contexts and intentions in order to flesh out Galesia's words. With so many silent interlocutors simultaneously overlaid, the pragmatic profile of Galesia's voice is correspondingly obscure. Galesia herself shows some anxiety about the interpretive range this deficit allows. She continually seeks to deflect any scandal by reassuring her listener/reader that her communication with these young men is 'pure and candid, such as might be amongst the Celestial Inhabitants' (p. 95). Galesia's defensive posture shows that her correspondence is dialogic not only as an interaction between its participants, but also as an intimation of other, undocumented significances.

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[65] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 284.
[66] The note appears at p. 100.

In spite of their suggestive vocal presence, Galesia's friends do not speak with distinct, autonomous voices. In this sense they function in much the same way as Lower in 'Anatomy' -- they exist in the text as a foil for Galesia's own self-awareness and development, another means, like Lower, of multiplying her voice. They are unlike Lower, though, in the crucial respect that they occupy the same narrative plane as Galesia, outside of her writings. They are an independent part of the world in which she lives. Galesia, then, is dialogic not only in the sense that she is changeable, altered by her interactions with others, but also in the sense that her own understanding, though central, is not the limit of the possibilities portrayed in the text. The fact that a dialogic aesthetic extends beyond her poems and letters and into the larger narrative means that the reflexive and dynamic self-awareness Barker uses to achieve psychological realism is also ascribed to the wider world in which Galesia lives. That is, Galesia is depicted as one particular, thinking being among many. Although Barker does not develop them fully, the voices she places alongside Galesia represent living, context-dependent idiolects, components of heteroglossia. They imply, as Bakhtin writes, 'specific points of view on the world, forms for conceptualizing the world in words, specific world views, each characterized by its own objects, meanings and values'.[67] The heteroglossia of Galesia's environment signifies its epistemic multiplicity.

The world Barker describes in the patchwork fictions is itself a patchwork made up of a multitude of languages and voices. As the coach journey framework that begins *A Patch-Work Screen* indicates, it is a world in which human experience is filtered through channels of telling and re-telling, so that events are reviewed and reflected upon even by people who might be at many removes from the events themselves. Minor

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[67] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 291-292; see also pp. 271, 315.

characters, when they encounter Galesia, are eager to narrate their own past experiences to her. For example, while Galesia is in London, a nurse arrives on a nameless errand and proceeds to divulge the story of her unlucky marriage, disinheritance, and subsequent poverty (pp. 119-122). She then disappears from the text just as suddenly, never to return. Barker seems to have included some of these framed digressions simply for their own sake, as if to illustrate dynamic human variation.

Incongruous though some of them may be, the multiple voices of Barker's framed narratives place Galesia against a backdrop of variable human possibilities, some of which test the limits of Galesia's comprehension. Galesia's inset story 'The Unaccountable Wife' begins as a love triangle between a husband and wife and their female servant, but ends with the eventual exclusion of the man from what appears in today's terms to be a lesbian partnership. The tale provokes an emotional reaction on the part of Galesia and the Lady but seems to disallow any final interpretation. Galesia harshly judges the servant who succumbs to her master's advances and dares to behave as an equal to her mistress. Such conduct makes her a 'vile Wretch' and a 'Strumpet'. Galesia also proffers her mother's conclusion that the wife's desire to cohabitate with her servant rather than her husband, is a 'Contradiction of Nature' (pp. 144-145).

However, after Galesia and her mother (who were present as the events of the tale unfolded) attempt in vain to reason the wife out of her attachment to the servant, and after the inducements of the Queen herself fail to effect any change, Galesia's language shifts from outrage to bewilderment. The situation fills her with 'the greatest Amazement possible'; it is 'such a Truth as I believe never was in the World before, nor never will be again' (pp. 146-147). When she attempts to describe the partnership of the two women away from the husband's household, in

voluntary poverty and exile, Galesia's incomprehension overshadows even the narrative action itself:

> Now what this unaccountable Creature thought of this kind of
> Being, is unknown, or what Measures she and her Companion
> thought to take, or what Schemes they form'd to themselves, is
> not conceivable. (p. 147)

The unaccountable wife is so unfathomable that Galesia cannot imagine even the circumstances of her lifestyle, let alone her motives. As Spacks remarks, 'the lack of explicit motive appears almost to constitute the story's point'.[68] Upon hearing the tale, the Lady can explain it only with recourse to the supernatural, suggesting that the 'poor Creature was under some Spell or Inchantment' (p. 149). Galesia, uncharacteristically dumbstruck, neglects to make any closing comment at all.

Though all of Barker's tales of objectionable pairings and ruined relationships have their Jacobite overtones, 'The Unaccountable Wife' provides no easy didactic soapbox for Galesia. It serves only to reveal her bafflement when confronting inscrutable difference. It is, like Barker's frequent use of the rhetorical 'I know not', a marker of the limits of Galesia's -- or any individual's -- understanding. The cultural codes available to Galesia and the other witnesses of the narrative simply do not apply to the particular events that have occurred. As Williamson writes, 'Women wooed by the same man and binding across class lines are simply not to be understood'.[69] The tale is, in Spacks's words, an example of Barker's 'mode of presenting socially acceptable opinions and undercutting

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[68] Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Novel Beginnings: Experiments in Eighteenth-Century English Fiction* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 2006), p. 36.
[69] Williamson, p. 251.

them by fictional action'.[70] In its 'unaccountability', the tale stands as an unspoken affront to Galesia's understanding of the world.

Though she is not a fully developed character, the wife embodies the Bakhtinian 'dialogizing background' of the text; her presence announces Galesia's voice to be 'contested, contestable and contesting', however central it might be.[71] As such, Galesia's outrage at the events of the tale is objectified, de-authorized. This is why, in the welter of novelistic heteroglossia, Bakhtin believes that 'images of virtue (of any sort: monastic, spiritual, bureaucratic, moral, etc.) have never been successful in the novel'.[72] A rule declared dialogically reveals its boundaries; it is *a* way rather than *the* way. Speaking of the case of the unaccountable wife, King reads the conspicuous situatedness of Galesia's opinion as a gesture toward alterity:

> In moments of interpretive indeterminacy such as these Barker's fictions point toward a space between cultural formations that constitutes an 'elsewhere', a space outside or, if that is too utopian, at the outer margins of the controlling narratives of Barker's culture.[73]

The reader may wholeheartedly endorse Galesia's judgement, but only as an act of taking sides, only against a contentious, dialogized atmosphere. There is a persistent 'elsewhere' or 'other' overshadowing such a stand. Galesia's moralizing is a useful tool in dealing with the vicissitudes of her

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[70] Spacks, *Imagining a Self*, p. 68. Williamson notes a similar 'tension between the values Barker herself held and those she represented in her fiction' (p. 250).
[71] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 332.
[72] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 344.
[73] King, pp. 218-219; see also p. 232.

experience, but here, as elsewhere, it does not offer the comfort of certainty. It cannot account for the unaccountable.

Later in *The Patch-Work Screen*, another dialogizing voice emerges to contradict Galesia's understanding. This happens while Galesia is musing on the avarice of the Duke of Monmouth, whom she believes 'to be possess'd with [the] Devil of Ambition' in his bid to depose James II. Her moralizing monologue is interrupted by the voice of a neighbour singing a 'Hymn' of praise to the Duke: 'Preserve thy Holy Servant Monmouth, Lord,/ Who carries for his Shield thy Sacred Word' (p. 159). Like the physical barrier that separates her from the singer's room, Galesia's political and religious orientation excludes her from the singer's contexts. Galesia cannot put herself in the other's place, and so instead of interpreting and understanding, she can only wonder at such wrong-headedness:

> Happy had such been to have died in their Infancy, before the Baptismal Water was dry'd off their Face! But, ah! if I think on that, who is there so Righteous, but that they may wish they had dyed in the State of Innocency? (p. 160)

The astounding fact that someone could hold such views can only be assimilated as a mark of all people's liability to folly. And yet, though the 'Wicked Song' horrifies her, Galesia nevertheless reproduces it in its entirety. To Galesia, and surely to Barker as well, Monmouth's unsuitability is self-evident, and yet there on the other side of a wall, singing a full nine lines, is the incarnation of a contrary understanding.

Rivka Swenson reads in this image of a physical and ideological schism between the two women a microcosm of the division between 'Britain and British subjects'. She cites Barker's quotation of the 'Wicked

Song' as evidence that, 'While Barker doesn't relish the multiplicity of modern experience, she is committed to its representation'.[74] Such a commitment means that, while the text condemns the singer of the pro-Monmouth lines as 'wicked', 'graceless' and ignorant, Barker nevertheless depicts Galesia's position as embattled, and thus dialogized, however privileged it might be (p. 160). The singer of the hymn not only praises the Duke, she does so in religious terms, as if James II were the enemy of God. She is a direct inversion of Galesia's belief -- an anti-Galesia. In this respect the singing woman is a Bakhtinian 'fool', a figure who, with or without the sympathy of the author or narrator, 'by [her] very uncomprehending presence [...] makes strange the world of social conventionality'.[75] The singer 'makes strange' by embodying an ideological opposite so different as to be unfathomable to Galesia, disrupting the prospect that one understanding could ever be *the* understanding. Significantly, no narrative action intervenes to bear out Galesia's point of view. Unlike the rake Bellair, who robs his way to execution, or the several sexually indiscreet women of Barker's texts, the supporter of Monmouth goes uncorrected by fate. In fact, she vanishes from the text altogether after her brief cameo. Galesia's opinion may be presented as preferable, but without any plot-based confirmation of her tirade, her view is conditional, not authoritative.

Indeed, as she does so frequently, Galesia seems to revise her conclusions after she makes them. In this case, after finding all mankind to be so imprudent that anyone might wish to have 'dyed in the State of Innocency', Galesia dreams of the fate of unbaptized Christians in the afterlife. Her dream-poem 'The Childrens, or Catechumen's Elysium'

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[74] Rivka Swenson, 'Representing Modernity in Jane Barker's *Galesia Trilogy*: Jacobite Allegory and the Patch-Work Aesthetic', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 34 (2005) 55-80 (p. 64).
[75] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 404.

envisions a quasi-paradise in which 'every one was happy in his Sphere:/ That is to say, if Happiness can be,/ Without th'Enjoyment of a Deity'. Innocent bliss is incomplete; it is 'but half true Happiness' (pp. 160-161). Complete happiness requires complete salvation, which for Galesia is only possible after catechism and baptism -- knowledge and responsibility. Unless, as Galesia cynically observes, one dies immediately after one's christening, life must be lived with such knowledge and responsibility, along with free will. This last of course allows for the wilful living even of such exasperating individuals as wives who run away with female servants or neighbours who praise an illegitimate usurper. The placement of the poem immediately following the stranger's hymn to Monmouth serves to downplay the epithets and condemnations of Galesia's initial reaction to the incomprehensible other, emphasizing instead the ultimate outcome of her incomprehension: a withholding of judgement, a musing upon the fallen, divided state of mankind generally. Galesia's dream of pity for the catechumens, who have died neither damned nor fully saved, makes a covert acknowledgement of the untidy metaphysics of the world of the living, in which whatever organizing logic might exist is largely beyond the individual's grasp.

Barker makes it clear that while a patchwork approach may yield greater understanding, it may just as easily produce confusion. In the preface to *A Patch-Work Screen*, she counters her image of tea-table harmony with a more ambivalent passage. Declaring that she has 'carr[ied] the Metaphor too high', she shifts to the past tense:

My high Flight in Favour of the Ladies, made a mere Icarus of me, melted my Wings, and tumbled me Headlong down, I know not where. Nevertheless my Fall was amongst a joyful Throng of People of all Ages, Sexes, and Conditions! who were rejoycing at a

> wonderful Piece of Patch-Work they had in Hand; the Nature of
> which was such, as was to compose (as it were) a New Creation,
> where all Sorts of People were to be Happy, as if they had never
> been the Off-spring of fallen Adam. (p. 53)

At first, the narrator (recall that Barker writes her preface as the signatory 'Jane Barker') is delighted, but when the crowd discover her to be in possession of 'some Manuscript Ballads', they angrily expel her from their group. Bilger and Donovan see in this image a figuration of the social dangers faced by female writers.[76] However, in this case the exile of 'Jane Barker' turns out to be fortunate; the crowd have more reason than she to regret their ambition:

> Their Patch-Work Scheme, by carrying the Point too high, was
> blown up about their Ears, and vanish'd into Smoke and Confusion;
> to the utter Ruin of many Thousands of the Unhappy Creatures
> therein concern'd. (p. 53)

Wilson suggests in a footnote to this passage that the 'Scheme' is a reference to the 1720 collapse of the South Sea Bubble. Accordingly this scene allegorizes, in King's reading, 'the outcast female poet [...] in symbolic opposition to a corrupt and mercenary Whig order' of bourgeois greed.[77] The scene lends itself to topical readings focused on issues of gender and class, but underlying this allegorical content is a more general pessimism about people's capacity to understand their place in the world.

There are two falls in this passage, but they share a basic pattern. The first, that of 'Jane Barker', is the Icarian fall of an individual. The

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[76] Bilger, pp. 27-28; Donovan, 'Women and the Rise of the Novel', p. 453.
[77] King, p. 210.

second is an Adamic fall, dramatizing the fallen state of all mankind, which the diverse 'Throng' attempt unsuccessfully to surmount. Both falls are images of the vanity and futility of human striving. As a narrator prone to indulge in and then repent bouts of pride, Galesia often uses the counterpart figures of rise and fall. The various falls she imagines unfold according to a common paradigm: like in the case of the scheming patchworkers of the preface, intellectual activity seems to be a means of ascension, but it is truly so only if practised to perfection; a fall inevitably occurs when that perfection proves to be out of reach.

In Galesia's personal experience, erudition promises flight but invites a fall. Speaking of her admiration for Katherine Philips, Galesia says, 'Her Poetry I found so interwoven with Vertue and Honour, that each Line was like a Ladder to climb, not only to Parnassus, but to Heaven'. However, when in 'Boldness' Galesia sets out to imitate her literary role model, she does not climb but instead is 'dropp'd into a Labyrinth of Poetry' (p. 76). Similarly, when Galesia seeks out a private room in which to write, she opts for a garret, which she calls 'my exalted Study: Or, to (use the Phrase of the Poets) my Closet in the Star-Chamber; or the Den of Parnassus', but she is barred from the room when her mother discovers its vulnerability to the corrupting influence of intruders (p. 124). Much of Galesia's anxiety about some kind of fall is, as in the case of her exclusion from the garret study, the direct result of her gender. In a verse letter to her Cambridge friends, Galesia openly covets the young men's educational opportunity, lamenting that the 'Tree of Knowledge […] disdains to grow in our cold Clime' (pp. 94-95). (The word 'our', she discloses in a footnote, specifies 'A Female Capacity'.) The Tree of Knowledge is a fitting symbol, for Barker portrays scholarly endeavour as at once irresistibly alluring and enormously dangerous. As an aspiring intellectual and poet, Galesia must remain wary of the controversy of her pursuits. For a woman, such

attempts at self-improvement can occasion a fall in the eyes of society; learning can render her 'unfit Company for every body' (p. 83).

However it is not only women whose attempts at intellectual advancement are treated ambivalently in the fictions. Scientific pursuits pose a similar danger to any would-be adept, as in 'Anatomy', where an otherwise enthusiastic Galesia cannot help but recall the role of knowledge in the biblical Fall, remarking, 'But O how dearly Wisdom's bought with Sin,/ Which shuts out Grace; lets Death & Darkness in', before she embarks on her fantastic voyage through the human body (p. 87). Barker continually connects the difficulty of advancing human understanding to the general fallenness of humanity. When Galesia's brother dies, the paradise she imagines for him is one in which understanding reaches a completeness that would be unattainable for living mortals:

> The only Comfort I have, is, when I think on the Happiness he enjoys by Divine Vision; All Learning and Science, All Arts, and Depths of Philosophy, without Search or Study; whilst we in this World, with much Labour, are groping, as it were, in the Dark, and make Discoveries of our own Ignorance.[78] (p. 90)

The scope of Galesia's pronouns has expanded from the female-centred 'our' in her letter to the young men at Cambridge. In this more private remark to the Lady, the impossibility of comprehensive knowledge is a fact of human existence that everyone must endure.

If heaven is intellectual clarity, the corruption of the material world shows itself as chaos and confusion. Attendant to the ignorance Galesia observes in the world is a parallel sense of disordered multiplicity, which she illustrates with lists. When her father dies, young Galesia confronts

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[78] Barker/Galesia reiterates this sentiment in a poem on pp. 91-92.

'the Troubles of the World' in 'a thousand Disappointments'. She lists among them 'deceitful Debtors, impatient Creditors, distress'd Friends, peevish Enemies, Lawsuits, rotten Houses, Eye-servants, spightful Neighbours, impertinent and interested Lovers, with a thousand such Things to terrify and vex me' (p. 107). She and her mother seek respite in London, but find their peace there upset by 'Lodgers, Visiters, Messages, Howd'ye's, Billets, and a Thousand other Impertinencies' (p. 116). To highlight the absurdity she sees in the role reversal of the unaccountable wife and her erstwhile servant, Galesia lists the household chores that had fallen to the wife's lot (p. 145). Barker uses cataloguing to build up a sense of material disorder that corresponds to the immaterial disorder of clouded understanding or compromised morality. Most telling is Galesia's list of the legal manoeuvres that congest Westminster courts, in which she conflates variability, obscurity, and even error as symptoms of corruption:

> For Truth is too often disguised, and Justice over-ballanced, by means of false Witnesses, slow Evidences to Truth, avaritious Lawyers, poor Clients, Perjury, Bribery, Forgery, Clamour, Party, Mistakes, Misapprehensions, ill-stating the Case, Demurrs, Reverses, and a thousand other Shifts, Querks and Tricks, unknown to all but Lawyers. (p. 126)

These myriad activities, diverse as they are, are alike in their ability to distort the truth. In light of this equation of multiplicity and fallenness, Barker's reliance on coincidence and happenstance as narrative devices meshes well with the parataxis of her framed fictions. The fallen world Barker aims to describe is one in which the confusion of human experience

-- whether due to iniquity or incompetence -- masks the truths that underlie it.

In 'On the Difficulties of Religion', the poem that becomes the last patch of the screen, Galesia presents confusion as the most imposing obstacle to salvation:

> We are instructed of a Future State,
>
> Of Just Rewards, and Punishments in That;
>
> But ign'rant How, or Where, or When, or What.
>
> I'm shew'd a Book, in which these things are writ;
>
> And, by all Hands, assur'd all's True in it;
>
> But in this Book, such Mysteries I find,
>
> Instead of Healing, oft corrode the Mind.[79] (p. 164)

Study, even of scripture, cannot deliver enlightenment because no individual can be trusted to properly understand. Yet recourse to unthinking faith is equally ineffective. The result is a crisis of epistemology that portends disaster: 'Now Faith, now Reason, now Good-works, does All;/ Betwixt these Opposites our Virtues fall' (p. 164). Grasping at knowledge, it seems, re-enacts grasping at the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, and it carries with it on a smaller scale the same dangerous hubris, the same promise of a fall.

Galesia does not read this poem aloud, perhaps due to its volatile subject matter, and the Lady manages to read it only because of another fall -- Galesia accidentally drops it in front of her. As Galesia's most intimate statement on the possibility of understanding, it is also her most troubled. What she earlier portrays with a hint of mockery to her Cambridge friends as a feminine failing is in this poem universal and

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[79] An authorial footnote glosses the 'Book' as the Bible.

profound, a grave and even damnable flaw in human nature. In an apparent gesture of reassurance, the Lady counters with another poem, 'An Ode In Commemoration of the Nativity of Christ', previously given to her 'by an Excellent Hand' (p. 166). In this long, anonymous poem, God is 'the Thought-transcending Being' and the infant Christ is a living paradox, a 'Mighty Helpless Thing' (p. 169). The resurrection also emerges as a paradox, the acceptance of which is the cognitive act that can bridge from reason to faith:

> Man's Union hence with God ev'n Reason can,
>
> Tho' but by Consequence and faintly, scan:
>
> Enough, howe'er, to lead to Faith's true Road,
>
> Since this we find was done by Man,
>
> And could not but by God: (p. 172)

Thus the terms of Galesia's verses on the unreliability of human comprehension are reframed as a celebration of reason outstripped by faith, but in such a way that the remedy to the nagging doubt described by Galesia remains obscure. The claim that faith must ultimately surpass reason is conventional enough; however, considering that Galesia's poem concludes with the nearly blasphemous wish to be an animal with no immortal soul at all, the Lady's presentation of the ode as a response falls somewhat flat.[80]

The reader must ponder Galesia's reception of the ode unassisted by the text, for the poem makes up the final pages of *A Patch-Work Screen*. If not for the bold 'FINIS' printed just below the closing line, one

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[80] The closing lines of Galesia's poem read: 'Ah! happy Brutes! I envy much your State,/ Whom Nature, one Day, shall Annihilate;/ Compar'd to which, wretched is Human Fate!' (p. 165). A similar sentiment animates an interpolated poem in *Love Intrigues* (pp. 40-41).

imagines Barker's original readers might have suspected a binding error, so abruptly does the text end. King points out that most critical commentaries on this sudden stop overlook its political symbolism. The last lines of the ode make a plea for the conversion of Jews, which, King explains, 'in Jacobite contexts [...] stood for that conversion of English hearts and minds that would usher in a Stuart restoration'.[81] Thus, either as Christian or as Jacobite propagandizing, the ode is open-ended, casting a hopeful eye toward the possibility of future redemption.

This is fitting in a dialogic text like *A Patch-Work Screen*, since the absence of a neat resolution makes it clear that the end is not, in fact, the end. The framing fiction, the dialogue between Galesia and the Lady, does not conclude with the text either; the two women anticipate an evening of entertainment. Galesia's self-critical internal dialogue must surely continue as well, since, among other concerns, the profound anxieties of faith she expresses in her last patch are not fully or finally addressed by the reassurances of the ode. The fictions' heteroglot texture is consistent with this plotted open-enedness. Every voice announces itself as one among many, bound by subjectivity to a partial view. In essence, no word is final, whether in terms of narrative closure or authoritative understanding. In both its form and its exhortatory content, the end of Barker's text makes a turn toward the reader.

Barker presents voices that conflict with Galesia's, and though Galesia is baffled and offended by them, they dialogize her perspective even so. This effect is compounded by Galesia's subsequent reflections on her understanding, which, without overtly altering her view, complicate her earlier certainty. There remains, as a direct result of Barker's patchwork aesthetic, an interpretive gap. In the aforementioned portrayal of the Monmouth supporter and the political division she represents,

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[81] King, p. 164.

Swenson sees an example of Barker's text-wide implication of the reader's interpretive power:

> Readers must work to find unifying threads in the fictions, since, like the patch-work nation, its cross-sectional representation is rife with competing subjects and multiple voices, form against form, genre against genre, poem against poem, song against song.[82]

This is a crucial point, because it reveals the way the patchwork fictions, in building up a heteroglot multiplicity of voices, dialogize the text's narrative voice and, in so doing, also dialogize their relation to the reader. For instance, the reader who sides with Galesia when she reviles the unaccountable wife and the singing woman has *chosen* agreement, a position that Morson and Emerson note is necessarily dialogic because it 'concedes the possibility of disagreement'.[83] Galesia's understanding of the world is always marked as one among many, and it is precisely this background of difference that invites an active response from the reader.

In *A Patch-Work Screen*, Galesia is primarily a re-teller. She reads aloud her own writings and recounts tales from memory. While there is no obvious overarching structure, she is continually tracking the responses and prompts of her interlocutor. The Lady listens, comments, makes requests, and even supplies the last several pages of the text herself. As Swenson writes, 'Meaning is thus made in conversation between Galesia or Barker and the Lady or the reader.' Just as the heteroglot substance of the patchwork institutes a dialogue among its constituent voices, the conversational framing fiction models a dialogic relationship between teller

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[82] Swenson, p. 64.
[83] Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 1990), p. 313; see also p. 151.

and listener, and by extension writer and reader, in which receptivity is an active, constructive state, so that 'the Lady models the kind of invested behavior Barker solicits from readers'.[84] Galesia herself believes as much, declaring that 'though Reading inriches the Mind, yet it is Conversation that inables us to use and apply those Riches or Notions gracefully' (p. 109). In such a frankly textual fiction as this, the claim that reading is incomplete without supplementary human interaction necessarily makes some address to the reader.

In *The Lining of the Patch Work Screen*, reading continues to be a central activity of the framing fiction, with texts of diverse provenance providing narrative substance. Two of the interpolated tales are stories that Galesia reads while alone. The second of these, entitled 'The Cause of the Moors Overrunning Spain', displays themes typical of Barker -- treachery in a royal court and endangered feminine virtue -- but does so in a strikingly different setting. A usurper king, after inciting rebellion by raping the daughter of a general, seeks the advice of the devil by entering an ancient fortification named the Devil's Tower. The tower contains poison gas, a cauldron of boiling blood, a mill that grinds human beings, mysterious inscriptions, menacing creatures, and 'many more strange and monstrous Appearances, not easily to be remember'd, much less to be describ'd' (p. 209).

The explorers of the tower are horrified, but their predominant state is puzzlement. Twice they wonder about the nature of the monsters they see, but both times 'they could not tell' what the creatures might be. They attempt a natural explanation for the boiling blood, but 'no body could conclude; tho' every one made their several Conjectures thereon' (p. 209). The inscriptions they find leave them similarly bewildered. After the entourage make their escape from the tower, it sinks into the earth. The

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[84] Swenson, p. 59.

devil never appears, nor is much explanation offered for the (rather comically misleading) title. Galesia seems to enjoy the tale -- she reads it late into the night -- but it has no direct bearing on any subsequent content, and she makes no comment on it at all.

Galesia evidently is not the sort of involved reader Barker praises in *A Patch-Work Screen*; however, the utter inexplicability of the tale seems to be another gesture toward the reader's own interpretive responsibility. Spacks categorizes the tale of the Devil's Tower with 'The Unaccountable Wife' as examples of the way 'Barker's fiction demands a particularly active reader, forced constantly to shift expectations'.[85] Throughout the patchwork fictions, Barker tends to follow her more realistic segments with her most fantastic imagery. Perhaps, Spacks suggests, this is an attempt to offset the tales' occasional sordidness, but most of all it reveals the high priority Barker places on variety:

> Agility becomes a desideratum for reading as the text places in the foreground the fictionality of its own construction. [...] The vigorous, varied, lavishly multiplied narratives that compose her novels declare the power of fiction, not to make the reader suspend disbelief; rather, to make disbelief irrelevant.[86]

Spacks's characterization of Barker's patchwork aesthetic is accurate, but Barker achieves an effect that is more complex than Spacks indicates. At least as striking as their obvious modal differences is the similarity of these tales' situation within their surrounding narrative frame. Like so many of Barker's sub-narratives, both are delivered to the reader as discrete units, independent of the rest of the text. Though 'The

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[85] Spacks, *Novel Beginnings*, p. 36.
[86] Spacks, *Novel Beginnings*, p. 37.

Unaccountable Wife' is presented as an episode from Galesia's own experience and 'The Cause of the Moors' is a tale from a book, very little distinction is made between their ontological conditions. This haphazard piling up of contrasting tableaux does indeed demand readerly agility, but a co-effect of making disbelief irrelevant is a heightened emphasis on receptivity; the reader is incited to be active, but in such a way that particularly analytical and selective capacities remain dormant. Barker's multiplicity constitutes a deferral of scepticism.

Like Galesia when she encounters people whose understanding of the world inverts her own, and like the explorers of the Devil's Tower, the reader is to focus on perceptual comprehension, 'taking it all in', rather than on the conceptual comprehension of full understanding. Barker makes this obvious not only with her sporadic leaps from realism to fantasy, which are prominent even when she writes as 'Jane Barker' in her prefaces, but also with her vaguely indirect discourse, rhetorical aporia, and convoluted framing. Though hierarchy can be traced in the patchwork fictions' structure, it is overshadowed by the paratactic onrush of variety, in which the relevance and meaning of respective fragments is left evocatively implicit. The reader can thus press onward with the impression that all is freighted with meaning without the requirement of uncovering and isolating that meaning. This is the sort of attentive, enabling listening performed by the Lady in *A Patch-Work Screen*, and as *The Lining* continues Galesia too sustains just this sort of engaged-but-indiscriminate receptivity, reading books and hearing tales from other friends and strangers. As the text proceeds, Galesia's acquaintances provide still more models of, and material for, this type of receptivity.

Barker seems determined at times to complicate the provenance of the text's multiple, sometimes overlapping, interpolated tales. In one case, two women, Lady Allgood and Philinda, visit Galesia. They decide

that Allgood should tell the story of Philinda's life, while Philinda waits in the next room. They claim, oddly, that this is in order to avoid 'Confusion' (p. 211). Upon her return Philinda shares another story, unrelated to her own, that she has just read from a book. The characters approach these two tales with uniformly disinterested openness, regardless of whether they are immediately involved with the events being described. The tale from the book yields only an aphoristic interpretation: 'Marry in Haste, and Repent at leisure' (p. 217). Philinda's own life story, in which she is mistaken for a prostitute and jailed, only narrowly escaping permanent ruin, provokes an even more unenlightening banality: 'After a Storm comes a Calm' (p. 214). Both in their incorporation into the frame narrative and in the uninspired reactions they elicit, the two stories are granted equal status. It is the variety they provide that justifies their telling more than any communicative or affective impact; the listening characters and the reader simply take it all in.

The contexts of 'Philinda's Story out of the Book' are in this way an address to the reader, another instance of Barker endorsing a particular orientation toward the text. The content of the tale itself is also significant to the reader's position in the patchworks. Wilson observes in a footnote that the story Philinda tells, which comes from the same volume in which Galesia reads the tale of the Devil's Tower, is patterned after Aphra Behn's 1689 *The History of the Nun; or, The Fair Vow-Breaker* (p. 214). More Behn material features in the intertwined tales 'The History of the Lady Gypsie' and 'The Story of Tangerine, The Gentleman Gypsie' (p. 227).[87] Unlike Philinda's Behn story, these latter two are presented by Allgood as having been delivered to her by a witness -- 'an ancient Gentlewoman' she met during a coach journey. Barker's reader might very well have

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[87] Donovan adds to these examples the life story of Barker's character Malhurissa, which she claims draws upon Behn's 'The Unfortunate Happy Lady: A True History' (*Women and the Rise of the Novel*, pp. 92-93).

encountered these tales previously. If so, they constitute an injection of metafictional self-awareness into the narratives, an additional means by which the stories 'acknowledge their own fictionality', as Spacks remarks.[88] The fact that these appropriations of Behn are placed at two different narrative removes -- one attributed to a book of old romances, the other essentially a bit of anonymous gossip -- means that they produce a blurring effect both internally, between narrative frames, and externally, between Barker's text and the world of the reader. It is as if a fictional Behn lives alongside her own characters in the world of *The Lining*, and simultaneously as if Barker's characters inhabit the same world as the reader, in which they might thumb through Behn's *History of the Nun*.

The Behn references are not explicit. Aside from attributing the first to a book, Barker offers no hint of their origin, perhaps wary of contradicting her condemnation of Behn by name in *A Patch-Work Screen* (p. 108).[89] Barker is eager, however, to place her work in conspicuous dialogue with other texts. Through all three of the Galesia fictions, Barker supplements the multiplicity of voice she achieves through liberal use of aphorisms and proverbs with an ongoing campaign of name-dropping, allusion and quotation. The intertextuality of *Love Intrigues* has been touched upon above. In *A Patch-Work Screen,* along with the conspicuous citation of medical texts and their authors, biblical references, and allusions to Classical works, Barker specifically cites the names or titles of Horace, Ovid, Virgil, Cervantes, Dryden, and Behn (pp. 143, 132, 167, 124, 76, 108). Barker also quotes others' poetry as a means of

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[88] Spacks, *Novel Beginnings*, p. 38.
[89] This need not be read as a contradiction, however. For instance, Williamson sees moralistic and feminist revisionism in Barker's appropriations of Behn: 'The old stories from the libertine tradition refined and set in a moral framework impress the reader with the scope of the female community and its strong internal bonds' (p. 251).

encapsulating her own opinions, as she does twice with John Denham's 'Cooper's Hill', and once with Rochester's 'A Satire Against Mankind' (pp. 115, 126, 155). She also claims Katherine Philips, 'the Matchless Orinda', as her primary inspiration, praising her in prose and verse and reproducing six lines from her 'Song to the Tune of Adieu Phillis' (pp. 76, 108, 127, 139). In *The Lining of the Patch Work Screen*, she references more than a dozen additional writers or works, peppering the text with quotations and allusions. This is clearly a testimony on Barker's part of her own erudition and her texts' cultural legitimacy, but her use of intertextuality has the added effect of furthering her texts' metafictional blurriness. By complicating and obscuring the provenances of her framed fictions, she subordinates credulity to receptivity. By populating her fictions with familiar textual artefacts, she illustrates that her work is in dialogue with the real-world cultural matrix of which her readers are a part. These actions allow Barker's fictions to announce their own fictionality, and to indulge in the narrative freedoms such an acknowledgement permits, but at the same time to declare a presence in -- and so a relevance to -- the real world of readers' experience. Barker plants her flag in both territories as it were, and yet because she does so by blurring boundaries, she need not defend any claim overtly.

The various mechanisms of Barker's aesthetic of multiplicity -- shifting narrative frames, fantastic and rapidly successive events, allusions to real-world texts -- undergo a messy fusion in the final portion of *The Lining*. Meditating on moral lessons she has gleaned reading Oswald Dykes, Galesia falls into a long and extraordinary dream, which begins with lists of nightmarish scenes of a chaotic world full of vice and suffering. The dream ends with a vision of Katherine Philips high atop Parnassus, crowned with laurel as 'Queen of Female Writers' and serenaded by famous seventeenth-century poets, enormous grasshoppers,

nightingales, and fairies (pp. 275-277).[90] Galesia is unnoticed by Philips,
but the queen of the fairies spots her and commands her to leave, though
not without first giving Galesia a pocketful of gold.

The dream reiterates the double fall experienced by 'Jane Barker' in
the preface to *A Patch-Work Screen*. Seeking respite from the chaos of
the fallen world, Galesia ascends to a poetic Parnassus, only to be
returned to imperfect reality by her ejection from the hilltop celebration.
Spencer remarks that there is 'something wistful' in the dream sequence.
Galesia's late arrival at the coronation and her place at its periphery reveal
Barker's sense of living in 'a new and uncongenial age when the great
tributes to the poet she admires are over' and the opportunity for another
female writer to reach such stature has passed.[91] That Galesia is paid at
the same time that she is expelled from her vision of poetic paradise
implies that historically high literary arts have been degraded by modern
commodification.

Galesia awakens to find the ambiguously generous deed
immediately repeated in waking life -- a stranger delivers gold to her door.
The money makes Galesia anxious; by way of illustration, Barker
shoehorns in the 'Story of a Cobler', in which a poor cobbler is driven to
distraction after finding a cache of gold. The story breaks off *in medias
res*, however, and Galesia's waking experience returns to dreamlike
fantasy when a sea captain calls on her hoping to sell a cargo of 'Female
Vertues' he has imported from the Indies. She purchases them with her
'Fairie-Treasure', and by means of a hardworking distributor, whom she
calls her 'Factor', attempts to sell them on to women of various classes all
across London, without much success. Interrupted once when a 'Mrs.
Castoff' relates the tale of her descent from respectability into squalid

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[90] King suggests that the grasshoppers 'are meant to invoke a long
tradition of metaphorical usages' connecting them to poets, p. 215.
[91] Spencer, p. 178.

prostitution, this bout of moral mercantilism all but ends the third and final Galesia fiction -- after receiving an invitation from the Lady, Galesia sets off with her virtues for the country.

The dream's celebration of the artistic past has a complementary political intent when read together with the heavy-handed moralizing of Galesia's investment in virtues. Swenson writes that the virtues have 'a certain metonymical value, associated as they are with a fictional world of "times-gone-by"'. The recovery of these symbolic values partakes of 'a rhetorical Jacobite project, in which the idea that a moral standard was lost with the passing of an age was germane'.[92] Swenson adds, however, that in Barker's case this is not so much a regressive nostalgia as it is a call for a 'cyclical progression' congruent with the springtime setting of the text's final lines -- a restoration.[93] Like the end of *A Patch-Work Screen*, *The Lining*'s lack of closure, even with its glance to the past, is deliberately orientated toward futurity.

It is then especially appropriate that what shuttles between Galesia's dreamed and waking worlds is gold. As King points out, gold is symbolically ambiguous; it could denote 'the degeneration of the times or the pure gleam of transcendent value'.[94] In this case, with appropriately Barkerian ambivalence, each sense enriches the other. In the course of her career as a writer, Barker found herself shifting from writing manuscripts for narrow coterie circulation at Cambridge in the 1670s and 1680s to writing for a larger, more anonymous body of consumers of print in the eighteenth century, those whom she entreats to 'buy these patches

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[92] Swenson, p. 70.
[93] Swenson, p. 71. Swenson considers the Factor to be identical to Galesia; however, Barker seems careful to specify that the distribution of virtues is carried out by some agent other than Galesia, perhaps personifying trade or booksellers. This accommodation of middle-class commercialism adds an additional progressive element to the moral restoration Barker envisions.
[94] King, p. 216.

up quickly' (p. 54).[95] It was a move toward commercialism that must have embarrassed her traditionalist literary sensibilities. Yet to the extent that Barker is a moral or political polemicist, it was also a very pragmatic move -- enabling her to get the word out among a disconnected diaspora of receptive readers.[96] Though her texts are not altogether 'high art', they may capitalize on their misfit status in order to serve a high purpose.

Galesia's situation corresponds, whether read literally or metaphorically. Her fall from Parnassus provides her with the means and circumstances to reach out to others, combating the disorder of the fallen world and comforting its victims. Importantly, those who are most eager for the virtues she sells are those in the most fallen circumstances: the prostitutes who walk the 'Hundreds of Drury'. Galesia's Factor succeeds in distributing 'Repentance and Piety' there only after other virtues are rejected (and not always graciously) by women of higher station at court and in the city (p. 282). Galesia is a forthright narrator when dealing with her emotional condition, yet after lamenting a corrupt world where humans are 'more irrational than Brutes' and dreaming of her own incompatibility with the lofty realm of her literary idol, she does not despair. Despite her pessimism about human potential, Galesia seems convinced that a fall can catalyse redemption.

Though not normally attended by such stoicism, resiliency is always in Galesia's nature. When her brother dies, she is inspired to apply herself to medicine until she is able to practise as a physician and write prescriptions in Latin (p. 116). Over a larger plot arc, her rejection by Bosvil in *Love Intrigues* spurs her toward a life of artistic and financial independence -- an initial failure that, as Spacks remarks, becomes 'oddly

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[95] King, p. 23; on Barker's manuscript circulation, see also pp. 38-54.

[96] King discusses bookseller Edmund Curll's strategies for marketing Barker's works to 'constituents of various estranged communities -- Tory, Catholic and Jacobite' (p. 178; see pp. 170-179).

like a triumph' by the end of *A Patch-Work Screen*.[97] Even the literal fall

of her coach into a river occasions the beginning of a rewarding

relationship with the Lady.

The state of fallenness, in all its figural depth, is crucial to the

project assumed by Barker's fiction. The social, political, and religious

critiques she offers are alike in finding the present world to be fragmented,

disordered, and bewildering because it has in some way failed. In fact it

would be more accurate to phrase this diagnosis in the progressive: the

world of Barker's fiction is failing, because the manifold confusions she

presents are ongoing, capable of producing ever more anomalies,

injustices, and dilemmas. The tactic dictated by this ongoing fall is a

motile, provisional responsiveness on the part of subjective individuals.

Barker demonstrates that epistemological unsettledness is the lot of the

individual subject, who cannot expect to know with certainty what is right

and yet must persist anyway, without benefit of complete understanding

or final confirmation. Barker's texts employ generically novelistic

techniques because, with their formal emphasis on reflecting the

complications of knowledge in the phenomenal world, these are well suited

to images of multiplicity and indefiniteness. The 'ongoingness' of the

dialectic between empiricism and scepticism inheres in the form itself, and

thus the novel can efficiently portray the fallenness of both individual and

world.

By crafting fictions in which dynamic subjective interiority is cast

against the backdrop of an open-ended, multiply interpretable world,

Barker is able to cast the fallen state of the individual subject as a

symptom of the fallen world but also, crucially, as a means of dealing with

its vicissitudes and its obscurity. The fragmented and confused nature of

the world requires of the individual an ongoing, good-faith striving,

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[97] Spacks, *Imagining a Self*, p. 67.

because this is the only kind of effort that can proceed in the face of uncertainty, without closure or affirmation. There is something in this of the Christian notion of the *felix culpa* or the fortunate fall. Victor Yelverton Haines defines the concept:

> The paradoxical doctrine of the *felix culpa* teaches that the Fall of Adam was from one point of view fortunate, since without it humankind could not have experienced the unsurpassable joy of redemption.[98]

Haines notes that in this context, many human virtues are seen as responsive to the chain of events set in motion by sin and salvation, such as 'hopeful penance' and 'patient suffering, […] none of which would have been possible (or, of course, necessary) without the Fall'.[99] Barker would have been familiar with the concept in Western literary traditions as well as in her own religious faith. It is mentioned in the Exsultet, a hymn sung at the Easter Vigil of Roman Catholicism, and recurs in various theological and artistic guises throughout Western Christian history, where it is associated with oxymoron and juxtaposition.[100] The *felix culpa* also bears a clear connection to the underlying themes of Barker's fictions, which depict a world where a person aspiring to virtue must put up with rather than put right the flaws of the world. Like the poem supplied by the Lady at the end of *A Patch-Work Screen*, which presents Christian salvation as a

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[98] Victor Yelverton Haines, '*Felix Culpa*', in *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature* ed. by David Lyle Jeffrey (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1992), pp. 274-275 (p. 274).

[99] Haines, p. 274.

[100] Haines, pp. 274-275. The relevant passage in the Exsultet, as quoted by Haines, reads '*O felix culpa, quae talem ac tantum meruit habere Redemptorem!*'; 'O fortunate fault, which has merited such and so great a Redeemer!' (p 274). A slightly altered translation appears in modern liturgy; see 'Exsultet', in *The Sunday Missal, A New Edition* (London: Collins, 2005), pp 282-286 (p. 283).

sublime paradox, Barker's use of novelistic technique amounts to a call for faith as a means of staving off -- though not necessarily surmounting -- the doubt that results from the problem of subjective understanding. Barker's rather haphazard formal mixture carries this plea for receptivity beyond a specifically religious context and into a general orientation toward otherness.

The turn toward the reader that so much of the text enacts is thus not a demand for unreserved agreement, or even final interpretation, but rather an appeal for the withholding of any decisiveness or finality, a thoughtful openness. The final openness of the text is the most important feature for Barker's exhortatory purposes as well as for the text's generic identity. What in the specific textual content is, for instance, a call for the individual to have faith in God relies upon a deeper generic analogue of this faithfulness -- a humble orientation to alterity and potential, the sense that all is neither known nor even knowable from a single subjective stance, but that one may approach this epistemic horizon through the provisional acceptance of heterogeneity. In generic terms, it is the impossibility of the novelistic task -- the textual representation of subjective particularity -- that allows for any specific novelistic text to proceed. The Galesia fictions, too scattered and uneven to constitute a typological model for the novel, are nevertheless novelistic because they make so evident their provisional negotiations with this problem of representation in the medium of extended prose fiction. Their flaws, it could be said, comprise a literary theoretical 'fortunate fall'. Barker's texts proclaim by virtue of their very form that there can be no access to any absolute, but that this need not preclude a striving *toward* the absolute. Over and above the historical details of their composition, it is in this respect that the Galesia fictions help to characterize the genre called 'novel'.

Chapter 3

Mimetic duplicity and 'the Devil's tennis ball'

In the preceding chapter, Jane Barker's emphasis on the sense of embattled, conditional understanding that experience of multiplicity fosters in individual human subjects is shown to be central to the artistic and polemical underpinnings of her Galesia trilogy. More importantly to a broad theoretical consideration of the novel, this epistemological provisionality is shown also to be situated inextricably within the generic mode of novelistic prose fiction itself, independently of Barker's particular thematic emphases on, for instance, piety and Jacobitism. To label a piece of extended prose fiction a novel is to label it as invested with epistemological provisionality, because such is the novelistic orientation to the possibility and quality of human knowledge. (One might more usefully deploy this statement in reverse: to discover such provisionality in a text is to discover that that text is to some degree novelistic.)

That the complications of understanding highlighted by this novelistic epistemological stance are ingrained in the realistic portrayal of individual experience has been suggested already. Realism is closely associated with the generic identity of the novel because, though realism is not in and of itself the generic mark of the novel, it is productive of that mark. Realism, in various forms, allows for the depiction of problems of knowledge that are open-ended and unfinalizable, problems that require a correspondingly partial and provisional way of knowing. This claim has subsequently been borne out by Barker's reliance on realism, first as a portrayal of psychological interiority, but also in her infusing her fictions with 'truth to life' by other means more deeply rooted in the genre itself, like thematic emphasis on multiplicity and a pervasive sense of

'fallenness'. These effects are components of the novel's orientation toward provisionality. In order more thoroughly to characterize this stance, it is worthwhile to linger a bit longer on what engenders it: figural reflection of the world.

Mimesis, the action of reflection, can provide an informative source for such an inquiry, because, as a categorical designation, it encompasses the various realisms that a writer might deploy to achieve novelistic effects. Indeed, this is so even when the term realism is used, as in this study, with deliberate imprecision. If it is assumed that the novelistic stance is derived, at least in part, from problems of knowledge that are foregrounded by literary realism, an examination of some of the permutations the figure of mimesis has taken throughout its use in Western culture can be a way to uncover derivative characteristics of the novelistic stance. Accordingly, this chapter will first consider the figure of mimesis in an abstract sense, independently of particular literary or even artistic applications. After indicating some ways in which mimesis tends toward similar problems of knowledge to those implicated by the novel, the chapter will proceed to trace mimetic figures and their consequences in a specific novel, Tobias Smollett's *The Adventures of Roderick Random*.[1]

The word mimesis, taken directly from the Greek (*μίμησις*), documents something of its own status as a word of theoretical importance in Western discussions of knowledge and artistic production. As often happens with words borrowed untranslated from another language or culture, mimesis retains an element of the *je ne sais quoi*, overlapping with 'imitation' but also permitting translation as 'representation' and generally contributing its conspicuous and fertile open-endedness to any theoretical deliberations that concern it. Malcolm

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[1] Tobias Smollett, *The Adventures of Roderick Random*, ed. by David Blewett (London: Penguin, 1995). Subsequent references appear in the text.

Heath, who opts for the term 'imitation' in his 1996 translation of Aristotle's *Poetics*, reasons that 'a quasi-technical term of modern aesthetics may tend to obscure the continuity which Aristotle perceives between *mimêsis* in painting, poetry and music and in other, non-artistic forms of activity'.[2] In contrast, Stephen Halliwell criticizes 'the dangerous inadequacy, for the understanding of Aristotle at least, of the neoclassically established and still current translation of mimesis as "imitation"'.[3] One suitably indeterminate translation might be Heath's phrase 'the creation of likeness'.[4]

Halliwell further points out the insufficiency of any one translation by emphasizing the connotative shift of the term 'imitation' that has rendered it increasingly inappropriate since its earlier use by neoclassical critics. Perhaps a practical approach is, following Halliwell, to use mimesis as a 'general designator', keeping in mind a broad semantic field rather than a strict and proscriptive definition.[5] Beyond Classical studies, Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, emphasizes, as its subtitle indicates, the representative capacity of mimetic imitation as a flexible, general impression.[6] Matthew Potolsky provides an ample supply of cognates -- 'emulation, mimicry, dissimulation, doubling, theatricality, realism, identification, correspondence, depiction, verisimilitude, resemblance' -- and points out the inclusivity of mimesis as the province of 'artists as well as apes'.[7] In the pages that follow, mimetic terminology will be used with an eye

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[2] Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. by Malcolm Heath (London: Penguin, 1996), p. xiii.
[3] Stephen Halliwell, 'Aristotelian Mimesis Reevaluated', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 28.4 (1990), 487-510 (p. 488).
[4] *Poetics*, p. xiii.
[5] Stephen Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis: Ancient Texts and Modern Problems*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 2002), p. 14.
[6] Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1953; repr. 2003).
[7] Matthew Potolsky, *Mimesis*, (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 1-2.

toward such inclusiveness and in accord with -- and substantiation of -- the assertion that 'mimesis is an intrinsically double-faced and ambiguous concept, which is a major reason for its long-lasting presence in the vocabulary of aesthetics and criticism'.[8]

Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz traces the origins of the term to 'the rituals and mysteries of the Dionysian cult', in which it 'stood for the acts of cult performed by the priest -- dancing, music, and singing'.[9] Halliwell, more reluctant to speculate about an etymology he deems 'irrecoverable', concedes that 'by the time of Aeschylus words from the *mim-* root had already come to be associated with the musicopoetic arts'.[10] However clouded the origins of mimesis as a concept may be, it is Plato whose treatment of mimesis in his Socratic dialogues, particularly the *Republic*, initiates it as a philosophical touchstone of enduring importance in the West.

In the *Republic*, book ten, the crux of Socrates' argument for the banishment of poets from the ideal state is his understanding of the nature of mimetic imitation. He envisions an ontological hierarchy in which the most absolute reality resides only in the divinely created forms of things, of which any individual manifestation is but an imperfect specimen. Imitators -- that is, artists and poets -- create mere images of such manifestations, incomplete and devoid of substance, hopelessly distant from the truth that invests forms. Because images thus necessarily deviate from essential truth, their power derives from an appeal to the irrational side of human psychology, and so they pose a double danger to the health of the republic: they mislead by distorting and diminishing reality, and, in so doing, they foster irrational habits of mind

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[8] Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis*, pp. 22-23.
[9] Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz, 'Mimesis', in *Dictionary of the History of Ideas: Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas*, ed. by Philip P. Wiener, 5 vols (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), III, 225–230 (p.226).
[10] Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis*, pp. 17, 19.

which pose a danger to the health of society at large. Hence Socrates proclaims, 'A low-grade mother like representation, then, and an equally low-grade father produce low-grade children'.[11]

Before progressing any further from this point, it is important to note that the hierarchy of being envisaged in the *Republic* need not be construed as an encapsulation of Plato's ontology. Halliwell cautions readers that the 'critique of mimesis as "twice removed" from the truth' is not an unassailable statement of some Platonic (or Socratic) dogma. Instead, it is 'the most pronounced invitation ever issued to Plato's readers to continue the debate themselves'.[12] The goal here is not to reconstruct the opinions of the historical Plato, but to extrapolate from influential conceptions of mimesis that have emerged from that debate, remaining visible in one form or another since the earliest critical treatments of the subject.

Rigidly conceived, Platonic mimesis is less a principle set forth in any one text of Plato than it is a rather purposeful reading of key passages, of which *Republic* ten is a principal example. Tatarkiewicz summarizes this conception of mimesis as 'a passive and faithful act of copying the outer world'.[13] Plato maintains that the primary concern of the imitator is to represent the sensory aspect of the natural world. Image-making on this account is an act of reproduction. Furthermore, because mimesis precludes actual duplication, the representing that Plato describes must be carried out in as deceptive a manner as possible to have maximal impact. The efficacy of a painting or poem is directly proportional to its power to mislead, since, 'An image-maker, a

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[11] Plato, *Republic*, trans. by Robin Waterfield, (Oxford: Oxford University, 1993; repr. 1998), p. 356.
[12] Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis*, p. 39.
[13] Tatarkiewicz, p. 226.

representer, understands only appearance, while reality is beyond him'.[14]

Mortals cannot truly copy reality; they must therefore copy it falsely.

As a prototypical poet and image-maker, Homer bears the brunt of Socrates' withering rhetorical interrogation in the *Republic*. Homer writes of medicine, yet cures no one; he writes of warfare, yet leads no one in battle; he writes like a mentor, yet educates no one.[15] Homer is indeed eloquent, but he is a liar, and his effect on society is like 'someone destroying the more civilized members of a community by presenting ruffians with political power'.[16]

Preparing to declare philosophers most fit to rule the ideal republic, Socrates peppers the ever-agreeable Glaucon with rhetorical questions:

> Is it possible for anything actual to match a theory? Isn't any
> actual thing bound to have less contact with truth than theory,
> however much people deny it? Do you agree or not?[17]

In an endnote, translator Robin Waterfield suggests the above pronouncement is 'gnomic' and 'rather implausible', but in terms of adhering to a metaphysics of forms, the implications are at least internally consistent.[18] Socrates knows that his discussion of an ideal state must not be bogged down with adherence to real-world examples and illustrations, because such particulars would divert the dialogue away from its object. If the state in question is in fact ideal, it will of necessity remain at the lofty height of the world of forms, only appearing in the world of experience as a flawed derivation. Plato's practical intent is simply to 'discover how a community's administration could come very close to our

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[14] *Republic*, p. 352, [601b, c].
[15] *Republic*, pp. 350-352, [599b-600e].
[16] *Republic*, p. 359, [605b].
[17] *Republic*, p. 192, [473a].
[18] *Republic*, p. 412.

theory'.[19] This is simple expediency, a response to the predicament of the inhabitants of the famous allegorical cave, where 'the shadows of artefacts would constitute the only reality people in this situation would recognize'.[20] Whatever truth and reality may be found in the phenomenal world, they are but the shadows of the pure essences residing at a distant remove from normal human life. Because pure form precedes its material expression, Socrates and Glaucon seek to discover a theory of statecraft to properly precede its practice. In the world of the cave, it is perhaps optimistic enough to seek to 'come very close' to the light that filters in.

For Plato, the deceptive quality of images rests in their capacity to occlude the ontological gap between a form and its phenomenal expression. This inherent deceit is the pivotal point in his exclusion of artistic mimesis from the ideal republic. However, it is precisely the difference of the image from the thing it represents that, for Aristotle in the *Poetics*, complicates its value and makes of it something perhaps not quite so reprehensible. The *Poetics* develops mimesis more deeply, elaborating upon the narrowly conceived imitative actions condemned by Socrates in Plato's *Republic*. For Aristotle, images and impressions themselves are the proper product of mimesis, and so the fact that imitation always falls short of ontological completeness and factual exactitude is not such a detriment. Imitation, the making of likenesses, ought to strive for a sense of truth specifically in its effects, independently of documentary perfection; this is why, in depicting the world, 'Probable impossibilities are preferable to implausible possibilities'.[21]

This reconsideration of mimetic action enables Aristotle to make claims that would have been impossible in the *Republic*, for example that Homer 'taught other poets the right way to tell falsehoods' or that 'it is

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[19] *Republic*, p. 192, [473a].
[20] *Republic*, p. 241, [515c].
[21] *Poetics*, p. 41, [1460a].

less serious if the artist was unaware of the fact that a female deer does not have antlers than if he painted a poor imitation'.[22] The notion that there might be a 'right way' to be false or that a painting could be both good and erroneous would be ludicrous to Plato. However, Aristotle's redefinition of the objective of mimesis changes its relation to the state of the community while maintaining a nearly unchanged conception of its methods and ultimate nature. Aristotelian mimesis derives its value through its craft, which is not the flawless re-creation of the world, but the achievement of certain generic effects. Moreover, these effects, far from 'deforming even good people', make people better, offering pleasure or catharsis, and providing an outlet for the expression of universals.[23]

Halliwell cautions against the misconception that those universals are transcendent, 'quasi-Platonic' essences, ethical precepts, or even 'generalized abstractions'. Instead, he interprets Aristotle's universals to be 'categories of discrimination and understanding'.[24] However conservatively one conceives of the terms, though, the claim that mimesis is a means of imitating particulars in order to make universal truths more tangible nevertheless locates Aristotle's mimesis within a hierarchical ontology akin to Plato's, albeit one more friendly to image-making. For both philosophers, mimetic action takes place at a manifold remove from ultimate reality. In Aristotle, though, this is not such a crippling concession to make; the imitation and its effects take place in a recognisably artificial milieu, so that whatever deception the image may achieve is consensual and benign. As Gebauer and Wulf put it:

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[22] *Poetics*, pp. 41, 43, [1460a, b].
[23] *Republic*, p. 359, [605c]; *Poetics*, pp. 7, 10, 16, [1448b, 1449b, 1451a-b].
[24] Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis*, p. 194.

> In distinction to Plato, who feared the consequences of negative models, Aristotle sees precisely in their mimetic recapitulation a possibility of lessening their effects.[25]

Such an emphasis on the ends, rather than the means, of mimesis as an aesthetic craft lightens the burdens of factual accuracy and impeccable morality, and it loosens the bonds of formal tradition as well. The point in tragedy, for example, is tragic effect, and this is not always best served by unswerving devotion to tradition, 'so one need not try at all costs to keep to the traditional stories'.[26]

The Aristotelian take on mimesis carries on Plato's suppositions about truth's emanation from a realm beyond the compass of mimetic approximation, but it also implants into this worldview a degree of flexibility not offered to the image-makers of the *Republic*. It is perhaps Aristotle's foregrounding of mimetic effects and leniency toward genre and artistic tradition, placed against the background of a Platonic hierarchy of truth and authority, that synthetically constitute the adaptive capacity of mimesis as a locus of aesthetic and philosophical thought. A variety of interpretations regarding the power and significance of mimesis can spring up from the same general background of assumptions. Tatarkiewicz writes that, as the concept of mimesis persisted in Western culture, 'the Platonic and Aristotelian conceptions proved to be basic enduring concepts in art; they were often fused into one and the awareness that they were different concepts was frequently lost'.[27] In such a fusion, reverence for the *a priori* assumes various forms, but remains as a constant accessory to mimesis in general.

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[25] Gunter Gebauer and Christoph Wulf, *Mimesis: Culture, Art, Society*, trans. by Don Reneau (Berkeley: University of California, 1995), p. 26.
[26] *Poetics*, p. 16, [1451b].
[27] Tatarkiewicz, p. 227.

In this sort of hierarchical schema, mimetic action would seem to be subject to the rule of diminishing returns. Between the original and whatever imitation follows it, there must exist a gradient of value such that the precedent always stands a little higher that its successor. In turn, that successor, diminished though it must be, will nevertheless stand superior to any subsequent copy for which it serves as model. The legitimacy of the original is therefore transferable, albeit as an incrementally shrinking legacy, from imitated to imitator. Such a state of affairs is articulated to a great extent by Neoplatonist thinkers like Plotinus, who, centuries after the *Republic*, envisages a 'systematically and magisterially hierarchical worldview', in which 'being or reality "flows" down the cosmos from top to bottom' and mimesis illustrates 'the process by which all being endeavours to revert, upward, to its source'.[28] This is the nature of the Platonic hierarchy of being, in which any imitation points upward to the next rung in the metaphysical ladder, so to speak, indicating some more authentic precursor from which it inevitably falls short.

Two important principles derive from this relationship between copy and copied. First, mimesis is a means of drawing forth and propagating that abstract quality of superiority -- one might call it genetic authenticity -- which makes the original. Second, inasmuch as a relationship of original/copy is hierarchical, with the original standing as the definitive standard toward which the imitator strives, the imitation exalts the original. Evoking the original celebrates it, testifying to its worthiness of emulation and broadening its sphere of influence, helping in turn to legitimate any subsequent mimetic references. There is a sort of two-way merit exchange taking place in mimesis, then, wherein the imitation is valuable because it is like the (still more valuable) original, and,

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[28] Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis*, pp. 314, 315.

conversely, the original is proven superior because it inspires imitation. As
Gebauer and Wulf explain, the early medieval European conception of
aesthetic mimesis illustrates such a transaction:

> People of the Middle Ages seem not to have made a principled
> distinction between the beauty of a sunrise, an artwork, and a
> person. The respective beauty of each had always to be a
> reflection of the beauty of God, and thus the three different forms
> share in common a mimetic relation to the beauty of God.[29]

The divine origin of beauty means that beautiful things are graced by the
mark of divinity, while at the same time their splendour attests to the
always greater magnificence of God himself.

In the theological politics of the same epoch, an analogous
understanding of mimetic hierarchy organized the structure of monarchy,
hinging upon a 'Christ-centred justification of kingship'.[30] In such a
structure of imitation, the relation of God to king was as a 'divine
prototype and his visible vicar'.[31] The monarch, as a material reflection of
divinity, establishes an authority second only to God through a Christ-like
imitative relation. Read in the opposite direction, to imitate is likewise to
invest the object of imitation with the authority of originality, which
combines the pre-eminence of having come before with the merit of being
important or influential enough to inspire imitation. When conceived as a
form of *imitatio Christi* or *imitatio Dei*, sovereign authority is circular and
self-legitimating. Since royal power is in fact God's power transferred, the
strength of the ruler is the seal of heavenly approval, and such an

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[29] Gebauer and Wulf, p. 67.
[30] Gebauer and Wulf, p. 73.
[31] Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1957), p. 47; quoted in Gebauer and Wulf, p. 72.

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endorsement in turn appears to be the very source of such strength. Indeed, the sovereign is consequently duty-bound to wield such power in order to acclaim and substantiate divine will.

Even in the late middle ages, as monarchical command comes to be conceived as deriving not directly from God, but rather from the law, the ontological pedigree which justifies political power retains the same structure. In *The King's Two Bodies*, Ernst H. Kantorowicz explains:

> The ancient idea of liturgical kingship gradually dissolved, and it gave way to a new pattern of kingship centered on the sphere of Law which was not wanting in its own mysticism. [...] In the Age of Jurisprudence the sovereign state achieved a hallowing of its essence independent of the Church, though parallel to it, and assumed the eternity of the Roman empire as the king became an 'emperor within his own realm'.[32]

Gebauer and Wulf find in John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* 'the idea of *rex imago aequitatis*, the metaphor of the king as the image of justice', which bears out the propagation of royal right as a species of image-making.[33] Law arises as the human-made mimesis of divine order, and therefore the ruler, though perhaps at one further remove from the absolute than a 'visible vicar', still stands as the representative and envoy of divine force -- the head of 'a secular *corpus mysticum*'.[34]

When beauty, goodness, and power are constructed as emanations from the same spiritual ether, a conceptual blend begins to take shape. For when aesthetic experience is conceived in such a way as to fall into tiered ranks, authority becomes an aestheticizing force. Something

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[32] Kantorowicz, p. 192.
[33] Gebauer and Wulf, p. 73.
[34] Kantorowicz, p. 192.

beautiful is so because it embodies the divine essence of beauty. Likewise, the power of the medieval ruler justifies itself inasmuch as it mirrors the divine might of God. Mimesis emerges in this light as a component of both right and rightness, encompassing both authority and obedience; it commands of the imitator a certain mode of existence, and the fealty of the imitation further justifies the commanding power to which it responds. All things point with their flaws toward perfection, toward the generative original atop the hierarchy of being. This is the 'Vast chain of being, which from God began' that Pope treats poetically in his 'Essay on Man'.[35] From a Neoplatonic standpoint, the entire world is engaged in mimesis, existing as it does solely by virtue of similitude to a distant *a priori*. Likeness (and thus compliance) to an inaccessible abstract original is thus the measure of political, artistic, or any other kind of authority. It is the very substance of correctness. As long as the divine prototype hovers somewhere beyond the vanishing point of human understanding, like makes right.

Mimesis, when conceived in the context of a Classically inspired hierarchical ontology, is the mechanism by which anything is what it is, and by which it can lay claim to whatever right or rightness it might have, be it beauty or truth, purity or power. Such values cross over from the formal realm into the sphere of everyday experience by means of mimesis, passing through successively more estranged strata of imitative distance as they diffuse into the compound material world. The more faithful the mimesis of the copy, the more of the original's genetic authenticity the copy can attain. And as detailed above, because mimesis is a two-way transaction, such a system of mimetic self-authorization retroactively characterizes the original as well as the copy. Even as an imitation shapes

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[35] Alexander Pope, 'An Essay on Man', in *Alexander Pope: The Major Works*, ed. by Pat Rogers (Oxford: Oxford University, 2006), pp. 270-309 (p. 279, l.237).

its identity after another, the identity of the object of imitation shifts also, by virtue of being imitated, so that for all the passivity of the original in a mimetic relationship, both imitated and imitator work in concert to self-identify respectively as original and derivation. In spite of whatever formal, temporal, or spatial distance separates them, imitator and imitated are thus brought into proximity by mimesis. Accordingly, the imitative choices of an image-maker become, in the words of Gebauer and Wulf, a 'movement toward the world', a path that the subject takes toward the object.[36]

The imitation in this sense is an invocation of the original. They co-occur to some degree, through this referral, when the act of imitation takes place. Mimesis in this respect is a remembrance; it establishes itself by harkening back to some previous thing or event. Indeed, the identifying power of mimesis is an extension of this historicizing function, since likeness connects the imitation to one or more precursors. In *The Light in Troy*, Thomas Greene suggests that a precondition of imitative art is an awareness of such a link between history and identity:

> As individuals and as communities, we learn who we are by means of private or collective memory. An amnesiac is considered sick and unfortunate because he doesn't know who he is. When he recovers his memory, he recovers his identity.[37]

The imitative act or object stands apart from the original, but indicates it, reaches toward it, through mimetic reference. Mimesis is the action of recalling identity. Things (or actions, or individuals, or any other phenomena) are what they are through their similarity to something that

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[36] Gebauer and Wulf, p. 286.
[37] Thomas M. Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1982), p. 10.

came before, through drawing closer to the immaterial or elusive original. Mimesis, because it is imitative and referential, must involve this kind of retrospective 'making close', a movement toward the *a priori*. This motion is conceptual rather than spatial or temporal, but mimesis quite literally approximates; it seeks closeness.

As a means of establishing this type of conceptual proximity, mimesis seems to disclose a kind of reverence, especially to the extent that mimetic proximity sanctions a hierarchical original/copy dynamic. The transactional nature of imitative action calls attention to the hierarchical structure of authority in which propriety and correctness, and even being itself, course downward through channels of similitude. As the traits of an original repeat in an imitation, or in a whole host of imitations, the status of the original as original, and as originator, is reified. Compounding this celebration of the precursor is the mode of homage that inheres in the memorializing remembrance enacted by mimesis. The derivation proclaims itself as both document and component of the significance of the original.

This pervading sense of reverence, of deferral to precursors, is a natural extension of the Neoplatonic worldview. In Western aesthetics and theory of art, the reverent imitation of role models has attained a sophisticated articulation under the label of *imitatio*. *Imitatio* is essentially mimesis directed toward exemplary human models, rather than toward nature in its raw state. It was a 'central and pervasive' standard in the Italian, French, and English Renaissance, influencing 'not only literature', but nearly every aspect of life involving the purposeful dissemination of knowledge.[38] It is not exclusive to any one region or era, however, and resists even its most basic definition, since the imitation of models and of nature seem to bleed together: 'some theorists [...] held that to imitate

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[38] Greene, p. 1.

the greatest master was only another way of imitating nature at its

highest and most characteristic'.[39] Potolsky finds praise for *imitatio*

(though at a time when it suffered critical attack) in Alexander Pope's

1711 'An Essay on Criticism':

> Unerring nature! Still divinely bright,
>
> One clear, unchanged, and universal light,
>
> Life, force, and beauty, must to all impart,
>
> At once the source, and end, and test of art.[40]

The job of the artist is to imitate the perfection of nature, the expression

of divinity on Earth. And yet, as in the case of the *rex imago aequitatis*,

the individual must approach the great original through a pre-existing

structure of mediation. In artistic *imitatio*, this structure comprises the

works of artistic precursors. Pope makes this clearer as the 'Essay'

continues, celebrating the greatness of Virgil, that 'Mantuan Muse', who

'but from Nature's fountains scorned to draw'; however, Pope emphasizes

that Virgil's greatness germinated only under the tempering and refining

influence of Homer, whose work is so well regulated that it prefigures 'the

Stagirite', Aristotle.[41] Potolsky explains, 'Following nature, in this

instance, does not mean trusting instinct or describing flowers. It means

following the best human role models and imitating trusted conventions'.[42]

A lineage is established here, in which a Platonic, immaterial

originator in the world of forms endows Nature (to borrow Pope's totalizing

majuscule) with 'life, force, and beauty', those familiar avatars of genetic

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[39] Ibid.

[40] Potolsky, p. 50; see Alexander Pope, 'An Essay on Criticism', in *The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends*, ed. by David H. Richter, 2nd edn (Boston, MA: Bedford Books, 1998), pp. 206-217 (p. 209).

[41] Pope, 'An Essay on Criticism', p. 209.

[42] Potolsky, p. 51.

authenticity. This originality, in turn, comes to the artist via the mediation of a sort of family tree of image-makers, who, like an assembly of rich aunts and uncles, have inherited shares of that enduring authority and can bestow them upon their favourites among succeeding generations. As would be expected of any heir to a lofty pedigree, the favour of these artistic predecessors demands faithful adherence to the rules of the family. To push the filial metaphor a step further, one could state that the role of *imitatio* in carrying forward this legacy is not to enforce rote duplication, but to shape successive artistic production according to the forms that shaped previous works -- to create family resemblance. As Potolsky notes, 'Epic, pastoral, comedy and tragedy [...] became recognizable as literary forms because they were objects of imitation'.[43] Conventions and traditions are systematized imitation; *imitatio* engenders genre and canon.

Like the mimesis described in the *Republic* and the *Poetics*, which in both cases allows a crossing over of formal or universal realities into the realm of human experience, *imitatio* also is a form of crossing over. These various conceptions of mimesis all involve investing specific imitative behaviours or artefacts with an ethereal authorizing/aestheticizing force that originates externally. In 'On the Sublime', Longinus (praising the *Republic* and echoing *Ion*) describes the influence of artistic predecessors as spiritual possession:

> From the great natures of the men of old there are borne in upon the souls of those who emulate them (as from sacred caves) what we may describe as *effluences*, so that even those who seem little

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[43] Potolsky, p. 52.

likely to be possessed are thereby inspired and succumb to the

spell of the others' greatness.[44]

Whether it takes the form of sovereignty, beauty, or some nameless

'effluence', authenticity in mimetic relationships nonetheless propagates

from top downward, from before to after, and mimetic action moves in the

opposite direction. That is, the passive original is approached by the

imitation, which is inferior -- if not in value then certainly in hierarchical

position -- and the original establishes the authoritative set of

characteristics that the imitator strives to adopt. Thus Gebauer and Wulf

can characterize mimesis as 'a precondition of fellow-feeling, compassion,

sympathy, and love toward other people. It is imitation, assimilation,

surrender'.[45] Imitation is faithfulness.

It is this attractive force of mimesis that allows a genre or an

artistic tradition to cohere, or a writer to feel as if possessed by the spirit

of a literary forebear. Such a ready conflation of imitation and love

underscores once again the potential in mimesis for homage, the result of

the copy's reaching upward toward its model in a vertically-orientated

structure of original authority. Reaching in this way typifies the drawing

near of mimesis, and it reveals a driving mechanism of imitation to be

desire. Potolsky notes that in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno's

conception of mimesis 'does not respect rigid divisions between subject

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[44] Longinus, 'On the Sublime', in *The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends*, ed. by David H. Richter, 2nd edn (Boston, MA: Bedford Books, 1998), pp. 79-118 (p. 90). In *Ion*, Plato (via the Socrates character) likens artistic inspiration to magnetism, which has the power both to attract and to be passed on, so that it can create a chain of artistic intermediaries linking the 'Muse' to the 'spectator'. See Plato, *Ion* [excerpt], trans. by Lane Cooper, in *The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends*, ed. by David H. Richter, 2nd edn (Boston, MA: Bedford Books, 1998), pp. 29-37 (pp. 32-33).
[45] Gebauer and Wulf, p. 286.

and object. It is thus akin to "touch, soothing, snuggling up, coaxing"'.[46] As homage, as remembrance, and as a movement into proximity, mimesis enacts desire.

In the works of René Girard, an especially important type of desire is itself born of mimesis. In Girard's discussion, this mimetic desire forms a triangular structure. The desiring subject feels inclined toward an object because of the mediating influence of another entity. The points of Girard's mimetic triangle are therefore the subject, the object and the mediator. Drawing an example from Cervantes, Girard points out that Don Quixote quite lucidly expresses his yearning for a chivalrous life through a desire to be as similar as possible to his supposed precursor in knight-errantry, Amadis of Gaul. 'Chivalric existence is the *imitation* of Amadis in the same sense that the Christian's existence is the imitation of Christ'.[47] Similarly, Sancho Panza's ambitious plans for his future do not arise spontaneously; instead they are born through mimesis, for 'it is Don Quixote who has put them into his head'.[48] In both cases, the characters' wills are shaped by a 'desire *according to the Other*'.[49] The mimetic nature of this type of triangular desire is engrained so deeply in its action as to be invisible. 'Don Quixote and Sancho borrow their desires from the Other in a movement which is so fundamental and primitive that they completely confuse it with the will to be Oneself'.[50]

The way these characters idolize their mimetic models of desire illustrates the capacity for love inherent in reverent mimetic action. The emulation of the model easily translates into adoration. In language

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[46] Potolsky, p. 144, quoting Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. by John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1972), p. 182.

[47] René Girard, 'Triangular Desire', in *The Girard Reader*, ed. by James G. Williams (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1996), pp. 33-44 (p. 34).

[48] Girard, p. 35.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid.

strikingly compatible with a Platonic metaphysical hierarchy, Girard writes

that a character engaged in this kind of mimesis 'worships his model

openly and declares himself [the model's] disciple'.[51] In such a situation,

the mimetic model is 'external', distant, 'enthroned in an inaccessible

heaven', which makes worship possible.[52] If, however, that distance

collapses and the subject and model of mimetic desire fall into reciprocal

interaction, the possibility of competition for the same object awakens the

conflictual potential of mimetic proximity. Indeed, in this more volatile

'internal' mediation, typified in Girard's discussion by characters from

Stendhal, the mere prospect that such competition could develop can

intensify the mimetic subject's desire, fostering a sort of vicious, and

perhaps violent, cycle. In such a situation, mimesis alone may invest the

object with its importance; as Gebauer and Wulf comment, 'The attractive

force of the object does not lie in its inherent value; nor is it rendered

valuable by the libido of the competitors'.[53] Each competitor, that is,

imitates what he or she perceives to be the other's desire for the object.

To emulate the model, the desiring subject must emulate the

model's desires, thereby competing for the same object. Likeness

paradoxically places them at odds:

The mediator can no longer act his role of model without also

acting or appearing to act the role of obstacle. Like the relentless

sentry of the Kafka fable, the model shows his disciple the gate of

paradise and forbids him to enter with one and the same gesture.[54]

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[51] Girard, p. 39.
[52] Girard, p. 38.
[53] Gebauer and Wulf, p. 256.
[54] Girard, p. 38.

Don Quixote's mimetic desire leads him to admire and venerate his model, and yet essentially the same desire -- the wish to be like another -- can foster an equally powerful enmity between subject and model. In internal mediation, 'The subject is torn between two opposite feelings toward his model -- the most submissive reverence and the most intense malice'.[55] This propensity to fuel both 'reverence' and 'malice' is latently characteristic of mimesis in general, because mimesis always yokes together likeness and unlikeness. It is the duplicity of mimesis that allows Girard to open the conventionally linear structure of desire into a triangle, and to discover in its workings the striking similarity between the recipes for love or hatred.

Desire is of singular importance to mimesis, for not only does it provide the impetus for mimetic action, but the paradoxical nature of desire suggests a contradiction at the heart of any imitative undertaking. Desire implies, in fact requires, absence. The potential violence of Girard's internal mediation makes this clear. The destructive capacity of a mimetic relation is proportionate to the mutual presence of subject and object. Even in a very concrete instance of desire -- for example a person wanting a glass of water -- what is desired must yet be out of reach. One cannot want what one already has. The same holds true for mimesis, the desire for likeness, which in spite of its tendency to abstraction is nevertheless subjective and directional. Imitation is transitive; it needs an other, a model, even if that model happens to be hypothetical or imaginary. By definition, to want is to lack, and so desire exists by virtue of a void at its end. And mimesis, like its adjunct, desire, moves toward its object without attaining it.

The counterpart to the imitation's self-identification through similarity is its concurrent self-definition as other than the original. The

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[55] Girard, p. 40.

aforementioned mimesis of sun and king may be repeated in this context: the Platonic beauty of a sunset is praiseworthy because it functions as a reference to divine beauty; such a reference is accessible, is present at all, only by virtue of its falling short of true divinity. The same follows for the monarch who merits submission as *rex imago aequitatis* or *imitatio Dei*. The king rules as an earthly viceroy for the immaterial, a mimesis of divine will, and the justification of his position hinges on the inevitable falling short of mimesis. He is both like God (and so to be obeyed) and yet also unlike God (and so physically present to rule). Within this all-important falling short appears a crucial distinction between desire and mimesis: whereas desire may move toward its object to the point of fulfilment, mimesis inherently preserves difference. It remains confined to the realm of likeness, always outside of sameness.

Reviewing Auerbach's *Mimesis*, Terry Eagleton points out that an imitation must preserve some kind of difference in order not to disappear altogether:

> If a representation were to be wholly at one with what it depicts, it would cease to be a representation. A poet who managed to make his or her words 'become' the fruit they describe would be a greengrocer.[56]

The notion of the flawless copy is an oxymoron; a copy cannot be recognized as flawless if it is to be recognizable as a copy. As Jacques Derrida notes in an essay that will be discussed below, 'A perfect imitation

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[56] Terry Eagleton, 'Pork Chops and Pineapples', *London Review of Books* 25.20 (23 October 2003), 17-19 (p. 18). Eagleton uses the image of the greengrocer/poet again in a discussion of realism in *The English Novel: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), p. 10.

is no longer an imitation'.[57] Hence, mimetic action approaches the original, but at the same time, it reinforces the otherness of what has come before. This complicates the notion of mimesis as the foundation for a relation of proximity. The closeness of mimesis places imitation and original beside each other in unavoidable comparison, but any resemblance becomes a marker of discrepancy, and so mimetic similarity highlights difference: 'Similarity is thus the determinative characteristic of the image [...]; on the one hand, the image is a double, and on the other, it is a mere illusion'.[58] The drawing near of mimesis is also a falling short, because it reaches into an impassable gulf of identity. As much as it may contain a 'movement toward the world', it also 'secures the "primacy of the object" against the subject's claims to domination'.[59] Similarity must encompass sameness and difference; it must reach but not grasp. This seems to parallel what Halliwell describes as a 'tension between discrepant impulses in Plato's thinking'. On the one hand, the impoverished nature of images and image-making promotes a sense 'that reality cannot adequately be spoken of, described, or modeled [...]'; on the other hand is the implication 'that all human thought *is* an attempt to speak about, describe or model reality'. The result is that Plato's mimesis appears as 'a lost cause, doomed to failure' yet also 'all we have, or all we are capable of' -- the only available mechanism of human apprehension.[60]

Because the imitation can never be identical with the original, mimetic action must be to some extent selective. It must temper sameness with difference. As such, it becomes not only a passage into the identity of the original, but also into the imitation as an object in its own right. Indeed, in the *Poetics*, Aristotle equates the pleasure of images with

[57] Jacques Derrida, 'Plato's Pharmacy', in *Dissemination*, trans. by Barbara Johnson (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 1981), pp. 61-171 (p. 139).
[58] Gebauer and Wulf, p. 40.
[59] Gebauer and Wulf, p. 286.
[60] Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis*, pp. 70-71.

that of 'understanding', because the recognition of an object as imitative of something else requires an informed, interpretive act.[61] Further, spotting an imitation as an imitation requires recognition of both similarity and difference. This visibility of the selections entailed by mimetic association is a precondition of hermeneutic understanding. To recognize likeness is (at least to begin) to recognize identity. Those aspects of the original that reappear in the imitation, and those that are omitted, as well as any distortions or additions introduced into the mimetic act, become readable and interpretable as a text. It is this aspect of mimesis -- the opening of a space between original and imitation that reflexively grants access to both -- that constitutes one of Auerbach's central themes in his *Mimesis*.

Auerbach sees mimesis as a key to relating the use of figure in human expression to the social and historical moment from which it springs. The selections made through imitation, the omissions or amplifications that reveal the heredity and uniqueness of particular cultural objects, are for Auerbach windows which offer to an examining, interpreting eye a prospect on the preoccupations of the historically-located societies that produce and reproduce them. Hence, through interpretation, not of *Don Quixote* but rather of the way in which the *Quixote* engages the currents of tradition and imitation on which it drifts, Auerbach can speak of a Cervantic 'attitude toward the world'.[62] In the divergence of biblical from Classical stories, he reads the rise of early Christianity and the consequent volatility in concepts of high and low, sacred and profane.[63] Auerbach's stylistic understanding predicates itself on reading mimetic selectivity as a text in itself, so that style can approximate experience, the experience not so much of an author, but of

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[61] *Poetics*, p. 7, [1448b].
[62] Auerbach, p. 355.
[63] Auerbach, pp. 72, 151.

the chorus of voices invoked by the myriad connections from which a given work draws in establishing its own identity. As the work of Auerbach demonstrates, looking for a culture's signatures in certain texts provides insights not only on that culture or those texts, but also on how texts reveal culture at all. Mimetic selectivity generates and makes available not only new inroads into understanding the respective contexts of both imitation and original, but also an altogether new synthesis of these two: their relation of proximity as an interpretable object.

To return to context, a component of the distance maintained by mimesis inheres in the contextual reference intrinsic to any imitative act. Its appearance in new circumstances is part of the imitation's self-identification as an other, part of what marks it as an imitation, and, indeed, part of what allows a reader from Auerbach's vantage to find that mimesis informs on both original and copy as a kind of hermeneutic meta-text. However, the contextual shift brought about by mimesis re-contextualizes similarities as well as differences. Even the likeness of an imitation contributes to its status as other; hence the unsettling power of repetition, doubling, and the 'secretly familiar' of the Freudian uncanny.[64] This is why meeting one's *doppelgänger* would be far more disturbing than meeting someone merely wearing the same outfit, or why a perfectly executed *trompe l'œil* painting of ivy would be more striking (and more costly) than the plant it represents. It is precisely because of mimetic distancing that *imitatio* in the Renaissance could honour utterly pagan artistic practices without overtly contradicting Christian orthodoxy: 'Imitating the ancients also meant distancing oneself from them'.[65] So it would seem that one could not accept Heath's glossing of mimesis as 'the

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[64] Sigmund Freud, 'The 'Uncanny'', trans. by Alix Strachey, in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Vincent B. Leitch (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), pp. 929-952 (III, p. 947).
[65] Potolsky, p. 60.

creation of likeness' without conceding that mimesis must inversely create unlikeness as well.[66]

The making other of even those characteristics that are, for all appearances, faithfully carried over from the original means that the selectivity of an imitation supplies a commentary. That is, the imitation draws attention to the pre-existence of certain aspects of the original, but draws them out of their earlier context into new surroundings. Consequently, the original, conjured into a new milieu, is de-historicized, made closer to contemporaneous judgment, but concurrently held at arm's length, placed at the extent of an ironic, scrutinizing distance. In the process of being called forth from its historical context, the object of imitation becomes subject to new valuations, and by virtue of being thus judged, it also becomes distanced as an other, bearing the signature of its historical moment even as it is divorced from it. Of course 'every parody pays its own oblique homage', and interpretive scrutiny implies some inherent worthiness in its object.[67] Besides, the process of making other need not take the form of an attack. Nostalgia could not operate without this same apparatus of mimetic selection and re-contextualization. In Potolsky's words, 'As every school child knows, imitation can be cruel as well as complimentary'.[68] In fusing proximity and distance, mimesis instigates both tribute and travesty.

As discussed previously, mimesis makes a kind of homage as it draws near its object. How then can it also embody antagonism? Mimesis necessarily involves a 'moving toward', and so in the temporal hierarchy in which priority makes validity, mimetic imitation is the mark of the devotee, or even the supplicant. However, this vertical arrangement, in which the original presides over the state and position of the imitation, is

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[66] *Poetics*, p. xiii.
[67] Greene, p. 46.
[68] Potolsky, p. 53.

not the sole expression of mimetic proximity. Without abandoning time as an organizing principle in mimetic relation, the hierarchy of originality, of dominant priority, may undergo an inversion. Mimesis is potentially as much a performance of aggression as it is one of devotion.

Time and proximity are integral to the mimetic act, and in light of the passivity and precedence of the original, they illuminate this duality between approbation and aggression. For imitation to amount to devotion, temporal and conceptual priority must be synonymous with pre-eminence, a position implied by the Neoplatonic ontological hierarchy. The passivity of the original in this paradigm is the aloof disinterest of the ranked superior. However, the state of antecedence, of having been before, does not guarantee such superiority. As much as mimesis memorializes, it also sets in motion the process of forgetting.[69]

Considered from a point in time contemporaneous with the imitative act, the original resides at a distance, claimed by the past. It is the prototype, perhaps, but bears its influence on the imitator not as the standard of aspiration, but rather from the distant and immaterial remove of inspiration. Contrarily, the imitation is, in more than one sense, present; it stands over and above the original, overshadowing it, the culmination of a primitive forerunner. As J. G. Droysen points out concerning historical understanding, 'We can only find and posit the origin in relation to that which has already become'.[70] When the temporal relation between original and imitation is conceived in such a light, the passivity of the original is that of the outmoded and the usurped. Observing mimetic repetition in the speeches of Chryses and Achilles which bookend the *Iliad*, Arne Melberg notes repetition's openness to

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[69] Gebauer and Wulf, p. 97.
[70] Johan Gustav Droysen, 'The Investigation of Origins', in *The Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present*, ed. by Kurt Mueller-Vollmer (New York: Continuum, 1985), pp. 124-126 (pp. 124-125).

alteration: 'Repetition repeats what has been, but turns it into something else: repetition re-presents and overcomes its origin'.[71] Mimetic proximity is established through the imitation approaching its original, but within its outward show of devotion such an approach carries the threat of deposition.

Herein lies the aggressive capacity of mimesis. If the mimetic process is one of 'moving toward', of creating a relationship of proximity between imitator and imitated, then the implied end of such a motion might be collision, alteration, or replacement as easily as worship or surrender. Gebauer and Wulf note that the transformative power of mimesis features even in Aristotle's description of the imitative arts, which 'aim much more at "beautifying" and "improving" individual features, at a *universalization*. Mimesis is thus copying and changing in one'.[72] The imitation, as a more current and potentially better version of the original, threatens to efface its own heredity, impersonating the original and cutting it off from the present. Such a sense is conveyed in the translation of mimesis as representation; it may involve 'the "absentification" of the represented object: the object is replaced'.[73] The imitation cannot become the original, but it can, by representing it, eclipse it into invisibility. As much as it approaches the *a priori*, mimesis remains rooted in its own context. As a commentary, a familiarization, or even an improvement, the imitation can both *make over* the original and make the original *over*. In either case, the later derivation impinges on the original, obscuring it and threatening to conceal it behind the mask of its own reflection. Mimetic closeness can thereby be the method of the original's displacement.

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[71] Arne Melberg, *Theories of Mimesis*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1995), p. 37.
[72] Gebauer and Wulf, p. 54.
[73] Mieke Bal, 'Mimesis and Genre Theory in Aristotle's *Poetics*', *Poetics Today*, 3.1 (1982), 171-180 (p. 172).

It is a telling duplicity that 'originality' connotes both priority and novelty. To be the first of a kind is to be new; yet, in a series of iterations, to be newest is to be latest and last. What takes the form of a contradiction is not necessarily a cancellation. For mimesis is a transaction; it moves in more directions than one. It is, to repeat Halliwell, 'double-faced and ambiguous'.[74] This is part of the danger Plato attributes to mimesis in the *Republic*. The so-called lies of reckless poets are too volatile for their inexpert hands; though they can be 'helpful [...] as a preventative medicine', they are injurious if poorly prescribed.[75] What Waterfield translates in this passage as 'medicine' is the problematic term *pharmakon* (*φάρμακου*), of which Gebauer and Wulf write:[76]

> The Greek concept of pharmakon is untranslatable; its characteristic significatory ambivalence cannot be conveyed in other languages. Pharmakon means poison, drug, and remedy all at once. Its ambiguity and ambivalence cannot be sublated.[77]

In a consideration of the slipperiness and reversibility of mimesis, the concept of the *pharmakon* is a useful tool.

In 'Plato's Pharmacy', Derrida discusses the significance of this term to the *Phaedrus*. Its polysemy exposes it to the 'imprudence or empiricism of the translators', so that, as Gebauer and Wulf note above, it may be expressed only with partial approximations in English (or of course French). However, the rich imprecision of *pharmakon* precedes its transferral into another language; the term takes on such a diversity of

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[74] Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis*, p. 22.
[75] *Republic*, p. 78, [382c]. (In other editions, this phrase appears at 382d.)
[76] For a Greek/English parallel text, see Plato, *The Republic: Books I-V*, rev. edn, trans. by Paul Shorey (London: Harvard University, 1937), p. 194 [382d].
[77] Gebauer and Wulf, p. 296.

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meaning in Socrates' thought that it has essentially been translated within the same language, 'between Greek and Greek', and made from a 'nonphilosopheme into a philosopheme'.[78] Derrida links this ambiguous term to writing, citing a passage from late in the *Phaedrus* in which the capacity to write is explicitly labelled as a *pharmakon* and presented as an aid to memory by virtue of the very same capacity that makes it also a threat to memory.[79] He proceeds to develop a complex of associations in which writing, as *pharmakon*, is embodied in the mythos of the Egyptian god of writing, Thoth, a 'god-doctor-pharmacist-magician' capable of standing in for the hierarchically superior god Ra:

> As a substitute capable of doubling for the king, the father, the sun, and the word, distinguished from these only by dint of representing, repeating, and masquerading, Thoth was naturally also capable of totally supplanting them and appropriating all their attributes.[80]

Repetition and representation that carries with it the threat of effacement and usurpation, an upward reaching that upsets metaphysical order, these are the qualities of Thoth that Derrida aligns with writing as *pharmakon*. Thoth is an imitator, a mimeticist who 'extends or opposes by repeating or replacing', by enacting the paradox of mimesis:

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[78] Derrida, 'Plato's Pharmacy', (p. 72). See also Niall Lucy, 'Pharmakon', in *A Derrida Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 90-92.
[79] Derrida, 'Plato's Pharmacy', pp. 74-77. The passage to which Derrida refers occurs at *Phaedrus* 274c-275b; writing is called '*pharmakon*' at 275a. See *Phaedrus*, 2nd edn, trans. by C. J. Rowe (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1988), pp. 121-123. In this instance Rowe translates '*pharmakon*' as 'elixir' (p. 123).
[80] Derrida, 'Plato's Pharmacy', p. 90.

The figure of Thoth takes shape and takes its shape from the very thing it resists and substitutes for. But it thereby opposes *itself*, passes into its other, and this messenger-god is truly a god of the absolute passage between opposites.[81]

As in book ten of the *Republic*, the *Phaedrus* dialogue also links writing with painting, considering both to be imitative of reality.[82] Both 'have faithfulness to the model as their model'; both are 'mimetic techniques'.[83] Mimesis is thus an instance of the Derridean *pharmakon*, and so the characteristics of the latter concept can be used as a key to those of the former.

The denotative complexity and reversibility of the word *pharmakon* is perfectly suited to the Janus-faced mutability of mimesis:

Ambivalent, playing with itself by hollowing itself out, good and evil at once -- undecidably, *mimēsis* is akin to the *pharmakon*. No 'logic,' no 'dialectic,' can consume its reserve even though each must endlessly draw on it and seek reassurance through it.[84]

What mimesis does, it undoes. It enacts reverence, remembrance, love and desire, and yet it is the substance of mockery, of effacement, jealousy and hatred. It illuminates likeness and resemblance even as it proves and preserves difference. Mimesis enables the carrying over of universals, allowing the transferability of abstractions like beauty, power, and categorical resemblance across concrete, individual expressions. Nevertheless, it perpetually falls short of this same feat, for similarity

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[81] Derrida, 'Plato's Pharmacy', p. 93.
[82] Derrida, 'Plato's Pharmacy', p. 136. See *Phaedrus*, p. 125 [275d]. On the *Republic*, see above.
[83] Derrida, 'Plato's Pharmacy', p. 137.
[84] Derrida, 'Plato's Pharmacy', p. 139.

encloses difference, and the particular is always also the incomplete. As Derrida writes, 'Imitation does not correspond to its essence, is not what it is -- imitation -- unless it is in some way at fault or rather in default'.[85] Almost and not quite, drawing close but keeping a distance, mimesis is approximation.

The dissimilarity embedded within likeness is the keystone for the entire edifice of mimesis. It is the falling short from the absolute original that allows any imitation to exist as a separate and apprehensible image. By such a mechanism, mimetic authority announces itself present; the two-way, transactional nature of mimetic authorization and identification functions thanks to this not-being. To repeat is simultaneously a motion 'back in time to what "has been"' and 'a movement forward: it "makes" new and *is*, therefore, "the new"'.[86] Mimesis reaches toward its origin, establishing similarity, desiring. Yet in this attraction the imitation proves its difference, because the original is as untouchable as a mathematical asymptote, infinitely approachable and ever separate.

Like the 'passage between opposites' Derrida attributes to the figure of Thoth, mimesis has the capacity to act as a shuttle, moving interstitially between scales, times, or degrees of abstraction, and this allows it to endure as an axis of critical discourse.[87] At the same time, this makes it insidious; mimesis, as *pharmakon*, undermines dualistic oppositions. The self-perpetuation of mimesis invests even Plato's condemnation of image-making. Melberg calls this 'the puzzling paradox that is never conceptually articulated, but is always present in Plato's argument against mimetic poetry: the argument is itself mimetic'.[88] This is not so much a weakness in Plato's argument, though, as it is an

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[85] Ibid.
[86] Melberg, pp. 136-137.
[87] Derrida, 'Plato's Pharmacy', p. 93. See above.
[88] Melberg, p. 12.

inevitable characteristic of the topic. Gebauer and Wulf explain, 'A *conceptual representation* of mimesis is not a priori superior to simple mimesis; it too contains a mimetic representational component'.[89] Speaking specifically of representation in a literary context, Eagleton makes a similar point, claiming that 'you cannot compare representations with "reality" [...], since what we mean by "reality" itself involves questions of representation'.[90] One must imitate to think about and discuss imitation, and so every illumination of the subject will cast new shadows. In the words of Halliwell, 'The mimeticist tradition [...] was, from the outset, a framework for argument and dialectic, not [...] a doctrinaire continuum'.[91] As a *pharmakon*, as a simultaneous carrying over and falling short, mimesis engenders a dialectical dynamism that accommodates an indefinite range of analytical activity.

Such unfinalizable generativity invests the theorization of mimesis because mimesis itself is generative. In Derrida's words, 'No "logic", no "dialectic", can consume its reserve even though each must endlessly draw on it and seek reassurance through it'.[92] It follows, then, that mimetic artistic practices exemplify what Melberg calls a corresponding 'active, productive, and highly moveable paradox'.[93] More than being simply at odds with itself, mimetic activity generates from internal opposition the capacity for renewal and creativity, for a reproduction more organic than mathematical, fostering growth and variation. This is why innovation arises in the works of a faithful practitioner of Renaissance *imitatio* consciously imitating the past. Likewise, this is why the works of a Romantic individualist struggling against the ghosts of tradition can

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[89] Gebauer and Wulf, p. 21.
[90] Eagleton, *The English Novel*, p. 10.
[91] Halliwell, *The Aesthetics of Mimesis*, p. 13.
[92] Derrida, 'Plato's Pharmacy', p. 139.
[93] Melberg, p. 32.

achieve the culmination of a time-honoured canon. 'To make new is impossible; and it is impossible not to make new'.[94]

As Aristotle points out in the *Poetics*, imitative representation, because it in some degree participates in the relation of universals to particulars, takes place in the realm of probability. So in mimesis is 'the emergence of an "as-if", which opens the imaginary space of artistic production'.[95] Perhaps the key to the (re)productive power of mimesis, whether in critical or artistic terms, is this state of 'as if', in which existing structures of understanding prevail just as in a purely empirical world, but benefit from the added potential of provisionality. In an imitation, what *is* remains open to what *may be*, and every theoretical approach or artistic success broadens the scope of possibility. No imitation can be conclusive because in the lineage of every dominant mode rest the materials of its deposition. The power of mimesis lies at once in doubling and in doubling back.

At this point, some general characteristics of mimesis as a figural mechanism can be extrapolated from the preceding discussion. Mimesis posits a hierarchically superior and temporally prior original. Imitative authenticity and authority are subjectively quantifiable degrees of likeness to this original, which must itself be somehow absent. Mimesis thus establishes a horizon in which the original is incompletely approachable -- imitation may draw ever nearer to it, but by definition cannot possibly attain it. Consequent to this situation of the imitated ideal at an unbridgeable remove is the notion of a mimetic shortfall, a gap between a representation and its object, which has been shown to be central to Barker's representations of multiplicity and falleness. This chapter has suggested that such a shortfall is the source of the deceptive capacity of

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[94] Melberg, p. 84.
[95] Gebauer and Wulf, p. 119.

mimesis, which involves not merely the illusory power of similarity to occlude that which it mimics, but also the paradoxical mutual entailment of similarity and difference. Because it moves toward the horizon of sameness, mimesis enacts likeness only by simultaneously proving unlikeness. In this contrariness is the doubleness of the Derridean *pharmakon*, as well as the generative capacity of mimesis: making new by making over.

In Tobias Smollett's 1748 novel *The Adventures of Roderick Random*, mimesis is the ever-present centre of problems of human behaviour, morality, and knowledge. In addition to Smollett's concern with mimetic realism, apparent in his detailed portrayal of the often sordid material conditions of day-to-day life, the novel develops themes of impersonation, deceptive appearances, and inverted hierarchies. Smollett's protagonist, the title character, is quite literally set in motion by a version of the mimetic gap -- he is outraged that the world is not as it ought to be. As he moves through a fallen landscape, Roderick assumes various roles and appearances, until he himself becomes a sort of living *pharmakon*. In order to bring the novel to its comedic conclusion he assimilates to the society against which he has previously railed, enacting a mimetic reversal that takes place in multiple, overlapping aspects of his being. Not only does he finally pay imitative homage to the moral fluidity and *ad hoc* authority that once disgusted him, but he does so in a way that reinforces his erstwhile criticism of these faults, thus making an affirmation and an affront in one gesture. In doing so, he also takes on paternal traits, both by re-establishing his connection to his own father and by becoming a father himself, so that his metaphysical mimesis engenders physical mimesis. The remainder of this chapter will therefore focus on *Roderick Random* as an example of the way mimesis, already posited to be integral to the generic identity of the novel, reiterates and

reconfigures the problems of understanding associated with novelistic

fiction in the previous discussion of Barker's Galesia trilogy.

In terms of narrative content, Smollet's novel shares little with

Barker's fictions; however, both authors seek, as Jerry C. Beasley notes,

to 'vigorously detail the spreading decay of English culture'.[96] Similarly,

Michael Rosenblum examines Smollett's novels as what he deems

'conservative satire'.[97] A satirist seeks to uncover relations and

commonalities in the world, Rosenblum writes, which reveal the deeply

flawed nature of life as it is. They create an image of 'the bad society', a

culture that holds together only because it is 'coherently bad'.[98] What

makes Smollett's satirical vision conservative, argues Rosenblum, is that

in his novels 'the bad society is loose, unstructured, permissive, uncertain

of its values'.[99] Ronald Paulson also detects in Smollett a Tory distaste,

common in the satire of the time, for 'uncontrolled and chaotic license'.[100]

Though 'Smollett himself scorns those who make too much of the

Tory/Whig distinction', the author's social conservatism seems abundantly

clear in *Roderick Random*.[101] The *Random* world is truly a disordered

place. Smollett illustrates a broken class structure, corrupt authority

figures, an absence of moral strictures, lawlessness, and a generally

reigning chaos that permeates society down to the diseased and disfigured

bodies of the beings who comprise it. As Rosenblum observes, the evils of

this novelistic world arise as the result of too much license -- insufficiently

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[96] Jerry C. Beasley, 'Politics and Moral Idealism: The Achievement of Some Early Women Novelists', in *Fetter'd or Free?: British Women Novelists, 1670-1815*, ed. by Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski (Athens, OH: Ohio University, 1986), pp. 216-236 (p. 226).
[97] Michael Rosenblum, 'Smollett as Conservative Satirist', *ELH*, 42.4 (1975), 556-579 (p. 556).
[98] Rosenblum, 'Smollett as Conservative Satirist', p. 557.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ronald Paulson, *Satire and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1967), p. 64.
[101] Michael Rosenblum, 'Smollett's *Humphry Clinker*', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Eighteenth-Century Novel*, ed. by John Richetti (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1996), pp. 175-197 (p. 192).

governed agency. People, whether as social beings, representatives of the state, or biological entities, do not behave as they should. Beasley points out that, with 'moral rottenness and stupidity' ascendant in the military, government, and legal systems, social hierarchy becomes a kind of contagious counter-order: 'The rest of society repeats the failures of these political institutions'.[102] Considered from a Neoplatonic perspective in which human institutions are an imitative striving toward the order of original form, the downfall from which the bad society suffers is a failure of mimesis. The only adjustment, it follows, that could possibly set such a fallen world aright is a mimetic regression to a purer state by means of the imposition of order.

The eponymous hero of the tale is just one man, however, for whom reining in such a tumult would be a futile endeavour. Roderick's lot, Smollett asserts in his preface, is to embody 'modest merit struggling with every difficulty to which a friendless orphan is exposed', eliciting the sympathy of the reader, whose 'heart improves by the example' (pp. 5, 3). Conscientious physician that he is, Smollett prescribes the imitative internalization of orderliness as a tonic not only for the corrupt world of his narrative, but for the reader who apprehends it as well. The chapters that follow this polite apologetic are not quite so straightforwardly didactic, however. The reader finds neither a fantasy of utopian order laboriously reclaimed, nor an exemplary tale of virtue maintained in a hostile world. Instead, Smollett presents a text that, while superficially venerating order and propriety, simultaneously casts doubt upon the possibility of these aspirations, posing uneasy questions that never quite find their answers. Mimesis is duplicitous, always moving in two directions, and so when the solution to the problems of the bad society materializes as right regained

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[102] Beasley, p. 218.

through mimesis, *Roderick Random*, conservative as it may be, becomes something far more complex than the unilateral ridicule of disorder.

Roderick's earliest experiences make it clear that the world into which he has been thrown is one where he can count on nothing except the general indifference and cruelty of others. It is a world turned upside-down, in which neither high birth nor loving parents can guarantee safety and comfort. Effectively parentless, Roderick faces the 'implacable hatred' of his cousins and the hypocritical indifference of his grandfather, who 'would stroak my head, bid me be a good boy, and promise to take care of me', yet who then bundles him off to a school where 'he never paid for my board, nor supplied me with cloaths, books, and other necessaries I required', leaving Roderick 'very ragged and contemptible' (p. 13). Consequently, Roderick's difficult position results from the inconstancy of the family patriarch (rather injudicious behaviour from one who acts as judge in local 'cases of scandal') compounded by the jealous malice of his extended family. Such treatment is obviously callous and dishonest, but more importantly, it is unjust. It contradicts the dictates of convention. However more or less unpleasant young Roderick's experience of his family's unconcern might be, the greater wrong is that they simply *ought not* to behave as they do. As representatives of a culturally founded institution -- the family -- Roderick's cousins and grandfather are supposed (by both the reader and the intratextual norms of Roderick's world) to look after him. That the reader's conception of what is right mirrors propriety as it should manifest in the novel is declared in Smollett's preface, when he invokes 'that generous indignation which ought to animate the reader'. The novel's deformation of that reflection reveals, to borrow the rest of Smollett's phrase, 'the sordid and vicious disposition of the world' (p. 5).

Smollett presents domestic instability more as an incidental condition of life than a source of pathos. Boucé notes that the 'dislocation of the family group' in *Roderick Random* constitutes an 'ambiguous character of the Smollettian world'.[103] It is as visible in the fractured families of the apothecary Lavement and Roderick's love interest, Narcissa, as in that of Roderick himself. Such a failure to fulfil the 'ought' of a particular station or circumstance unites the many forms of misfortune Smollett invents for his characters. The schoolmaster, for instance, assures Roderick's guardian that he will strive 'to prevent [Roderick's] future improvement' (p. 13). Indeed, this teacher's subsequent attempt to sabotage Roderick's education culminates in a pivotal moment in the development of his character. Using a board that has been lashed to his hand to curb his budding literacy, Roderick splits the scalp of a taunting schoolmate. In the bloody aftermath of his anger, he feels a fleeting instant of 'great terror' -- a rare moment of self-reproach (p. 13). It is not long, however, before the consequences fill him with an aggressive sense of having himself been wronged:

> I was so severely punished for this trespass, that, were I to live to the age of Methusalem, the impression it made on me would not be effaced; no more than the antipathy and horror I conceived for the merciless tyrant who inflicted it. (p. 14)

It is noteworthy that the undisclosed 'impression' Roderick derives from his punishment is something explicitly distinct from his distaste for its executor. The blows he receives in this passage will echo throughout the rest of the novel. Though it remains unarticulated, what impresses itself

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[103] Paul-Gabriel Boucé, *The Novels of Tobias Smollett*, trans. by Antonia White (London: Longman, 1976), p. 297.

upon Roderick is an uncomfortable awareness of a perversely cruel and arbitrary world -- a world in which little or no connection sustains between the conceptual state of what is right and the material condition of what actually is. Such 'injustice is a marked feature of Roderick's youth' and is the principle influence on his character.[104]

Many punishments follow from this 'merciless tyrant'; often they are so absurd that they seem to be attacks not only on Roderick, but on common sense itself. Roderick enumerates some of the non-crimes for which he is 'inhumanly scourged':

> I have been found guilty of robbing orchards I never entered, of killing cats I never hurted, of stealing gingerbread I never touched, and of abusing old women I never saw. Nay, a stammering carpenter had eloquence enough to persuade my master, that I fired a pistol loaded with small shot into his window; though my landlady and the whole family bore witness, that I was a-bed fast asleep at the time when this outrage was committed. I was once flogged for having narrowly escaped drowning, by the sinking of a ferry-boat in which I was passenger. Another time for having recovered of a bruise occasioned by a horse and cart running over me. A third time, for being bit by a baker's dog. (p. 14)

The beatings young Roderick endures surely are unpleasant, but physical pain makes no appearance in the passage, eclipsed by the sheer absurdity of his persecution. Their injustice, and therefore their affective power, originates in these punishments' irrelevance to their purpose. Completely contrary to the nature of a just penalty, Roderick's castigation answers no offence, enacting the very capriciousness and disorder that discipline

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[104] Boucé, p. 106.

purports to enforce. 'In short,' explains Roderick, 'whether I was guilty or unfortunate, the correction and sympathy of this arbitrary pedagogue were the same' (p. 14).

Deeper than any physical mark, that epiphanous 'impression' left by his punishment has its effect: the conspicuously unjust world kindles in Roderick a deep sense of outrage. He declares, 'my indignation triumphed over that slavish awe which had hitherto enforced my obedience' (p. 14). Roderick learns that in the fallen world he inhabits, justice and right reside at such a remove from everyday experience as to be utterly arbitrary. Through spite and malice, or even simple ignorance, human beings have substituted their own capricious sense of personal offence and revenge for right. Morality, authority, duty -- emanations from some grand metaphysical right -- have been dethroned by manmade impostors. This failure of order itself, more than the disagreeable particularities that result from it, is the source of Roderick's indignation. Disinherited by true authority, obedience merely expresses 'slavish awe' to sham morality, a deceptive copy that distorts and usurps its original.

Newly aware of the arbitrariness and unreliability of convention, Roderick adopts a new persona, demonstrating an 'impression' of another sort: the impersonation of the very capriciousness against which he seems to react -- what Boucé calls 'a compulsive need for vengeance', adding that '"revenge" is a key-word, not only in the first half of *Roderick Random* but of the whole novel'.[105] Right and wrong become a personal, reactionary contrivance for self-satisfaction. Impartial justice becomes impromptu justification.

Even before Smollett concludes the paragraph in which his protagonist discovers his new, more vengeful self, Roderick has led a group of his peers in a series of schoolyard battles and smashed out the

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[105] Ibid.

teeth of his cousin's tutor with a rock. 'It is remarkable', observes
Paulson, 'that every time something is done to Roderick, his first reaction
is that he must revenge himself ("revenge" is one of the most frequently
repeated words of the novel)'.[106] This violent protagonist recalls the
Continental lineage of *Roderick Random*: 'Roderick undoubtedly draws
upon the convention of punishment traced in picaresque literature'.[107]
Indeed, a tendency toward vengeful punishment complements Roderick's
resemblance to the figure of the itinerant *pícaro* who has abandoned the
shelter of social convention in exchange for egocentric self-assertion;
however, Roderick is not alone in his new line of attack. When Lieutenant
Bowling exacts violent retribution on Roderick's behalf -- binding and
whipping the schoolmaster in front of his pupils -- Bowling too seems to
believe that revenge is a corrective force: 'I have given you a lesson that
will let you know what flogging is, and teach you to have more sympathy
for the future' (p. 26). Yet, given that the punishment that awakened
Roderick's desire for revenge was one he actually earned (by violently
settling a score with his schoolmate, no less), one must wonder if
Bowling's lesson will render the impression he intends. For, whereas
revenge aims to enforce conformity to another's will, it seems instead
more apt to breed wilfulness.

In fact, most of Smollett's characters must have experienced a
childhood crisis of injustice like Roderick's, because the novel is
punctuated with acts of outraged retribution from even minor figures.
Again and again, insults, fists, musket balls, and the contents of chamber
pots fly, always settling a score. The common drive for Smollett's
revenge-seekers is their personal sense of outrage, of having been
wronged. In this way, they all react to the out-of-balance world of the

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[106] Paulson, p. 172.
[107] Paulson, p. 173.

novel. But in seeking to mete out punishment according to their own whim, they serve only to intensify civilization's reigning disorder. With no overarching pattern to follow, seeking justice propagates injustice. Like filial duty, class distinction, honesty, and the myriad other failed systems of valuation in *Roderick Random*, justice has no universal form. It resides in the judging mind of every individual, and is subject to each individual's vastly contingent complex of defects. Paulson writes that, 'In *Roderick Random*, Smollett connects evil with the effects of egotism -- the impingement of one individual on the liberty, security or serenity of another'.[108] Yet for Roderick, justice and revenge are one. If the same holds true for even a fraction of the squabbling, belligerent masses that people Roderick's travels, justice appears so warped as to be nothing but a figment.

This highlights a paradox of satirizing disorder by emphasizing its ubiquity. The violent and anarchic Smollettian world reveals 'a profound disbelief in the benevolence of fate'; order has failed.[109] The great tragedy of this fall hinges on the loss of some ideal structure. To thus decry humanity's decent into chaos is simultaneously to long for a return to some distant golden age when everything was in its proper place. But such a return, practicality aside, is unreachable, ever distant. As Rosenblum phrases it, 'Utopia was or will be, but is not *now*'.[110] The Platonic good, that mimetic original, always eludes regression, always recedes like a mirage when approached. The divine perfection of a prior order lies in its definitive firstness, which occludes the possibility of disorder. Once such harmony has been lost, even the most faithful imitation of its structure cannot erase its previous failure. The lurking

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[108] Paulson, p. 226.
[109] Angus Ross, 'The 'Show of Violence' in Smollett's Novels', *Yearbook of English Studies*, 2 (1972), 118-129 (p. 119).
[110] Rosenblum, 'Smollett as Conservative Satirist', p. 557.

anxiety of degeneration will remain to undermine any regained stability. What good are barriers, after all, once they have been broken? They are not barriers at all.

By demonstrating the need for order with hyperbolic illustrations of its universal absence, Smollett succeeds in condemning chaos, but paradoxically shows order to be little more than a dream, infinitely out of reach. Rosenblum writes that 'the present state of society which the satirist diagnoses as "sickness" may seem more normal than health'.[111] Paulson spots an analogous tendency, pointing out that 'satire, that thrifty genre, often uses the ideal-real opposition to catch aspects of both' the object of ridicule and the norms which censure it.[112] Here again mimesis affirms its reversibility. The satirized world is an incorrigible mess; it testifies to its own imperfection and, simultaneously, proves the inapplicability of the standards from which it falls so short. Lost virtue only returns as an approximation.

With convention left bankrupt, what can an individual do when faced with the power of the unredeemable masses? One option is surrender. And while Roderick himself makes a few half-hearted attempts at capitulation to a corrupt world, he simply is not the quitting kind. After being shipwrecked, bludgeoned, robbed, and left for dead, he is utterly overwhelmed:

> I cursed the hour of my birth, the parents that gave me being, the sea that did not swallow me up, the poignard of the enemy, which could not find the way to my heart, the villainy of those who had left me in that miserable condition; and, in the extacy of despair, resolved to be still where I was and perish. (p. 213)

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[111] Rosenblum, 'Smollett as Conservative Satirist', p. 569.
[112] Paulson, p. 16.

Then he gets up to seek help. After being robbed by a treacherous monk in France, Roderick wanders the countryside in hunger and despair, so disgusted with humanity that he wishes to sink into some primordial state: 'A thousand times I wished myself a bear, that I might retreat to woods and deserts, far from the inhospitable haunts of man' (p. 245). This lament echoes Galesia's envy of the animals -- 'happy brutes' -- who, unburdened by rational thought, are oblivious to the fallenness of the world.[113] The desire to be like an animal makes it clear that it is not physical suffering that has pushed Roderick to such desperation but rather the anguish of seeing that all is not as it should be. It is his awareness of the falling short of the world from an imagined ideal that grieves him.

The comfort of oblivion never holds its appeal for long, but the escape from the awareness of corruption -- through the self-effacement of enforced conformity -- continues to entice Roderick. When he happens upon a group of starving French soldiers, their kindness and merriment amaze Roderick. It does not take long, though, for the French soldiers' cheery resiliency to irritate Roderick. In what seems like a deliberate attempt to incite violence, Roderick decides that an old veteran has 'insulted me with his pity and consolation' and proceeds to start an argument over the divine right of kings (p. 247). The veteran asserts that 'the characters of princes were sacred, and ought not to be profaned by the censure of their subjects' (p. 248). Such steadfast belief in the royal mimesis of divinity is outrageous to Roderick, who has had the impossibility of particulars reflecting absolutes quite literally impressed upon him. In an irony he seems not to notice, Roderick's attack on the

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[113] Jane Barker, *The Galesia Trilogy and Selected Manuscript Poems of Jane Barker*, ed. by Carol Shiner Wilson (New York: Oxford University, 1997), p. 165. See chapter 2.

veteran's unthinking loyalty emerges as the rote repetition of 'all the arguments commonly used' in favour of individual liberty (p. 248).

Still, his indignation is real, and the language of his attack reveals that Roderick's disgust for such obedience is a recurrence of that ongoing disappointment in an arbitrary world he has felt since his boyhood. The French veteran is a 'desperate slave' suffering 'to sooth the barbarous pride of a fellow-creature, his superior in nothing but the power he derived from the submission of such wretches as him'. Those who so willingly submit are 'the slaves of arbitrary power' (pp. 247-248). The argument escalates into a duel of swords. As McNeil points out, such an *argumentum ad baculinum*, or 'argument by the rod', reveals just how irreconcilable Roderick's mindset is with that of unquestioning servitude.[114]

Surrendering to the vicissitudes of such a mad world would require of Roderick either physical suicide or intellectual docility, prices he is unwilling to pay. Still other characters in Smollett's novel exemplify an opposite approach to the fallen world. Rather than submit to the caprice of chance and the insults of corruption, they seek to dominate their environment through the oppression of others. These are Smollett's tyrants, of whom there are several. The tyrant presides over some kind of microcosm, be it a household, a ship, or a court of law, and within that small realm has ultimate power. These miniature dominions 'are at once reflections and distortions of reality'.[115] As a result, the tyrant's justice is no less idiosyncratic than that of anyone else, but because it bears both the sword and seal of officialdom, it can be uniformly (and arbitrarily) imposed, at least within the confines of the tyrant's narrow jurisdiction. Put in such general terms, despotic rule seems like the only real means to

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[114] David McNeil, *The Grotesque Depiction of War and the Military in Eighteenth-Century English Fiction* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware, 1990), p. 102.
[115] Boucé, p. 297.

reform the 'bad society' portrayed by Smollett's satire. Invested with institutional power and backed by the threat of physical violence, the dictates of the tyrant become, practically speaking, universal laws. Finally, in the shadow of a fearsome ruler, some regularity and order might enter the world.

However, *Roderick Random* is no *Leviathan*. The tyrant figures who swagger and bully their way through the episodes of Roderick's life are caricatures at best and wanton brutes at worst, and the microcosms over which they rule are so small as to contribute nothing but a little more incongruity to the already muddled world. Sheltered by their own autocracy, they are also prone to stupidity. Wrongly accused of theft by London prostitutes, Roderick appears before a justice who is eager to condemn him to the gallows without even hearing the complaint. 'The surgeons will fetch you from your next transportation', he gloats. When finally convinced he has made a mistake, this outlandish judge claims to have known all along that Roderick was no hardened criminal, but that 'it was always his way to terrify young people' to 'deter them from engaging in scenes of riot and debauchery' (p. 97). Throughout Roderick's travels, he sees a land where the presiding representatives of what is right are malicious, foolish, or corrupt. It is an especially telling occasion when the highwayman Rifle is captured and brought to stand trial, only to escape because the justice has left town. It would seem justice is conspicuously absent most everywhere.

On sea, true order also seems to be beyond the reach of tyrants. Take, for example, Crampley, who, when promoted to captain, rules with a marked poverty of both mercy and expertise. Eventually he runs the ship aground and abandons it to be ransacked by its crew. Another shipboard dictator, Captain Oakhum, is one of the most despicable figures in the entire novel, though not nearly so inept a seaman. His ability to navigate

and his apparent courage in battle do little to redeem him, however, after he spitefully works dozens of ailing men to death, drives the sensitive Mr Thomas to attempt suicide, and does his best to hang Roderick for a false charge of mutiny. The destructiveness of imposing an individual will on reality cannot be overlooked when, driven by what McNeil calls 'Lilliputian passions', Oakhum engages a friendly French vessel in battle, leading to the most violent scenes in the novel.[116] As Roderick, in chains on the deck, witnesses the fray, he is spattered with blood, brains, and entrails. He can do nothing but 'bellow with all the strength of my lungs' and scream futile 'oaths and execrations' until he collapses (p. 171). Just as meek surrender to life's madness is an unacceptable strategy for survival, its polar opposite, the rule of an iron-fisted dictator, is not the answer either. In Smollett's depiction, totalitarian order rests on inverted logic and violence. It is no order at all.

Despite the sense of futility that underlies so much of the pandemonium in *Roderick Random*, there remains room for hope. Smollett provides some rare hopeful moments in the form of intuitions and visions, as if some Platonic superstructure of goodness were still in tenuous contact with the quotidian world. Roderick's infancy, for instance, elicits an optimistic prediction from a 'highland seer', who assures Roderick's parents that 'he would flourish in happiness and reputation', and other visions crop up during the tale to remind readers of the protagonist's auspicious destiny (p. 9). For example, the witch-like Mrs. Sagely, who probably saves Roderick's life, also gives him 'a happy presage of my future', and Roderick himself, while still in uncertain circumstances, dreams of his beloved Narcissa, 'who seemed to smile upon my passion, and offer her hand as a reward for all my toils' (pp. 216, 256).

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[116] McNeil, p. 92.

These hopeful presentiments are borne out by Smollett's recurrent use of astoundingly lucky coincidences to propel his protagonist through his adventures. Whenever the situation seems most dire, the benevolent hand of providence will usher in a saviour like Bowling, Sagely, Miss Williams, or the fanatically loyal Strap. In fact there are quite a few such characters in the novel, people who, perhaps not without some flaws, are for the most part generous, benevolent, and virtuous. Boucé notes that even during the 'absurd nightmare' of Roderick's naval experience, there are to be found some 'simple and kindly people'.[117] However twisted the values of humanity might be, evidence regularly surfaces for an underlying structure of transcendent meaning, some objective good toward which these kind characters incline. The easy reversibility of Roderick's misfortunes, as Milton Allan Goldberg writes, 'seem[s] to indicate that these crises are not wholly arbitrary, [...] for they move with a pattern scarcely fortuitous toward the culmination afforded in the final section of the novel'.[118] In the words of Morgan, another of Smollett's upright characters, 'There is such a thing as justice, if not upon earth, surely in heaven' (p. 174). With such glimmers of virtue persisting in the chaos, even disregarding the first-person narration, the reader may wonder *how*, but never *if*, Roderick will survive.

It comes as no shock, then, when Roderick is languishing in the Marshalsea prison, despairing of life once again, that a miraculous accident restores his faith. Having had ample time for self-reflection, Roderick has realized that the woman he loves is a part of the same apparently broken world against which he has fought so bitterly. Goldberg comments, 'He is aware, for perhaps the first time, of the real dual nature of society, which encompasses not only a "perfidious world," but also "the amiable

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[117] Boucé, pp. 113-114.
[118] Milton Allan Goldberg, *Smollett and the Scottish School* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico, 1959), p. 42.

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Narcissa"'.[119] As if on providential cue, Bowling arrives, flush from privateering, to offer freedom, money, and employment to both Roderick and Strap.

Thus begins a series of events that brighten the tone of the final chapters to a baffling extent. John M. Warner, jarred by this shift, finds that 'the third volume really deserts satire' for an 'unlikely' ending.[120] Roderick reaffirms his vows of love to Narcissa, and after arriving in South America he happens upon none other than his own father. Perhaps acknowledging the statistical near-impossibility of such a reunion, father and son exalt the *deus* who has just emerged *ex machina*. Don Rodrigo cries, 'O infinite Goodness! let me adore thy all-wise decrees!' at which cue Roderick also 'adore[s] the all-good Disposer, in a prayer of mental thanksgiving' (p. 411). The theistic bent of their language serves only to emphasize that the two are praising, in essence, the arrival of that objective and universal benevolence that has been so conspicuously lacking in prior chapters. From this point, it is a smooth and happy coast to the end of the novel.

Roderick's perennial combat against the unjust world seems to come to armistice. His great reward at the end of his journey is doled out strictly according to the standards of class and law that proved so inadequate in the preceding volumes. He marries Narcissa, who is, as Edward C. Mack remarks, 'overly discreet, colorlessly pure, and tearful' -- an 'exact reproduction' of conventional eighteenth-century feminine virtue.[121] He earns a hefty sum in colonial trade and expects to gain still more when a legal technicality grants him access to Narcissa's fortune. The very system of law that sanctioned his disinheritance and drew his ire

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[119] Goldberg, p. 41.

[120] John M. Warner, 'Smollett's Development as a Novelist', *Novel*, 5.2 (1972), 148-161 (p. 151).

[121] Edward C. Mack, 'Pamela's Stepdaughters: The Heroines of Smollett and Fielding', *College English*, 8.6 (1947), 293-301 (p. 296).

has become the authority by which he commands his own life.[122] As if these windfalls were not conservative enough, he also returns with his father and wife to his ancestral estate, and to the ecstatic adoration of a host of peasants, an act of reversion at once social, historical, geographical, and genealogical. Just to ensure that the return to order is as patently endorsed by tradition as possible, the retrospectively narrating Roderick offers a 'pompously Johnsonian' postlude:[123]

> If there be such a thing as true happiness on earth, I enjoy it. The impetuous transports of my passion are now settled and mellowed into endearing fondness and tranquillity of love, rooted by that intimate connexion and interchange of hearts, which nought but virtuous wedlock can produce. (p. 432)

Roderick's new capacity to act out social norms has allowed him to experience love in the expressly mimetic form of emotional 'interchange'. This in turn makes possible a more concrete mimesis, predicted in the last lines of the novel:

> My dear angel has been qualmish of late, and begins to grow remarkably round in the waist; so that I cannot leave her in such an interesting situation, which I hope will produce something to crown my felicity. (Ibid.)

 The regal imagery is appropriate, for Roderick has finally gained the noble status he was always certain he deserved. After so much vacillation between resistance and surrender, Roderick has learned to take

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[122] David Punter, 'Fictional Representation of the Law in the Eighteenth Century', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 16.1 (1982), 47-74 (pp. 48-49).
[123] Boucé, p. 124.

practical advantage of the world, to participate. Appropriate too, is the procreative source of Roderick's 'crown', for it is only after he has learned to reproduce in himself the images of conformity and propriety that the reproductive capacity of mimesis can fully unfurl. Though he takes on many occupations before his final triumphant voyage with Bowling, he always does so as if he is assuming a temporary role, a disguise. John Barrell observes that Roderick's ability to drift from job to job is unique to him:

> In *Roderick Random* people are what they do; but Roderick himself is the exception that proves the rule, for he changes his occupation continually, without ever taking on the stereotypical characteristics of the 'normal' practitioners of the various occupations he enters.[124]

He is always an outsider in the midst of crowds, a position that allows him mobility and a privileged position of judgement, but also estranges him. Only after his epiphany in prison, when his love for Narcissa 'preserved my attachment to that society of which she constituted a part', and after Bowling's arrival affords him the opportunity, does Roderick internalize his impression enough to effectively act as a part of society, rather than an unfortunate alien trapped within it (p. 394). 'Only love', writes Leo Braudy, 'finally reconciles Roderick Random to society'.[125]

But as Warner has noted, this is somewhat of an unlikely solution to the very concrete flaws of the world. After enduring barbarous violence, filth, corruption, and more than one passionate existential crisis,

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[124] John Barrell, 'A Diffused Picture, an Uniform Plan: Roderick Random in the Labyrinth of Britain' in *The English Novel Volume II: Smollett to Austen*, ed. by Richard Kroll (London: Longman, 1998), pp. 97-127 (p. 106).

[125] Leo Braudy, 'Providence, Paranoia, and the Novel', *ELH*, 48.3 (1981), 619-637 (p. 636).

the pugnacious Roderick triumphs through orthodoxy? It would seem from the final paragraphs of the novel that, indeed, he does. He has found lucrative employment, settled down with a nice young lady, and outgrown the hot-headed idealism of his youth. He is happy. In fact, everyone is happy, apparently, except those rogues who have deservedly died or found their way to imprisonment or poverty. A return to the long-forsaken *ought* has redeemed the 'bad society'. But then, if the end of *Roderick Random* is to be taken as an affirmation of some grand metaphysical and moral order, an affirmation made through mimetic adherence to a material particularization of that order, there must necessarily remain some nagging imperfections in this blissful denouement. Mimesis reproduces; it does not duplicate.

One question raised by the events in the novel but never clearly confronted involves Roderick's adventures in the British naval forces. Boucé observes that, as critical as Smollett (or rather the narrating Roderick) is of the violence of the press-gang, forced conscription itself receives no scrutiny; 'at no point in *Roderick Random* does [Smollett] raise the issue and express an explicit condemnation of this institution'.[126] Roderick's impressment into military service reiterates in new terms the impression he receives as a boy from the ruthless schoolmaster: though he laments the injustice of unprovoked brutality, he nevertheless proceeds to join, and thereby to repeat, the institutionalized chaos that perpetuates it. James H. Bunn writes that, 'Among eighteenth-century novels only *Roderick Random* evokes the wastefulness of [...] soldiering for empire upon a global landscape'.[127] Yet, as McNeil points out, despite the appallingly high body count of the naval chapters, it is the

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[126] Boucé, p. 291.
[127] James H. Bunn, 'Signs of Randomness in *Roderick Random*', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 14.4 (1981), 452-469, p. 454.

'mismanagement of the expedition' which faces the fury of Smollett's satire, never 'the morality of colonial expansion itself'.[128]

However, to moralize on such a level would be a bit unwieldy for Smollett, since to condemn the colonial project too severely might cast aspersions upon the novel's principal agents of benevolence. Rosenblum points out that Smollett is 'quite explicit about the means by which three such innocent characters as Roderick, his father, and his uncle were able to get rich so quickly'.[129] The irreproachable position of colonialism in *Roderick Random* is perhaps most prominent to modern readers when Roderick makes part of his fortune in the slave trade. Though it was permissible by contemporaneous legal standards, one cannot help but wonder how Roderick, who was horrified by the filthy and crowded conditions on a British man-of-war, could so coldly disparage his ship's 'disagreeable lading of Negroes, to whom indeed I had been a miserable slave' (p. 408). To equate the hassle of transporting slaves to the misery of actual enslavement is a remark of almost absurd callousness. The African captives are reduced to a composite non-entity incapable of eliciting compassion, perhaps because their plight offers a monetary benefit to Roderick. Furthermore, for a man to whom the 'slavish awe' of forced obedience is the ultimate injustice, and for whom the complacent French 'slaves of arbitrary power' are utterly contemptible, such an attitude is bleakly ironic indeed. It is a striking demonstration of Roderick's newfound ability to mediate between his own sense of indignation and the pressing dictates of expediency. Evidently the 'modest merit' Smollett cites in his preface can modestly turn away when outrage is inconvenient.

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[128] McNeil, p. 99.

[129] Michael Rosenblum, 'Smollett's *Humphry Clinker*', p. 183.

Rosenblum notes that Roderick's establishment in his family estate is like a withdrawal into the idealized past.[130] With this backward grasp at elementary order he imitates the tyrant figures he so despises. He creates a microcosmic niche for himself, fortified against the degeneracy of the outside world by distance and by the bulwarks of class and tradition. He also partakes of the unthinking escapism of the joyfully obedient French soldiers; how else would he manage to sacrifice his righteous anger, what Roderick comes to call his 'impetuous transports', to convenience (p. 432)? Herein lies the tension of irresolution. There is 'no intimation of a final defeat of the bad forces', just a 'strategic retreat'.[131] Roderick's tactic against disorder, then, is accommodationist: giving in where necessary, adapting to the dominant social structure (and the flimsiness thereof), yet receding into safety at the same time in order to diminish that compromise.

Certainly he does not measure up to the moral exempla of more didactic contemporaneous fiction. Samuel Johnson seems to have *Roderick Random* in mind when, in the 31 March 1750 issue of *The Rambler*, he warns that when 'writers, for the sake of following nature, so mingle good and bad qualities in their principal personages, that they are both equally conspicuous' the result is that 'we lose the abhorrence of their faults'.[132] Roderick participates in this kind of mingling because he has learned to capitalize on mimetic selectivity. Though, as Goldberg

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[130] Rosenblum, 'Smollett as Conservative Satirist', pp. 571-574.

[131] Rosenblum, 'Smollett as Conservative Satirist', p. 571.

[132] Samuel Johnson, 'The Rambler, No. IV, Saturday, March 31, 1750', in *The Rambler: In Four Volumes*, ed. by Alexander Chalmers (Philadelphia, PA: J. J. Woodward, 1827), I, pp. 56-60 (p. 59). Reprinted in *Tobias Smollett: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Lionel Kelly (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), p. 45. For a brief reading of Johnson's remark as a comment specifically on *Roderick Random* (along with *Tom Jones*), see Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (London: Pimlico, 1957), p. 280. Ioan Williams attributes the initial suggestion that Johnson wrote with Smollett and Fielding in mind to Alexander Chalmers; see *Novel and Romance 1700-1800: A Documentary Record* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), p. 142.

notes, Roderick's development through the course of the novel shows his turn from impudence to reason, his seems a particularly calculating strain of rationality.[133] As an imitator, Roderick follows a haphazard morality, one which is unsettled (and, to Johnson, unsettling) because it is only an impression, a sort of productive hypocrisy that may repeat or resist as circumstance requires. Indeed, as Johnson's comments on Smollett's mixture of vice and virtue suggest, the reader may find an uncomfortable reflection of his or her own variable standards in Roderick's pragmatism; reading of his adventures is surely at least as voyeuristic as it is edifying.

On one hand, aspects of the novel's orientation must be fundamentally conservative, in the sense that order, having been lost, needs reinstatement. Only against a background of conservative presumptions could Roderick's concessions to a corrupt world stand out as what they are. On the other hand, he seems as ready to hide behind principles of precedent and tradition as he is to adhere to them. The suddenness with which he learns to act the part of upstanding social conventionality confirms that he is doing just that: acting a part, performing an impression. Roderick steps into a life of virtue as if it were a pair of boots, and the apparent superficiality of this swift *volte-face*, especially after virtue itself has proven to be little more than an effigy, discloses a tense negotiation between emulative celebration and cynical mockery of rule-bound order. As Watt indicates, Smollett is no Richardson; he does 'not demand our acceptance of [his] positive standards' of morality.[134] Mack adds that 'In Smollett the Richarsonian ideal has been drained of all content and meaning'.[135] Indeed, because Smollett presents conformity as an imitative performance, as mimesis, he hints at both tribute and insult without any promise of resolution. Warner

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[133] Goldberg, pp. 44-47.
[134] Watt, p. 219.
[135] Mack, p. 297.

senses this anxiety throughout the author's work: 'Most broadly conceived, Smollett's intention is to show the impossibility of maintaining fixed, dogmatic attitudes in the face of the ever-changing texture of experience itself'.[136] Roderick's success is a confirmation of societal norms, true, but it confirms them as artifice rather than naturally emergent structures. His presence in such happy circumstances, paradoxically, proves the arbitrariness of the order it endorses.[137]

While considering the precarious position in which Roderick settles -- settling into the sanctioned stability of matrimony and yet settling for conformity and a relativistic ethos -- it is important to note the comic nature of Smollett's novel. However comfortable Roderick is in his new home, he must know that nothing is ever certain; indeed, the pragmatic turn of his maturity proves that he knows. And he knows, too, that beyond the provisional tranquillity of his domestic haven the chaos of the world rages on unabated. However, his adventures compose themselves not into a lament, but a laugh (though perhaps of the kind qualified with a shrug). He has quite literally lived to tell the tale. The final images of the book centre appropriately on fecundity: Mr and Mrs Strap's farm, and Roderick and Narcissa's child. Just as the narrator has been repeating his own story through the course of the novel, the final chapter assures the reader that the impersonations will continue to repeat as a legacy.

A reader coming to *Roderick Random* hoping either for scandal or betterment will find scraps of both, but the whole of neither. Truly, the world is broken, but for Roderick it is a lucky break, without which his

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[136] Warner, p. 161.

[137] See Susan S. Lanser, who traces the trope of the mobile subjective individual in eighteenth-century novels. She writes that the portrayal of movement as the source of social success 'suggests the fragility or permeability of the system as a whole'; 'The Novel Body Politic', in *A Companion to the Eighteenth-Century English Novel and Culture*, ed. by Paula R. Backscheider and Catherine Ingrassia (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 481-503 (p. 487).

productive hypocrisy would fail. Elizabeth Kraft's remarks on comic fiction are substantiated in Roderick's mocking dialectical impression: 'Comedy exalts flexibility', and the inconstancy of the *ought* is precisely why 'comic consciousness is shaped by an interplay between the authoritative and the individual point of view'.[138] One may add Boucé's comment that, in Smollett's work, 'Humour appears as the obstinate affirmation of an individual dynamism which triumphs in spite of the servitude of our human condition and the constraints of society'.[139]

When pregnant, Roderick's mother has a prophetic vision:

> She dreamed, she was delivered of a tennis-ball, which the devil (who, to her great surprize, acted the part of a mid-wife) struck so forcibly with a racket, that it disappeared in an instant; [… after which] she beheld it return with equal violence, and enter the earth, beneath her feet, whence immediately sprung up a goodly tree covered with blossoms. (p. 9)

Roderick's resilience is motile; it consists in shifting and shuttling between alternatives. And as adumbrated by the dream's Edenic imagery, his triumph resides in the fertility -- and the ambiguity -- of mimesis. The satirical import of Smollett's text performs a similar impression to that of his protagonist. Whatever conservatism inhabits these pages presents itself not so much as an answer, but rather as a stopgap, a provisional, *ad hoc* ploy to accommodate a profound uncertainty that reverberates more impressively in the final pages than at the beginning.

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[138] Elizabeth Kraft, *Character and Consciousness in Eighteenth-Century Comic Fiction* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia, 1992), pp. 57, 62.
[139] Boucé, p. 326.

Chapter 4

Amis's *Money*: 'A realism problem'

Extended prose fiction that seeks to faithfully represent the phenomenal world must contend with the inevitable gap, the falling short that attends mimesis. As a literary mode founded on realism (in the most inclusive sense of that term), the novel can therefore be said to be a genre that bears within it the epistemological consequences of realism -- the reversals, problems, and potentials of the mimetic shortfall. This critical orientation toward understanding is the novel's principal generic identifier, existing prior to narrative content, investing that content with a sense of provisionality and open-endedness. The most direct means to transform a romance into a novel, for instance, would be to rewrite it with a sustained emphasis on subjective, particular experience in a world of phenomenal variation. Some plots lend themselves to such an orientation more readily than others, but the orientation itself stands independently of any plot. The novel, corresponding to the mimesis that underlies it, reaches toward the world it represents and in doing so marks out an unbridgeable separation from it.

That such a literary form became prominent in eighteenth-century Britain seems, in this light, to be a consequence of the empirically inclined culture of the time. Novelistic fiction, as a form of discourse that foregrounds the multiplicity of experience and a sense of the inaccessibility of comprehensive understanding, provided a convenient forum for the dialectic tension between naive empiricism and extreme scepticism. Its derivation from the cultural milieu of the British Enlightenment shows that the generic identity of the novel is to some extent historically situated. However, because this identity consists more in a stance toward problems

of representation and subjectivity than in any rigidly enforced formal imperative, it is highly adaptable. More than, say, the romance, the novel has the potential to outlive the specific historical frame to which it once responded by means of such adaptation -- becoming in its successive iterations something outwardly different, though still novelistic because still engaged with representing situated subjectivity and thus the provisionality of knowledge. In a novel, the problem of individual subjectivity can be mediated through the specific, historically entrenched concerns of the culture of its time, but individual subjectivity itself exists outside of and prior to this mediation. The generic identity of the novelistic text is situated not so much in the particular literary devices it deploys as in the collective preoccupation of those methods with a representation of problematic subjectivity. The methods themselves -- techniques and formal features -- provide for sub-generic distinctions. Thus, one may speak of an eighteenth-century novel, a Victorian Realist novel, a Modernist novel, and so on, with whatever degree of specificity one requires, yet all of these are subsets of the much broader taxon encompassing all extended prose fictions inflected with subject-centred epistemological provisionality. The sub-generic features are more volatile and context-dependent than the provisionality they articulate, and so it can be said that the novel is partly determined by, but not finally reducible to, its historicity.

It is the instability and adaptability of the novel that permits, indeed perhaps requires, considerations of the genre itself to draw upon source texts from more than one historical situation. Because the present study is concerned with characterizing the novel as a literary genre in broadly applicable terms, attention to the mechanisms and consequences of the novel's attempt to interface with reality must take precedence over the specific socio-historical conditions of a particular novel or subset of

novels. In other words, the intent of this study is not to establish a diachronic lineage or narrate an evolutionary progression, but rather to sketch a synchronic image of the way the novel, as it appears from the critical vantage point of the early twenty-first century, announces (and the palimpsest of its history is part of this announcement) its epistemological stance.

Examining novels of different periods is useful, therefore, not in this case as a means of reconstructing the contexts from which specific novels have arisen, but instead as a means of using the analogous aspects of dissimilar texts to uncover the collective, generic identity they iterate. A continuous panorama of novels since the early eighteenth century would allow for the most instructive pool of sample texts; however, practical constraints dictate a more abbreviated approach. To that end, the discussion that follows will attempt a counterpart analysis to the preceding discussion of eighteenth-century novels by shifting focus to contemporary novels.

The discussion that follows will examine a late twentieth-century novel: Martin Amis's *Money: A Suicide Note.*[1] In many respects, Amis's work is representative of its time -- it displays the postmodernist, self-reflexive turn visible in a great deal of late twentieth-century art. Among those aspects of *Money* that have led critics to label it as postmodernist are techniques such as parody, allusion, and metafiction.[2] This last device

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[1] Martin Amis, *Money: A Suicide Note* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1984; repr. London: Penguin, 2000). Subsequent references appear in the text.
[2] Most critical treatments of *Money* make at least cursory use of the concept of 'postmodernism'. Sources in which it plays a central role are numerous and include: Jon Begley, 'Satirizing the Carnival of Postmodern Capitalism: The Transatlantic and Dialogic Structure of Martin Amis's *Money*', *Contemporary Literature*, 45.1, (Spring 2004), 79-105.; Catherine Bernard, 'Dismembering/Remembering Mimesis: Martin Amis, Graham Swift', in *British Postmodern Fiction*, ed. by Theo D'haen and Hans Bertens (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993), pp. 121-144.; Richard Brown, 'Postmodern Americas in the Fiction of Angela Carter, Martin Amis and Ian McEwan', in *Forked Tongues? Comparing Twentieth-Century British and American*

features prominently, taking the form of near-constant stylistic fabulation and a number of author-surrogate characters, one of which depicts Martin Amis outright. James Diedrick cites *Money* as an exemplary postmodern novel because of just these techniques, writing, 'The language of [postmodern] texts calls attention to itself, and the author or an author surrogate is often present as a character in the narrative'.[3] Amis himself has accepted the label for his habit of 'drawing attention to the fact that you are writing a novel'.[4] Amis uses these techniques to foreground mediation throughout the novel, contributing to an aesthetic of dislocation, fracture, and decline that serves as a vehicle for the (at least categorically analogous) epistemological problems bodied forth by eighteenth-century novels' own formal/aesthetic features. Because of this, *Money* is especially suited for exploring the epistemologically-derived sense of fallenness that permeates the novels on which the previous chapters focus, because its reflexivity presents a kind of self-criticism.[5] This chapter therefore will take up the question of how these postmodernist

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Literature, ed. by Ann Massa and Alistair Stead (London: Longman, 1994), pp. 92-110.; Robert Duggan, 'Big-Time Shakespeare and the Joker in the Pack: The Intrusive Author in Martin Amis's *Money*', *Journal of Narrative Theory*, 39.1 (Winter 2009) 86-110.; Elie A. Edmondson, 'Martin Amis Writes Postmodern Man', *Critique*, 42.2 (2001), 145-154; Amy J. Elias, 'Meta-*mimesis*? The Problem of British Postmodern Realism', in *British Postmodern Fiction*, ed. by Theo D'haen and Hans Bertens (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993), pp. 9-31.; Peter Stokes, 'Martin Amis and the Postmodern Suicide: Tracing the Postnuclear Narrative at the Fin de Millennium', *Critique*, 39.4, (1997), 300-312.; and Richard Todd, 'The Intrusive Author in British Postmodernist Fiction: The Cases of Alasdair Gray and Martin Amis', in *Exploring Postmodernism: Selected Papers Presented at a Workshop on Postmodernism at the XIth International Comparative Literature Congress, Paris, 20-24 August 1985*, ed. by Matei Călinescu and Douwe Fokkema (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1987), pp. 123-137.
[3] James Diedrick, *Understanding Martin Amis* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, 1995), p. 6-7.
[4] Christopher Bigsby, 'Martin Amis', in *New Writing*, ed. by Malcolm Bradbury and Judy Cooke (London: Minerva, 1992), pp. 169-184 (p. 171).
[5] This critical tendency is itself typical of postmodern aesthetics. As Patricia Waugh writes, 'All postmodern fiction foregrounds [...] critical self-reflexivity in a highly self-conscious fashion'; see *Practising Postmodernism/Reading Modernism* (London: Edward Arnold, 1992), p. 51.

features engage with the novel's genre-defining problems of knowledge in such a way that generic identity is perpetuated at the same time that unconventional literary effects are attempted.

Speaking with John Haffenden shortly after the publication of *Money*, Amis remarks that 'the plot is almost a distraction in this book'.[6] It is clearly secondary to the style of the text itself. Joseph Brooker writes that, 'For [Amis] more than for any British contemporary, "to write" is the intransitive verb that Roland Barthes called it. His prose is self-delighting, flaunting a joy at its own capacity'.[7] Of *Money* in particular, Diedrick writes, 'Amis's language becomes a kind of character [...] -- self-conscious, virtuosic, vying for attention with the plot and the other characters'.[8] Eric Korn, reviewing the novel in the *Times Literary Supplement*, impersonates narrator John Self's slangy parataxis to describe 'the astonishing narrative voice [Amis] has devised, the jagged, spent, street-wise, gutter-wise, guttural mid-Atlantic twang, the buttonholing, earbending, lughole-jarring monologue'.[9] As Korn clearly believes, linguistic innovation is the most prominent stylistic device in *Money*, but virtually every aspect of the text -- from the prefatory address to the reader ('the dear, the gentle', coos the signatory 'M.A.') to the typographically distinct final coda -- bears the imprint of a manipulating authorial presence. In an interview with Christopher Bigsby, Amis claims that his work consists of 'much more

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[6] John Haffenden, *Novelists in Interview* (London: Methuen, 1985), p. 5.

[7] Joseph Brooker, 'The Middle Years of Martin Amis', in *British Fiction Today*, ed. by Rod Mengham and Philip Tew (London: Continuum, 2006), pp. 3-14 (p. 9). Brooker seems to have in mind Roland Barthes's essay 'To Write: An Intransitive Verb?', in which Barthes claims that 'to write is today to make oneself the center of the action of speech, it is to effect writing by affecting oneself, [...] to leave the *scriptor* inside the writing [...]'. Barthes makes these remarks to justify what he calls 'semio-criticism'; however, their appropriateness to Amis's techniques in *Money* should become apparent below. See *The Rustle of Language*, trans. by Richard Howard (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1989), pp. 11-21 (pp. 18, 12).

[8] Diedrick, p. 7.

[9] Eric Korn, 'Frazzled Yob-Gene Lag-Jag', *Times Literary Supplement*, 4253 (5 October 1984), 1119.

writing than story', explaining that he uses plot and structure as facilitators for 'comic invention' and 'interesting situations'.[10] As the above comments indicate, the style of *Money* emanates from the narrating voice of John Self, but this voice is too stylistically loaded to cohere. The particulars of its fragmentation inform not only on the narrated world of the novel, but also on the state of the text itself -- the identity of *Money* as a novel.

Self is a director of television advertisements who lives a life of vulgar excess. He shuttles between London and New York, angling to produce his first feature film, a loosely autobiographical drama with the working title *Good Money* and then, after innumerable difficulties and disasters, *Bad Money*. Assured by his suntanned American producer and 'moneyman', Fielding Goodney, that his film project is backed by generous investors, Self sets about spending large portions of his pre-production budget engaging in his many personal vices: 'fast food, sex shows, space games, slot machines, video nasties, nude mags, drink, pubs, fighting, television, handjobs' (pp. 19, 67). He suffers the indignities attendant upon such a lifestyle, along with the demands of his quarrelsome cast members, the inconstancy of his covetous and unfaithful (and, one should add, ill-treated) girlfriend, Selina Street, and a series of bizarre and disturbing anonymous telephone calls.

Self's perpetual impairment, confusion, and distraction finally lead to his undoing; Fielding Goodney has been deceiving Self. With the complicity of other characters he has exploited Self's vulnerability to play an elaborate 'confidence trick' (pp. 392-393). There is in fact no film, and there are no real investors; Self has been throwing away his own money, destroying his career and making himself (more) ridiculous in the process. This is only one of several final pratfalls suffered by Self. By the end of

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[10] Bigsby, p. 179.

the novel, he is ruined financially and socially, rejected by Selina, and loathed by the man he believed was his father. Even his attempt at suicide fails.

Self's destruction is narrated in his own voice, though it is never completely his own; it is fragmented and multiple from the beginning. Self is, in Amis's phrase, a 'stupid narrator'.[11] His direct speech is often clichéd or merely phatic, tending toward vulgarity, repetition, and monosyllabism. He is barely verbal, for example, when he attempts to explain *Good Money* to Doris Arthur, the screenwriter hired by Goodney to produce a script:

> 'Tell me,' said Doris. 'What's the motivation of the Butch Beausoleil character?'
>
> 'Uh?'
>
> 'The Mistress. What's her motivation?'
>
> 'Uh?'
>
> 'Why is she sleeping with these two guys? Father gives her money. Okay. But why the Son. It's a big risk for her. And the Son's such a meatball.'
>
> 'I don't know,' I said. 'Maybe he's brill in the bag.'
>
> 'Pardon me?'
>
> 'Maybe he's a hot lay.' (p. 61)

The tone of this rather impoverished idiolect carries over into Self's narration as well, but this latter voice, reading more like that of a media-saturated ad-man, is far more evocative. Describing his beloved sports car, for example, Self composes what reads like voiceover material for an advertisement: 'Now my Fiasco, it's a beautiful machine, a vintage-style

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[11] Haffenden, p. 8.

coupé with oodles of dash and heft and twang. The Fiasco, it's my pride

and joy' (pp. 62-63). However stupid he may be, Self's narration can be

quite clever. As reviewer John Gross notes, Self's 'witty and insinuating

narrative voice […] is brisk and slangy, but it can also luxuriate into

virtuoso extended metaphors'. Gross refers to one of Self's most

developed figures, his description of his dental troubles in the terminology

of urban decay.[12] Narrating, Self also combines and reconfigures

American and British slang, coins neologisms, and draws out his ad-speak

into onomatopoetic riffs that seem to prioritize creativity over

communication. As Diedrick observes, 'Self's conversations with other

characters may be halting and fractured, but Amis has infused his

soliloquies with a dazzling punk-poetic eloquence'.[13] Amis has

acknowledged this split between Self's thoughts and his speech, citing V.

S. Pritchett and Saul Bellow as writers who have effectively used a similar

type of separation in their characters' voices.[14]

With his drunkenness, greed, violence, and chauvinism, Self is an

unpleasant man. However, as Gross comments above, the disparity

between his loutish behaviour and his idiosyncratic narration can have an

'insinuating' effect. Diedrick makes a similar claim when he writes that

Self is not 'merely […] a monster of wretched excess. He is so fully,

triumphantly realized that most readers will warm to him in spite of

themselves'.[15] What allows for some degree of readerly sympathy for the

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[12] John Gross, 'Books of the Times; *Money: A Suicide Note*. By Martin Amis', *New York Times*, 15 March 1985, p. C25. The body-as-city trope begins at Amis, p. 4. Gross quotes a more developed example from p. 26, which is considered below.

[13] Diedrick, p. 75.

[14] Haffenden, p. 8. See also Patrick McGrath's 1987 interview, in which Amis cites Saul Bellow's *Henderson the Rain King* as his model for this technique; 'Martin Amis', in *Bomb: Interviews*, ed. by Betty Sussler (San Francisco, CA: City Lights, 1992), pp. 187-198, (p. 190). Amis gives Bellow's title a cameo in *Money* when Self drinks a 'Rain King' cocktail (p. 20).

[15] Diedrick, p. 74.

repellent John Self is not necessarily his inward expressiveness as much as his continuous failure to articulate it to those around him -- his pathetic dividedness between thought and deed. He feels this schism acutely, at one point describing 'four distinct voices in [his] head': 'money', 'pornography', 'ageing and weather', and a nagging, unlabelled voice that 'has to do with quitting work and needing to think about things I never used to think about' (pp. 107-108). To some extent he is a man trapped between his voices, left helpless by his habits, his weak will, and his overpowering appetites.

Self's dim awareness of his psychological dividedness finds expression in his attention to animals. Dogs in particular intrigue Self; they seem to emblematize his feelings of attenuated agency. When Self hears a dog barking outside his Manhattan hotel room, he reports the scene with ironic hyperbole: 'His lungs are fathomless, his hellhound rage is huge. He needs those lungs -- what for? To keep them in, to keep them out'. In fact the dog's barking is meaningless; 'tethered in the airwell beneath [Self's] room', the animal has nothing to protect or defend, no one to keep in or out, and yet on it goes, fervently, pointlessly obeying the compulsion to bark (p. 13). At times of abject helplessness Self may see himself in canine terms. Recounting his crushing tennis defeat at the hands of Fielding Goodney, Self confides, 'basically I'm a dog on the court', and when during the match he is knocked off his feet by a ball to the face he tells the reader, 'I lay there like an old dog, an old dog that wants its old belly stroked' (pp. 31, 33). Out of shape and in borrowed clothes, he is publicly made a fool of by Fielding, the man who, Self will only discover much later, has much greater humiliation in store for him. And yet Self endures his hour of agonizing tennis without complaint, doggedly seeking approval, longing for comfort.

It is a particular type of helplessness that leads Self to identify with dogs: the tendency toward compulsion, the condition of partial self-awareness in continual thrall to the dictates of instinct. This canine debility becomes still more overt in relation to Self's involvement with Martina Twain. Twain is the only character in *Money* who seems to wish him well. She is neither disgusted by him nor out to deceive or exploit him. At her urging, Self attempts to read *Animal Farm*. Expending considerable effort, he interprets the book literally, at one point criticizing Orwell for unrealistically portraying the habits of pigs -- 'Either that, or I'm missing something', he declares with unwitting accuracy (p. 205). He decides that if he lived on Animal Farm he would be a rat, but then, reconsidering, he offers a revealing moment of introspection to the reader in another image of an immobilized dog:

> Now, after mature consideration, I think I might have what it takes to be a dog. I *am* a dog. I am a dog at the seaside tethered to a fence while my master and mistress romp on the sands. I am bouncing, twisting, weeping, consuming myself. A dog can take the odd slap or kick. A slap you can live with, as a dog. What's a kick? Look at the dogs in the street, how everything implicates them, how everything is their concern, how they race towards great discoveries. And imagine the grief, tethered to a fence when there is activity -- and play, and thought and fascination -- just beyond the holding rope. (p. 207)

That Self misconstrues *Animal Farm* as a story concerned only with animals, and yet finds it compelling for precisely that reason, is, as

Diedrick writes, 'one of the great comic conceits in the novel'.[16] More than just a joke at Self's expense, however, the pitiful image of the tethered dog 'nudges the reader toward genuine sympathy'.[17] True to the figure of the tormented but ineffectual animal, Self cannot express the impact of Orwell's novel to the woman who recommended it. With what he believes to be a 'shrewdly rehearsed' dismissal, he says to her, 'Come on, give me a break. How about a real book next time? Porker and Squeaky and the rest of the guys. I'm too old for animal stories' (p. 212). Though Self is unable to articulate his thoughts beyond the bounds of his outward, more intellectually limited persona, Twain seems to feel stirrings of the same sympathy Diedrick mentions above. She tolerates Self's often outrageous boorishness and even allows him to stay in her apartment, shares her bed, provides more books, and offers kind advice and better food. Even the self-indulgent Self perceives the striking asymmetry of such generosity. When he asks her why she likes him, she replies, 'You're like a dog' (p. 334).

As Twain goes on to point out, Self is in effect one of two dogs she has taken in. The second beneficiary of Twain's charity is an actual dog unsubtly called Shadow, an Alsatian discovered 'ownerless, starving, chewed up from fights with other dogs and the random clouts and kicks of the human canines on Twenty-Third Street' (p. 285). Under Twain's care, Shadow becomes 'a twirling hysteric of gratitude and health', and yet whenever he is walked past his old, unwelcoming home on Eighth Avenue, he looks 'baffled and hungry, momentarily lupine, answering to a sharper nature' (pp. 285, 289). When Twain worries that Shadow will run away,

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[16] Diedrick, p. 87. Amis has remarked that he 'thought it would be wonderfully funny' to attribute such a literalist reading to Self (in Haffenden, p. 23). Edmondson reads Self's literalistic take on Orwell as evidence of his entrapment in 'the commodified world of the marketplace' (p. 151).
[17] Diedrick, p. 87.

Self attempts to reassure her with a statement that applies equally well, and equally anxiously, to his own situation: 'And leave you? Relax. He knows what the good life is' (p. 289). Later, when Self and Shadow pass Eighth Avenue and the dog makes its customary 'noise of yearning', Self clearly feels the significance of the dog's conflict; when Shadow pulls at the leash, Self pulls back 'harder, much harder' (p. 321). He too is struggling to defy his self-destructive desires, but finds that his will continually comes up short against his baser drives.

In the midst of this struggle, Self visits a sex shop. Surveying the comically exaggerated depravities on offer, he thinks to himself, 'Me, I don't like what I want. What I want has long moved free of what I like, and I watch it slip away with grief, with helplessness' (p. 324).[18] Nourished though they are by Twain's efforts, in their respective ways both Self and Shadow are lured away from her by their inescapable animality, subject to their unthinking appetites. When Selina Street arrives in New York with the intent to seduce Self and expose his unfaithfulness to Twain, he succumbs immediately, sacrificing his chance to live the 'good life' Twain had offered. As if in confirmation of their connection, Twain loses both of her strays at once; at the very moment that Selina is seducing Self by showing him 'her eighth avenue', Shadow finally runs away (pp. 363, 347).

Self is split between more than one self, and the difference between his narrative voice and the voice he clumsily wields in dialogue with other characters is indicative of this divide. It is a separation that leaves him, as he says when he pictures himself as a dog, 'consuming myself' (p. 207). Excessive consumption is, for Self, a continuation of his

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[18] This grief has already surfaced. Earlier in the novel, for instance, Self watches an unsettlingly pertinent film about a prehistoric ape-man transported through time into the present. He cannot contain his emotional response: 'Moved? I had a nervous breakdown. The tears were still pissing from my eyes when I fled to the can' (p. 128).

battle between selves, and a guarantee that it is Self the animal who wins. His vices are all carnal indulgences: food, sleep, sex, intoxication, violence. In consuming all of these, his animal self also consumes -- in that it overcomes -- his rational self. His desires have turned against him. Early in the novel, for example, Self is shaken by the discovery that a prostitute he has picked up is visibly pregnant. He lectures her paternalistically, but he also feels a kinship with her:

> She was like me, myself. She knew she shouldn't do it, she knew she shouldn't go on doing it. But she went on doing it anyway. Me, I couldn't even blame money. What is this state, seeing the difference between good and bad and choosing bad -- or consenting to bad, okaying bad? (p. 26)

In a subsequent interview, Amis provides an answer; it is 'a state of corruption', 'moral unease without moral energy'.[19] To some degree, Self knows better, and yet he continues 'choosing bad'; he is split, watching himself, helplessly witnessing his own choices, his fallenness.

Tying together the animal motif with the concepts of unbridled consumption and a corrupt, fractured self, Self at one point undertakes a digression on two-headed snakes:

> Two-headed snakes are rare and don't last very long. They're forever quarrelling about food and which way to go. They keep trying to kill and eat each other all the time. Soon, one head becomes dominant. The smaller head is obliged to tag along but has no say in things any more. This arrangement keeps them going for a little while. But they both die quite quickly. (p. 173)

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[19] Haffenden, p. 14.

He later refers to himself as having a 'beady scaly face, the face of a fat snake' (p. 316). Though it is not the central animal in the novel's figurative menagerie, the snake is present enough to imbue the bestial Self with a distinctly post-lapsarian wretchedness. Further, Self's two-headedness and the animalism by which it manifests itself is symptomatic of fallenness in the parallel sense that, by a failure of will, he falls short of his potential. Twain's apparent affection for Self would seem to corroborate this -- she treats him not as the man he is, but as the man he could be, a man who reads instructive books, attends art galleries and operas, and eats food suited to moderate and mature tastes. There is a degree of caricature in the bourgeois ideals of Twain's mentorship, but her benevolence nevertheless points up Self's latent capacity to choose self-improvement over self-debasement. Instead, he fails. True to his corruption, Self falls short of the life that Twain anticipates for him, and with embarrassing literalness -- his sexual indiscretion with Selina follows weeks of impotence with Twain.[20]

Self's dissatisfaction with his lifestyle, and with his inability to change it, leads him to fantasize about effecting -- by purchasing, of course -- some profound change in his body. He imagines having his 'whole body drilled down and repaired, replaced' at a Californian clinic (pp. 5-6). Watching television, he admires the plastic sheen of a heavily reconstructed 'veteran entertainer' with a tan 'like a paintjob' and 'falsy ears', and imagines one day asking a team of surgeons to remake him 'just like that'. The condition of this television star, who has been 'sutured and stitched together in a state-of-the-art cosmetics lab' seems to promise relief for Self's fractured identity, but it is the relief of oblivion rather than

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[20] Echoing the image of the tethered dog, Self refers to his penis as 'my rope' and 'this old rope of mine' when he recounts his sexual failure (p. 323).

redemption. The man on the screen is an 'aged android', and his programme has a 'funeral-parlour glow -- numb, tranced and shiny, like a corpse' (pp. 17-18). The cosmetically altered hyper-life Self desires is also a kind of death, the final voiding of selfhood to make room for the empty imagery of media simulacra. Later, after a long passage envisioning California as his ideal artificially enhanced Elysium, Self adds a note of uncertainty:

> Ah but you know, you know sometimes I feel as if I've already been to California -- and it didn't work out. I feel … prosthetic. I am a robot, I am an android, I am a cyborg, I am a skinjob.[21] (p. 329)

The paradox of Self's divided psyche is that it leaves him both crowded and empty, torn in opposite directions but lacking any centre. In such a context, Self's ravenous consumption of alcohol and other drugs would seem to be another attempt at self-replacement, an urge to dissociate by quite literally filling his empty core. Finally, money, the means to attaining any of Self's favoured methods of escaping himself, is imbued with the power of intoxication and self-effacement. It consists of 'suicide notes' and amounts to 'the great addiction' (pp. 116, 384).

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[21] The term 'skinjob' in particular carries tragic suggestiveness. It comes from Ridley Scott's 1982 film *Blade Runner*, in which it is a pejorative term for 'replicants', synthetic humans who are virtually indistinguishable from biological humans. Although replicants are self-aware and so life-like that they may even believe themselves to be human, they are designed to self-destruct after only a few years. Self's similarity to these doomed simulacra of humanity is obvious. Perhaps also relevant is Self's similarity to Scott -- both are British directors with backgrounds in advertising who sought to advance their careers by 'going Hollywood'. Note also that Self uses the word 'skinjob' anachronistically -- *Money* takes place in 1981, before even the earliest test screenings of the unfinished *Blade Runner*. See Brian J. Robb, *Ridley Scott* (Harpenden: Pocket Essentials, 2001), p. 18; and Paul M. Sammon, *Future Noir: The Making of Blade Runner* (London: Orion Media, 1996), p. 286.

As his 'body transplant' daydreams imply, Self has what Diedrick calls 'a mechanistic self-conception', regarding his body as a collection of replaceable parts (p. 18).[22] Alteration of appearance, even when not as drastic as surgery, is a 'rethink' in Self's parlance, and so hairstyling sessions become 'rug-rethinks' and a bathroom a 'rethink parlour' (pp. 83, 153, 178, 273, 280). The word suggests the vain hope of more than superficial change -- indeed, Self at one point applies the identical term to the Russian Revolution (p. 212). The clinical attention Self does receive is dedicated to his rotten tooth, the pain in his 'upper west side'. The urban imagery with which he communicates his pain externalizes his ailments, as if his body is a sprawling, disconnected territory over which he has little control:

> My head is a city, and various pains have now taken up residence in various parts of my face. A gum-and-bone ache has launched a cooperative on my upper west side. Across the park, neuralgia has rented a duplex in my fashionable east seventies. Downtown, my chin throbs with lofts of jaw-loss. As for my brain, my hundreds, it's Harlem up there, expanding in the summer fires. It boils and swells. One day soon it is going to burst. (p. 26)

That Self's remarks are set in 1981, a year in which England suffered urban riots, emphasizes his sense that to be like a city is to be disunited by internal pressures.[23] Stewing in afflictions and addictions, Self's body is not his own; he merely observes as it careens from one indulgent self-abuse to another. In another self-mechanizing metaphor he asserts, 'I'm

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[22] Diedrick, p. 80.
[23] Amis has stated that these riots, along with the wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana, guided his choice to set *Money* in 1981 (Haffenden, p. 3).

not the station, I'm not the stop: I'm the train' (p. 112). His habits and vices are in a sense autonomous; whatever watches them from within, whatever is left of Self, is of very little consequence. As Self laments, 'My brain is gimmicked by a microprocessor the size of a quark and costing ten pee and running the whole deal. I am made of -- junk, I'm just junk' (p. 265).

Self, however, is not the only one observing. As he discovers near the end of the novel, Selina has been keeping watch over his destruction; she and her new lover Ossie have arranged for his involvement with Twain (who is Ossie's wife) as a means of 'crosschecking' their whereabouts (p. 363). Fielding Goodney also observes Self. He trails Self through New York, often dressed as a woman, from their first meeting. Assuming a persona that Self nicknames Frank the Phone, Goodney also makes menacing, anonymous calls to Self which reveal, along with an enraged sense of persecution, a near-omniscient knowledge of Self's movements, as well as intimate details of his personal history and weaknesses (pp. 28, 45-46, 116-117, 137, 290, 328, 347-348). In one revealing call, Goodney seems to speak as Self's disembodied conscience, tormenting him with a sampling of past wrongs:

> Remember, in Trenton, the school on Budd Street, the pale boy with glasses in the yard? You made him cry. It was me. Last December, Los Angeles, the hired car you were driving when you jumped that light in Coldwater Canyon? A cab crashed and you didn't stop. The cab had a passenger. It was me. 1978, New York, you were auditioning at the Walden Center, remember? The redhead, you had her strip and then passed her over, and you laughed. It was me. Yesterday you stepped over a bum in Fifth

> Avenue and you looked down and swore and made to kick. It was
>
> me. It was me. (pp. 217-218)

Self cannot recall any but the last of these callous acts, though he assents

that all are plausible. Strangely, Self is not at all unnerved that someone

would know these details of his life, as if it is perfectly natural for him to

be the focus of some unseen, judging observer.

　　　With his indeterminate identity and pervasive invisible presence,

Goodney parallels another prominent, though unseen, observer of Self:

the reader. Rather than a soliloquy, Self's narration often takes the form

of an intimate confidence, exclaiming, posing rhetorical questions,

apologizing for leaving out details. He clearly seeks to ingratiate himself

with his addressee, often referring to the reader as 'brother' or 'sister'.

Early in the novel, after waking up with a hangover and gorging himself on

fast food, he playfully boasts about his resiliency while at the same time

confessing that he seeks the reader's favour:

> Now, how bad do you assume I'm feeling? … Well, you're wrong.
>
> I'm touched by your sympathy (and want much, much more of it: I
>
> want sympathy, even though I find it so very hard to behave
>
> sympathetically). But you're wrong, brother. Sister, you slipped.
>
> (p. 29)

Later, attempting a joke, he shows a similar self-consciousness, both of

his own tendency to behave inappropriately and of his being observed by a

potentially disapproving reader:

> So, towards the end of dinner, as Martina stood at my side pouring
>
> out the last of the wine, I rammed my hand up her skirt and said,

'Come on, darling, you know you love it' … Relax. I didn't really.

(p. 215)

This comes a few pages after a more desperate entreaty to the reader.
After he confesses that he has downplayed his frequent visits to brothels
and porn shops, Self whimpers: 'Ah, I'm sorry. I didn't dare tell you
earlier in case you stopped liking me, in case I lost your sympathy
altogether' (p. 211). Amis's use of direct address in Self's narration is a
rhetorical device that, as Self openly hopes, lends some sympathetic
appeal to a character who, on the whole, is obnoxious. It is also,
however, a metafictional technique, not simply because it appears to
advertise an intended effect upon the reader, but because at times it
constructs a character who is aware that he is being read.

Although Self often seems to be currying the reader's favour, his
address can also take on a more hostile edge. For instance, Self's disdain
for his screenwriter, Doris Arthur, prompts a rant against people who have
earned degrees (Arthur is a Harvard graduate), then against people of a
certain social class. Self's bitterness, his language makes clear, extends
to the readers of *Money* as well:

I hate people with degrees, O-levels, eleven-pluses, Iowa Tests,
shorthand diplomas … And you hate me, don't you. Yes you do.
Because I'm the new kind, the kind who has money but can never
use it for anything but ugliness. To which I say: You never let us
in, not really. You might have thought you let us in, but you never
did. You just gave us some money. (p. 58)

With her high-culture tastes, Martina Twain would seem to belong to that
group as well. Commenting on Twain, Self makes another abrupt turn to

the reader: 'She knew far more than me. But then, who doesn't? *You* do' (p. 301). The accusatory italics are like a jab from an index finger. Self's persistent traversing of the fourth wall is in fitting with his character. It is a transgression -- just the sort of act in which he specializes -- and it is one that, to the extent that it can be sympathetic, can also be wheedling and manipulative. Further, because it is a metafictional device as well, it indicates that larger manipulations are taking place, of which Self is only a component, and in which the reader is complicit.

Because *Money* is narrated in Self's unique manner of internal speech, punctuated with his active efforts to change the way in which the reader receives his narration, the mediation of the plot is always prominently displayed. The limitations of Self's intellect, compounded by the limitations imposed on his awareness by his various vices, mean that he is a doubly unreliable narrator: neither lucid nor necessarily honest. In this capacity, he embodies a problem similar to the one noted by Henry Stubbe in his 1670 critique of the methods of the Royal Society, discussed previously: if a narrative is to derive its authority from its proximity to the experience of the perceiving subject, then it will only be as authoritative as that subject's claims.[24] The whole of *Money* is Self's representation to the reader. What is mediated bears the mark of its mediator; the world of *Money* is deceptive and disordered, and it can be known, by Self and the reader alike, only provisionally.

All the narration of *Money* filters through Self's muddled consciousness, but that is not the only mediating force presenting itself through the narrative. The first direct address to the reader -- a request to be 'on the lookout for clues or giveaways' -- comes not in Self's fractured voice but in a note poised on the border of the fictional frame,

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[24] Henry Stubbe, *A Specimen of Some Animadversions upon a Book, Entituled,* Plus Ultra, or, Modern Improvements of Useful Knowledge (London: [n. pub.], 1670). See chapter one.

immediately preceding page one, signed by 'M.A.'. The note differs from the typical authorial preface less for its content than for the content that follows it, because Martin Amis is also a character in *Money*. He is introduced into the text of the novel by Self, who, when Twain mentions writers, thinks to himself, 'A writer lives round my way in London. He looks at me oddly in the street. He gives me the fucking creeps' (p. 39). Oblivious as he is to Goodney and Street's surveillance, Self is unnerved by the gaze of Martin Amis, as if he senses some kind of preternatural influence. When he mentions this unsettling writer again, he uses almost the identical words:

> I think I must have some new cow disease that makes you wonder whether you're real all the time, that makes your life feel like a trick, an act, a joke. I feel, I feel dead. There's a guy who lives round my way who really gives me the fucking creeps. He's a writer, too... (p. 60)

In this case, the cause of his unease is made clearer; Self is prompted to think of Martin Amis by his feeling of artificiality and lack of agency. When Martin Amis is mentioned a third time, Self repeats the same phrases yet again -- 'round my way' and 'gives me the creeps' -- as if in those moments when he recalls the writer, the text's reflexivity causes stylistic decay, like feedback from a loudspeaker placed too near its microphone.

Self finds Amis's face to be 'knowing, with a smirk of collusion', and when he finally mentions Amis's name to the reader, it is with the air of a suspicious interrogator trying to startle a conspirator: 'This writer's name, they tell me, is *Martin Amis*. Never heard of him. Do *you* know his stuff at all?' (p. 71). Indeed, the reader is a conspirator of sorts, having had access to Amis's insinuating prologue in a realm -- the paratextual frame -

- that is utterly off-limits to Self.[25] With this tactic, as Victoria Alexander

notes, 'The reader's willing suspension of disbelief is discouraged, his awe

of the artist-writer encouraged'.[26] Along with the words 'Martin Amis'

printed on the cover and in the front matter of *Money*, the note from 'M.A.'

is proof of the reader's collusion with someone whose machinations Self

can only dimly suspect.

Self's metafictional transgression, his gesturing toward the reader

with entreaties and accusations, leads to the still more reflexive act of

speaking to his own author. He is already justifiably paranoid, since he is

after all stumbling into Fielding's elaborate trap, and he is further alarmed

by the Amis character's coy knowingness, so that, after the two men meet

in a pub (insinuatingly called the Blind Pig), Self's literary transgression

nearly incites a physical one:

[…] 'Well, see you around, Martin.'

'No doubt.'

'… What's that mean?' I didn't much like his superior tone,

come to think of it, or his tan, or his book. Or the way he stares at

me in the street.

'Mean?' he said. 'What do you think it means?'

'You calling me a cunt?' I said loudly.

'What?'

'You called me a cunt!'

'You're mistaken.'

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[25]Magdalena Mączyńska makes a similar connection between Amis's
paratextual note and 'reader complicity'; see 'Writing the Writer: The
Question of Authorship in the Novels of Martin Amis', in *Literature and the
Writer*, ed. by Michael J. Meyer (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), pp. 191-207
(pp. 198-199).
[26] Victoria N. Alexander, 'Martin Amis: Between the Influences of Bellow
and Nabokov', *Antioch Review*, 52.4 (Fall 1994), 580-590.

> 'Ah. So you're calling me a liar now. You're calling me a liar!'
>
> 'Hey, take it easy, pal. Christ. You're fine. You're great. I'll see you around.' (p. 88)

Self's belligerence toward Amis underscores the literary awkwardness of a fictional character encountering his creator. The threat of violence within the confines of the narrative signals another, prior violence enacted upon the conventions of novelistic fiction. Considered from the external perspective of a reader, Amis, though he is the more passive man in this scene, is in fact the more active participant in the situation of the fiction. He has set it up; the insults originate with him, and any violence that might occur would be his alone.

The Martin Amis character knows more than he could if he were simply another inhabitant of the fictional London in which Self resides. When he next encounters Self, Amis (or rather both Amises, the written and the writing) is even less subtle about his authorial advantage. He knows Self intimately. He mentions one of Self's actors by name, describes in detail an argument Self had with a stranger, and elaborates on Self's private musings about 'choosing bad' (pp. 175-177). However, he is not some otherworldly seer; Self repeatedly happens upon Amis in decidedly mundane circumstances -- eating a 'standard yob's breakfast', living 'like a student' in 'two dust-furred rooms off a sooty square' (pp. 176, 237). The Amis who appears in *Money* is thus a part of the fictional world of the other characters -- subject to the same unglamorous minutiae -- but also separate from their world -- endowed with an awareness that supersedes that of the other characters. Because of his uncertain status, wavering between that of a character and that of an omniscient author

figure, the limitations that govern the lives of the other characters are, for the Martin Amis character, present but provisional.

This blurriness means that, when Self eventually hires the uncanny Amis to doctor the screenplay of his film, a strange recursive tangle takes shape: Self's writer -- the person who has written Self's life in the novel *Money* -- is also Self's writer -- the person contracted to rewrite Self's life as it appears in the film *Bad Money*. Amis's two roles in fact combine, since, by providing the necessary alterations to Self's screenplay, the in-text Amis also alters the course of Self's life -- prolonging the period in which the film seems viable and allowing Fielding's ruse to gather more destructive momentum.

The Martin Amis character becomes integral to the plot specifically as a writer, which affords him the opportunity to expound on theories of fiction. Speaking to Self, who has only just discovered that Selina is leaving him and is pregnant by another man, Amis wonders, 'Is there a moral philosophy of fiction? When I create a character and put him or her through certain ordeals, what am I up to -- morally?' (p. 260). He all but admits to authoring Self, subjecting him to 'certain ordeals' with an aloof curiosity. With these comments' unambiguous relevance to Self's present abjection, Amis affirms his self-referential colonization of the text. His influence is greater than that of a character operating solely within the framework of the plot, but it also exceeds that of a detached, invisible author.

When Self has been utterly vanquished by Fielding's hoax, he barely makes it back over the Atlantic, abandoning the wreckage of his American life for the wreckage of his British life. He has been thoroughly duped, and it takes Martin Amis's insight to unravel the scheme for him over a game of chess. Only by means of conflating two identities, the intra- and extra-textual Amises, can Amis exploit the possibilities of both

figures at the same time. Amis authors Self -- he manufactures his world and his words -- and then he authors *himself*, so that he may intervene directly as a component of that world, prodding Self through his maze, steering him to self-destruction. Amis's literary game then finally culminates in a literal game. Self and Amis play for money, and in the last moments of the match the two men hastily raise the stakes:

> 'This is exquisite,' [Amis] said -- and made a waiting move with the king.
>
> [...] 'I hope you mean that, pal, because you're not having it back. Double.'
>
> 'Double.'
>
> 'Double.'
>
> 'Double.' (p. 378)

When Amis defeats Self by forcing him into a final, suicidal move -- a Zugzwang -- what has been so overbearingly obvious to the reader all along finally dawns on Self, manifesting, unsurprisingly, in yet another voice:

> I clamped my hands over my ears. Martin talked on, shadowy, waxy, flicker-faced. I don't know if this strange new voice of mine carried anywhere when I said, '*I'm the joke. I'm it! It was you. It was you.*' (p. 379)

Thus does Amis's revelation to Self take place in a scene of confounding multiplicity, of doubling and repetition. Self's voice has doubled by becoming 'strange' to him, but it has doubled in other ways too. His repetition -- a verbal doubling -- of the phrase 'it was you'

precisely echoes the Amis character's doubled words on the previous page, when he reveals to Self that Fielding Goodney had been spending Self's money all along: 'You were paying. It was you. It was you' (p. 378).

Self's exclamation can thus be read as expressing the delayed realization that he has been cheated by Goodney, and thus as a repetition of the Amis character's message in a different tone. At the same time, though, it also echoes Goodney, in the persona of Frank the Phone, when he speaks as the victim(s) of Self's past misdeeds: 'It was me. It was me' (p. 218, see above). Alternatively, Self's repetition of the phrase can be read as an accusation directed at his double, Martin Amis, expressing Self's deeper and more traumatic realization that Amis is a con man of an even higher order than Goodney, an authorial demiurge who has orchestrated all the details of Self's downfall. Thus the climactic moment of the narrative, the point at which knowledge makes its catastrophic intrusion into Self's awareness, is blurred, refracted, and irreducibly multiple.

When asked by interviewer John Haffenden about the Martin Amis character, Amis ambiguously uses the pronoun 'I' in a way that could apply equally well to author or author-character: 'Every character in this book dupes the narrator, and yet I am the one who has actually done it all to him'.[27] Self's actors use the pronoun in the same double-voiced way when referring to the characters they will portray, even as they detachedly discuss rearranging those characters' lives (pp. 16, 110-111, 186). They are neither one nor the other, but shift provisionally between the two identities. The figure of the author-character shares this elusive semi-presence. Martin Amis's admittance into his own fiction as a character is an admission of his exterior, authorial existence, and drawing a definitive separation between the two is not possible.

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[27] Haffenden, p. 11. In this context the word 'dupes' seems richly ambiguous as well, implying as it does both deception and duplication.

As in their previous row at the Blind Pig, Amis's violence to literary boundaries provokes violence within the text:

> I didn't see my first swing coming -- but he did. He ducked or shied or stood swiftly aloof and my fist slammed into the light bracket above his head. I wheeled sideways with a wide backhander, fell against the low chair and caught its shoulder-spike deep in the ribs. I came up flailing. I hurled myself round that room like a big ape in a small cage. But I could never connect. Oh Christ, he just isn't here, he just isn't there. (p. 379)

Amis is only provisionally present; he is there and not there. Thus he can lead Self into his own downfall as easily in Self's life as on the chessboard. Self's violent outburst reveals a difference in their physical qualities that underscores this ontological disparity: Amis hovers out of reach like an ethereal spirit while the perennially animalistic Self degenerates into a clumsy caged ape. For Self, the plot of *Money* is against him. He is doubly in Zugzwang.

Indeed, even this odd bit of chess terminology points to Amis as omnipotent author figure; it is one of several anomalies of diction that offer glimpses of Amis's manipulating presence. Self is (somewhat counter-intuitively) a confident chess player, and the first appearance of the term 'zugzwanged' in the text is in his narrating voice (p. 119). When he hears Amis say it, however, Self can only roar, 'What the fuck does that mean?' (p. 379). This highlights the gap between Self's voices; the diction of the narrating Self can be incomprehensible to the Self who speaks. Another, similar, vocal crack might be found in Self's reference to his television commercials as 'nihilistic' (p. 78). It is a word the speaking Self would never use, and an opinion the narrating Self would be unlikely to

hold. Self can also utter words that are chronologically inaccessible to him, as when he calls himself a 'skinjob' -- a neologism he somehow lifts from an unfinished, unreleased film (p. 329; see above). Self's multiple voices have shown him to be drawn and quartered by the broken, chaotic world he inhabits, but in context with the intrusive authorial presence of Martin Amis, they also reveal something else. Self is a puppet, not just to the mass-cultural forces around him, but also, as he is a mere figment of fiction, to the manipulating consciousness which has composed those forces. Self's many selves -- the beast, the lout, the addict, the consumer, as well as the wounded sentimentalist and the uniquely expressive narrator -- have pulled him apart, and between these component voices a unifying identity shines through. The voice which underlies all the others is that of Amis.

This revelation is, obviously, no revelation at all. Amis wrote the novel. However, what is revealed along with the profusion of Amis's authorial voice is the corresponding deficiency of the other voices. These voices resolve themselves as filters or conduits rather than autonomous sources. Richard Todd has noted the similarity of Self's narrative voice to Amis's own authorial voice as it appears in other texts. Citing the 'bizarrely figurative expressiveness' to be found in certain passages of *Money*, Todd suggests that 'in devising a voice for John Self, the extra-fictional Martin Amis has, it seems to me, quite explicitly chosen to use his own'.[28] Like the punning names of products and people, the hyperactive and hyperbolic language, and the inclusion of an author figure as character, John Self's disjunctive voice can be read as yet another mark of Amis's presence throughout the text.

With the visibility of the authorial imprint upon Self's voice(s) arises the possible inhibition of the vocal multiplicity that, for Bakhtin, is the

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[28] Todd, p. 135.

hallmark of novelistic discourse. One might point out the variety of registers, the evocative *skaz*, the sustained heteroglossia of Self's narrative, but one could do so only while pointing through Self to Amis.[29] As Karl Miller writes, 'it is sometimes possible to sense that only the one man is on show, to doubt the authenticity of those characters who trail no shadow of a Siamese connection with the author'.[30] Does this reveal *Money* to be a failed novel, one that, as Bakhtin writes, 'compositionally and thematically [is] similar to a novel', but exhibits only 'a primitive, artificial, worked-up double-voicedness'?[31] Placed alongside the Dostoevskian multiplicity of irreducible voices celebrated by Bakhtin, *Money* might appear to be monological, a collection of impersonations carried out by a single performer. Lodge, however, cites *Money* specifically as an example of a Bakhtinian novel, calling it a '*skaz* narrative in the *Notes from Underground* tradition' and pointing out Amis's broad use of the carnivalesque.

These elements are indeed present in Amis's text, but Lodge makes the strongest case for the novelistic status of *Money* when he describes Self as 'a hero or anti-hero who not only answers the author back, as Bakhtin said of Dostoevsky's heroes, but actually throws a punch at him'.[32] More than Self's proclivity for violent outbursts, it is his potential to 'answer back' that marks him out as an indicator of double-voicedness in *Money*. The voices that permeate the text, interwoven within Self's

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[29] For a discussion of the dialogic potential of *skaz*, see Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. by Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 1984), pp. 185, 190-194.

[30] Karl Miller, *Doubles: Studies in Literary History* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1985), p.414.

[31] Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, TX: University of Texas, 1981), p. 327.

[32] David Lodge, 'The Novel Now: Theories and Practices', in *After Bakhtin: Essays on Fiction and Criticism* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 11- 24 (p. 24). See also Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, pp. 63-64; and Sue Vice, *Introducing Bakhtin* (Manchester: Manchester University, 1997), p. 55.

narrating voice as well as supplementing it from without, are not reconcilable to a single register or ideology. Bakhtin provides a relevant list of some so-called 'prerequisites for an authentic double-voiced prose discourse':

> The relativizing of linguistic consciousness, its crucial participation in the social multi- and vari-languagedness of evolving languages, the various wanderings of semantic and expressive intentions and the trajectory of this consciousness through various languages (languages that are all equally well conceptualized and equally objective), the inevitable necessity for such a consciousness to speak indirectly, conditionally, in a refracted way.[33]

Even excluding secondary characters, the narration and speech of John Self alone fulfil these specifications. Todd echoes Bakhtin when he suggests that one must confront 'the extent to which the novel's various voices both are and are not claiming to be aspects of a single consciousness'. Todd's own conclusion is that the voices are those 'of a single selfhood complexly refracted through the existence of various, duplicitously conflicting, voices'.[34] Self is, in this sense, something like the tortured Raskolnikov, whose mind is, in Bakhtin's words, 'a field of battle for others' voices'.[35] The voices of *Money* undermine and complicate each other, making the novel a vocal composite, even if they carry with them a record of their authorial genesis.

Nonetheless, and true to his name, Self is in many ways an autobiographical reflection of Amis. Diedrick observes how Self's difficulties in producing *Bad Money* appear to echo Amis's own experiences

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[33] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, p. 326.
[34] Todd, pp. 133, 136.
[35] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 88.

as screenwriter for the 1980 film *Saturn 3*. He also points out that both
Amis and Self had American mothers and lived temporarily in New Jersey
as children, and proposes that Martina Twain may be modelled after
Antonia Phillips, Amis's first wife.[36] In fact, Amis and Phillips were married
on the same day that *Money* was published, a coincidence Amis in his
autobiography calls 'almost crassly appropriate'.[37] However, if John Self's
name can be taken as a clue to his role as author surrogate, the name
Martina Twain would seem to imply a similar role. Within the context of
the fiction, Twain is in some respects Martin's counterpart, or perhaps his
twin.[38] Residing in New York, she is Amis's geographical complement, and
the role she plays in Self's life correlates with that played by the Amis
character. She is Self's source of stability in New York, the one whose
commentary on his life offers him some of the few insights to which he has
access. Robert Duggan refers to her as 'the "nice" side of the author'.[39]
With her books and art and music, she is also the representative of high
culture among Self's American circle, just as Amis is among Self's British
acquaintances. Like the Amis character, she is also prone to abstract
digressions with obvious metafictional implications:

> She talked about perception, representation and truth. She talked
> about the vulnerability of a figure unknowingly watched -- the

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[36] Diedrick, pp. 95, 102.

[37] Amis also comments on the same page that 'it would be a ferocious
slander of Martin Amis […] if I called *Money* autobiographical', though he
concedes that 'the story turned on my preoccupations' about bachelorhood
and childlessness; Martin Amis, *Experience* (London: Jonathan Cape,
2000), p. 177. For an example of one critic's attempt to construe Self as
the mouthpiece of Amis's own prejudices, see Laura L. Doan, '"Sexy
Greedy is the Late Eighties": Power Systems in Amis's *Money* and
Churchill's *Serious Money*', *Minnesota Review: A Journal of Committed
Writing* 34-35 (Spring-Fall 1990) 69-80.

[38] Karl Miller, alternatively, reads Martina Twain as more of an
intermediary, 'a sort of bridge between Self and the sobersides Martin
Amis' (p. 412). This possibility still depends upon Twain reflecting Amis to
some extent, however.

[39] Duggan, p. 100.

difference between a portrait and an unposed study. The
analogous distinction in fiction would be that between the
conscious and the reluctant narrator -- the sad, the unwitting
narrator. (p. 132)

Twain and Amis seem to know Self better than he knows himself, and this
penetrating understanding, coupled with their uncanny metafictional
comments, link these characters together. All three, in their respective
ways, seem to cast glances at the reader. As Diedrick writes, 'The reader
is virtually invited to consider Self, Amis, and Martina as aspects of a
single consciousness'.[40]

If Martina Twain's insight into Self's condition can read as authorial
involution, what about the mad perceptiveness of that other author of
Self's downfall, Fielding Goodney? Fielding, with his literary forename, is
in many respects another double of Martin Amis. His plotting provides the
substance of Amis's plot, and, with his shifts between personalities and his
manipulation of symbolic systems like gender and money, he certainly
uses fiction to his advantage. Unlike Self, but like Martin and Martina,
Fielding also speaks the language of high culture. When assaulted, he
quotes *Othello*: 'O damn'd Iago! O inhuman dog!'.[41] The line is
unrecognizable to Self, who thinks he hears 'O damn dear go, [...] Oh and
you man dog', but Amis later translates Fielding's exclamation, finding it
'fascinating' (pp. 350, 377).[42] As an initiate into the literary culture
shared by Martin and Martina, and as the mastermind of so much of the

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[40] Diedrick, p. 92.
[41] The line, comprising Roderigo's dying words, appears in *Othello* at
v.1.62. William Shakespeare, in *William Shakespeare: The Complete
Works*, ed. by Peter Alexander (London: Collins, 1951), pp. 1114-1154 (p.
1148). For an observant consideration of the intertextuality of *Money* that
pays particular attention to Shakespeare and Shakespearean criticism, see
Duggan's 'Big Time Shakespeare and the Joker in the Pack'.
[42] Self's mishearing is nonsensical but not nonsense; he is after all
something of a 'man dog'.

action of *Money* (at least within the confines of its narrative frame), Fielding Goodney acts as another extension of authorial will.

Even a minor character like Doris Arthur, Self's first screenwriter, bears a professional resemblance to Amis. She has published a collection of short stories called *The Ironic High Style*, a title that names, as Mączyńska remarks, 'a mode also favored by Amis'.[43] The eponymous story, which Self manages to read, features a central character with an inexplicable command of language, 'a tramp who spoke exclusively in quotations from Shakespeare. All he did was beg and ponce and scrounge, but he talked Shakespeare while doing it' (p. 59). If Self resembles the articulate tramp, so too does Doris Arthur resemble Amis, who, in his fictional persona, will eventually step into her role to rework her screenplay.

Once Amis announces his presence within the narrative, the totality of the fiction attests to that presence. The situation is something like that of a person who, revealed as a habitual liar, can never be unreservedly trusted again. In this case, however, it is truth that has altered all subsequent discourse. Amis's technique makes a stylistically constituted confession -- 'I have written this; you are reading it'. This should surprise no one, but the presence of such a proclamation in the fabric of the fiction itself changes the way in which that fiction is read. As Patricia Waugh writes, 'The reader is made aware that, paradoxically, the "author" is situated *in* the text at the very point where "he" asserts "his" identity outside it'.[44] The most prominent metafictional features of the novel license the reader to consider *Money* as an artefact that has been created and mediated by a controlling consciousness; thereafter, every aspect of the text becomes potentially metafictional. Once one fictional element in

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[43] Mączyńska, p. 200.
[44] Waugh, *Metafiction*, p. 133. For a similar comment in regard to the figure of Amis in *Money*, see Edmondson, pp. 149-150.

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the text points beyond its frame, the frame has been breached. Any component of the text has the potential to repeat the transgression. Everything is suspect.

Some suggestion of why this is so can be made with reference to Derrida's concept of rupture, and to a certain discursive strategy that an awareness of this rupture would seem to demand. In Derrida's account, structure (and for Derrida this concept includes the structurality of any discourse and thus of understanding in general, at least in Western culture) relies upon some centre or 'point of presence' in order to function: 'By orienting and organizing the coherence of the system, the center of a structure permits the play of its elements inside the total form'. Such a permission is also a prohibition, however, because since the centre is the organizing principle of the play within a structure, it must also be 'the point at which the substitution of contents, elements or terms is no longer possible'. In this way the centre acts as a sort of anchor or hub, the node of fixity that grants to the play of the structure its 'fundamental ground' and allows for a sense of 'reassuring certainty'.[45]

In the history of Western metaphysics, in which the structural centre has borne labels like '*eidos, archē, telos, energeia, ousia* (essence, existence, substance, subject)', a rupture occurred 'when the structurality of structure had to begin to be thought' -- that is, when the substitutability of the centre became visible. This rupture was 'the moment when language invaded the universal problematic, the moment when, in the absence of a center or origin, everything became discourse'. For Derrida, this rupture 'has always already begun', but it is typified in its modern iteration in the works of Nietzsche, Freud, and Heidegger.[46] Of course,

[45] Jacques Derrida, 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences', in *Writing and Difference*, trans. by Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 1978), pp. 278-293 (pp. 278-279).
[46] Derrida, 'Structure, Sign and Play', pp. 279-280.

awareness of the substitutability of the structural centre does not waive one's reliance upon it -- one cannot step outside the compass of discourse. However, as Derrida writes, 'The quality and fecundity of a discourse are perhaps measured by the critical rigor with which [its] relation to the history of metaphysics and to inherited concepts is thought'.[47] One method of cultivating such critical rigour, which Derrida detects in the ethnology of Claude Lévi-Strauss, is to proceed with the inherited methods of discourse on the condition of their provisionality:

> [This conserves] all those old concepts within the domain of empirical discovery while here and there denouncing their limits, treating them as tools which can still be used. No longer is any truth value attributed to them; there is a readiness to abandon them, if necessary, should other instruments appear more useful.[48]

Lévi-Strauss acts as 'bricoleur' (Derrida appropriates this term from Lévi-Strauss in order to apply it to him), proceeding as if the framework in which he works is anchored by pure objectivity, even while conceding that it is not.[49] By proceeding provisionally in this way, post-rupture discourse avoids the paralysis of total relativism through self-reflexive, critical scepticism.

A key feature of the critical stance embedded in bricolage is the self-reflexivity of its concessionary content. If a discourse is to shed light upon the shortcomings of its own methods while continuing to implement them, then it must interweave whatever objective assertion it aims to make with a concurrent subjective admission. It must refer to itself simultaneously with its object. The result of such bi-directionality is

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[47] Derrida, 'Structure, Sign and Play', p. 282.
[48] Derrida, 'Structure, Sign and Play', p. 284.
[49] Derrida, 'Structure, Sign and Play', p. 285.

unmistakably mimetic. In the specific case of Lévi-Strauss, 'discourse on the acentric structure that myth itself is, cannot itself have an absolute subject or an absolute center'; it 'must itself be *mythomorphic*'. Put succinctly and in more general terms, self-critical discourse that proceeds in awareness of rupture 'must have the form of that of which it speaks'.[50]

To return therefore to *Money*, Amis has crafted a fiction that continually foregrounds its fictionality by bearing a clear authorial imprint at multiple levels. The diction, the characterization, and the plot, for example, all repeat the self-referential confession mentioned above -- announcing the text as created artefact. Waugh describes the effect of metafictional emphasis on 'the sign as sign' -- the artefactual, acentric quality of the language of fiction:

> To be aware of the sign is thus to be aware of the absence of that to which it apparently refers and the presence only of relationships with other signs within the text.[51]

There is therefore a stylistic rupture in *Money*, one in which, to apply Derrida's expression, everything becomes discourse. This is why breaching the conventions of realism initiates a chain reaction in which any textual feature might be interpreted as similarly transgressive of convention.

By entering so conspicuously into his own fiction, Amis disrupts the authorial invisibility that cloaks the originating voice of traditionally realistic fiction. Rather than posing as editor or witness, or hovering above the action like a disembodied eye, Amis lays open his role as author

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[50] Derrida draws this claim from his reading of Lévi-Strauss' *The Raw and the Cooked*; see 'Structure, Sign and Play', p. 286.

[51] Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1984), p. 57.

to the reader, making the necessity of that role impossible to ignore. In doing so, he de-centres his authorial voice, because, as Derrida explains, in order to function as centre it must remain disregardable:

> The center is at the center of the totality, and yet, since the center does not belong to the totality (is not part of the totality), the totality *has its center elsewhere.*[52]

Plunging into the discursive framework of his own fiction, Amis is not 'elsewhere', at least not fully. He is too visible. There are many overlapping conventions guiding the ways in which a reader might use a novel, and to the extent that those conventions rely upon the author's remaining outside of the 'totality' of his or her text, those readerly uses are reconfigured by authorial involution and metafiction. The rule of realist mimetic illusion is broken. This is why, having made a metafictional reference beyond its frame, the text of *Money* alters the interpretive possibilities, not just of its metafictional figures, but of the text as a whole. When the centre invades the structure it can no longer serve as its foundation; consequently, the play of that structure's signification is changed.

Amis's violation of traditional realist poetics instigates a rupture in which the fiction comes unmoored from the foundational notion of mimetic reportage and edges toward a freer play of signification. This poses what appears at first to be a problem for the status of *Money* as novel. If realism, however loosely conceived, and its attendant epistemological emphases are to continue to serve as the generic marker of novelistic writing, then *Money* would seem to be actively resisting the genre. However, the mimetic component of critical self-referentiality should not

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[52] Derrida, 'Structure, Sign and Play', p. 279.

be overlooked. In order to continue to explore the generic identity of the novel, *Money* can be considered, consistently with the preceding novels in this study, as representational of a particular aspect of subjective experience. As in the technical condition of the text itself, the world it portrays is one in which the stability of centred signification has been disrupted; all has become discursive. In this way, a modified sort of realism persists in Amis's work. It takes 'the form of that of which it speaks'.

The connection between *Money*'s metafictional self-referentiality and its novelistic representational capacity can be traced from, among other elements, the character of John Self, who is an emblem of the world in which he exists as well as of the author who has delineated that existence. The multiplicity of Self's personality functions synecdochically. It depicts an isolated psychological phenomenon, but it also enacts in miniature a broader fragmentation of experience that extends beyond him and in which other characters participate as well. Catherine Bernard writes that 'the course of history comes to be crystallized in the physical decay of some of [Amis's] protagonists'; in the case of John Self the correlation is psychological as well as physical.[53] Just as Self's body is like a dystopian metropolis, so too is the city he inhabits like his mind -- fragmented and chaotic, prone to confusing multiplication. In his more perceptive narrating mode, Self explicitly connects urban and human fragmentation in New York:

> Cars are doubling while houses are halving. Houses divide, into
> two, into four, into sixteen. If a landlord or developer comes
> across a decent-sized room he turns it into a labyrinth, a Chinese
> puzzle. The bell-button grills in the flakey porches look like the

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[53] Bernard, p. 141.

dashboards of ancient spaceships. Rooms divide, rooms multiply.

Houses split -- houses are tripleparked. People are doubling also,

dividing, splitting. In double trouble we split our losses. No

wonder we're bouncing off the walls. (p. 63)

Self's claim that 'people are [...] splitting' indicates that the process he

describes refers not only to the literal multiplication of people and

properties, but also to a more abstract and insidious state of being, in

which once-coherent wholes are disintegrating. Underlying the entire

spectrum of multiplicity that his comments encompass, from apartment

sublets to shattered selfhood, is a sense of ontological dissolution in which

the world is no longer reducible to stable, unitary principles that stand

independently of context. The fragmentation of Self's voice shows that he

is caught up in the very condition he describes. He is, in Bernard's phrase,

a 'prismatic' reflector 'of the world's mad farce, of its loss of meaning'.[54]

The many-selved Self, who identifies as 'addicted to the twentieth

century', embodies his time (p. 91). His name is 'the name of the very

era'.[55] His afflictions model the world that has produced him.

Diedrick points out that 'aesthetic postmodernism can never be

separated from, is always already implicated in, political postmodernity'.[56]

In the case of *Money*, stylistic emphases on mediation -- intertextuality,

metafiction, language play -- which invite the label of postmodernism are,

in concert with their self-referentiality, referential to aspects of human

experience in the empirical world in which the novel is read.[57] Amis's

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[54] Bernard, p. 126.

[55] John Mullan, 'Signs of the Times: John Mullan Analyses Money by Martin Amis. Week One: Names', *Guardian*, 13 September 2003, p. B32. For additional comments on Self as an archetypal 'Postmodern Man', see Edmondson, pp. 147-149.

[56] Diedrick, p. 11.

[57] To speak of 'the world' while invoking postmodernity is somewhat uncritical, but perhaps the pragmatism of the bricoleur justifies assuming

postmodernism, that is to say, is not only a stylistic flourish but is also a depiction of postmodernity. Diedrick advances this claim by reading Self's physical, psychological, and vocal disunity as indicative of the state of contemporary life more generally, writing that his 'temporal confusion, psychic fragmentation, and anxiety are common symptoms -- of the postmodern condition that has shaped his voice as well as the voices of his fellow "Earthlings"'.[58] 'Earthlings', incidentally, is the universalizing designation Self applies to those around him who seem to embody what might be called postmodernity: those who play their lives like actors, 'Manhattan groundlings, extras and understudies, walk-ons and bit-part players'; those who are culturally displaced, 'Lithuanian or Albanian or whatever'; those who feel controlled by alien forces, 'haunted tinnitic taxmen, bug-eyed barristers and smart-bombed bureaucrats'; and even his own disordered internal voices, 'these squatters and hoboes who hang out in my head' (pp. 44, 128, 330, 267). Self sees his condition reflected in the state of people around him, and he unambiguously diagnoses it as an effect of the twentieth-century Western mode of being.

Self shares this attentiveness to his cultural moment with the extra-fictional Martin Amis. In differentiating his work from that of Kingsley Amis for interviewer John Bigsby, the junior Amis distinguishes himself by citing the way both he and his father reflect their respective historical contexts, claiming that he writes 'about a different world' to that of Kingsley Amis.[59] That the 'world' Amis refers to is determined more by generational state of mind than by simple chronological succession is

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(provisionally) a shared objective reality. Suffice it to say that, however arbitrary such a binary might be, there is in some respect an 'inside' and an 'outside' of the fiction entitled *Money*, even if neither of these zones transcends the framework of textuality and discourse. That fictions refer to respective historically-entrenched 'worlds' is a possibility taken up by Amis himself in his interview with John Bigsby; see below.
[58] Diedrick, p. 75.
[59] Bigsby, p. 170.

emphasized by the vigour of the elder Amis's own novelistic output. Kingsley's controversial novel *Stanley and the Women* was published in the same year as *Money*, and his subsequent novel, *The Old Devils*, would win the Booker two years later.[60] Clearly the world about which the elder Amis wrote was not simply usurped by that of the younger. Rather, the two coexisted, at least for some time, as products of respectively different subjective relationships to history.

Speaking to Mira Stout in 1990, Martin Amis also claims the accurate depiction of the present as a concern that sets him apart from his literary peers:

> The 19th-century British novel was, if you like, a superpower novel. [...] With decline, the novel has shrunk in confidence, in scope. In its current form, the typical English novel is 225 sanitized pages about the middle classes [...]. What I'm interested in is trying to get more truthful about what it's like to be alive now.[61]

One clearly dominant element of the truth Amis seeks to approach in *Money* is the corrosiveness of consumerist late capitalism to the social fabric. The acquisitive money-mindedness that John Self, in spite of his

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[60] Michael Cox, ed., *The Concise Oxford Chronology of English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2004), pp. 575, 579.

[61] Mira Stout, 'Martin Amis: Down London's Mean Streets', *New York Times*, 4 February 1990, pp. SM32-36, 48 (p. 35). Amis seems attached enough to this criticism of the modern novel to have rehearsed it to the point of crystallization. In his most recent novel, *The Pregnant Widow*, protagonist Keith Nearing describes the 'English novel of about 1970' as 'concerning itself with the ups and downs of the middle classes, and never any longer than two hundred and twenty-five pages', (London: Jonathan Cape, 2010), p. 311. Bernard Bergonzi has dismissed the idea that 'English fiction was domestic and dull' in the mid-twentieth century as a 'literary critical myth', citing *Money* as a successful blend of American and English styles that proves the obsolescence of such a generalization; quoted in Nicolas Tredell, ed., *The Fiction of Martin Amis: A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism* (Cambridge: Icon Books, 2000), pp. 60-61.

frequent socially critical asides, equates with upward mobility is, for Amis, the root cause of widespread decline:

> The money age we're living through now is a short-term, futureless kind of prosperity […]. Money is a more democratic medium than blood, but money as a cultural banner -- you can feel the whole of society deteriorating around you because of that. Civility, civilization is falling apart.[62]

Amis argues that contemporary fiction is in a state of decline specifically because it does not -- or because as a result of certain restrictions it cannot -- faithfully reflect the social decline of the world that produces and consumes it.

As his displeasure with the 'sanitized' contemporary novel indicates, Martin Amis considers his formally innovative writing to have an at least partly representational function. In comments to Susan Morrison, justifying what she calls his 'postmodern literary prankishness', Amis situates his style firmly in the present:

> Well, it all comes under the main heading of 'Fucking Around With the Reader.' My father thinks that there's an orderly contract between writer and reader, which has very much to do with his generation, and he's incensed by any breach of those rules.[63]

Style is thus a means of engaging with a particular historical moment, and so writing, as Amis says, 'about a different world' to the one experienced by his father requires a different technical palette if it is to attain any

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[62] Stout, p. 36.
[63] Susan Morrison, 'The Wit and the Fury of Martin Amis', *Rolling Stone*, 17 May 1990, pp. 95-102 (p. 98).

degree of truth-to-life. Style, in this view, facilitates a kind of representational honesty.

In Amis's account, to write in a fashion that takes for granted the conventions of Realist prose fiction is to write for (and from) a previous generation. The stylistic innovations of postmodernism are for him as irreversible as the introduction of perspective to Renaissance painting, and they will endure until they are supplanted by some new aesthetic upheaval.[64] To write a purely Realist novel in his time would be impossible; no matter how assiduously constructed, it could not escape at least a tinge of pastiche.[65] As the intra-textual Amis of *Money* states, 'Even realism, rockbottom realism, is considered a bit grand for the twentieth century' (p. 248). To 'fuck around' with the reader as Amis does is in this consideration perhaps the most transparent style available to a late twentieth-century novelist, a means of representation that avoids the 'grand' contrivance of pretended objectivity. Waugh proposes that postmodernist literary techniques need not be construed as making the novels that deploy them 'any less serious or less engaged with history'. She asks:

> Have these novels, in fact, abandoned the norms of the historical
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> description of reality? Could it not be argued equally that they
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> have simply challenged the restrictive and reductive

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[64] Morrison, p. 98. The allusion to painting is Amis's.

[65] The spectre of pastiche arises because, as David Lodge explains, a contemporary novelist who creates fictions that rely upon an unchallenged illusion of mimesis is consciously and conspicuously selecting this mode over others (among which is metafiction). This exclusiveness places the contemporary novelist at a technical 'crossroads', but the complication of Realism by no means proves its obsolescence. As Lodge points out, the technique is still viable, and 'a great many of the most admired novels of the present time are written wholly in the discourse mode of traditional realism'; see 'The Novelist Today: Still at the Crossroads?', in *The Practice of Writing* (New York: Allen Lane, 1997), pp. 3-19 (pp. 5-6, 9-10).

representational forms which these norms *can take* within specific

discursive formations [...]?[66]

In this capacity, Amis's stylistic acrobatics might be considered, as in Head's phrasing, 'a reworking of the realist contract, involving the reader's willing acceptance that the text provides a bridge to reality'.[67] And yet Amis's postmodernism is anything but transparent. It places style before plot, author before characters. It announces the text as a text, calls attention to its status as a created artefact. If Amis's novel is engaged in such self-reference, how might it also serve as a 'bridge' to the world?

Amy J. Elias registers this tension between the techniques of postmodernist fiction and the potentially representational effects those techniques generate. She writes that Amis produces texts that are 'postmodernist in style, tone, and focus', and yet 'often seem to be closely allied with a mimetic aim'.[68] At one level, this connection could be attributed to a superficial coincidence of theme. For example, Elias calls attention to the characteristically Realist 'focus on class and the (often mundane) activities of social life' to be found in *Money*, which with its pointed admixture of low and high culture also happens to be both typically postmodernist and realistic in the Auerbachian sense.[69] However, the elements of the text that do the most toward resolving the apparent paradox between self-referentiality and reference to extra-textual reality are those that diverge from conventional realism -- the overtly metafictional devices already under discussion.

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[66] Waugh, *Practising Postmodernism*, pp. 60-61. In this passage, Waugh is referring in particular to Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse 5* and Salman Rushdie's *Shame*. The questions are applicable, however, to any novel that resists Realist convention with postmodernist devices.
[67] Dominic Head, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modern British Fiction, 1950-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2002), p. 229.
[68] Elias, p. 22.
[69] Ibid.

Elias's argument suggests that the emphasis on mediation that permeates *Money* is itself mimetic, constituting what she designates as 'Postmodern Realism', which 'attempts to *record* the real' revealing with this effort that 'the real itself has become a strange new world: mediated reality'.[70] The problem of mediated reality certainly features in the fictional world of *Money*. Self's occupation, his addictions, and his eventual downfall all involve the distortion and impoverishment of understanding as a result of deceptive mediating practices. Part of the metafictional content of these themes is their covert but inevitable reference to the mediated nature of the very narrative that presents them. As Self complains of his screenplay, 'We have a realism problem' (p. 237). However engrossed in the reading of *Money* he or she might be, the reader cannot ignore the fact that these concepts are accessible only through multiple, overlapping systems of signifiers.

Such is the reality of any text, but in *Money* it is a central part of the fiction as well -- its plot, theme, and style. This forceful spotlight on mediation, though it is already a kind of authorial intrusion into the text, demands a further exposure of the author's hand as a response to what Todd calls 'a perceived threat of solipsistic closure'.[71] The artifice of any text points to its origin; to include an image of the author in the text is to admit this fact with unconventional frankness. If disbelief cannot be suspended, then, as Lodge's characterization of authorial involution implies, to obscure the author's presence in the text is an unnecessary affectation:

> In pursuing mimetic methods to their limits, modernist fiction
>
> discovered that you cannot abolish the author, you can only

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[70] Elias distinguishes this from magical realism, which in her view 'defamiliarizes the real'; p. 26.
[71] Todd, p. 135.

suppress or displace him. Post-modernism says, in effect: so why not let him back into the text?[72]

Duggan contributes to this point, writing that 'the intrusion of the author is a consequence of the contemporary unraveling of faith in traditional narrative poetics and perhaps even in a shared perception of the social totality'.[73] Having ironized the discursive nature of experience with a discursive novel, Amis completes this critical acknowledgement by conceding the subjectivity of his own role as participant in the discourses he portrays and deploys. The overt self-reference of involution contradicts the more solipsistic, because covert and unacknowledged, self-referentiality of traditional Realism. Metafiction, as Waugh writes, not only 'exposes the inauthenticity' of realism, it also 'fails *deliberately* to build seamless mimetic illusions itself.[74] Thus, paradoxically, an act of authorial self-aggrandizement is simultaneously an act of humility. The duplicity of the mocking tribute lies at the heart of mimesis, and the confessional content of Amis's self-reference suits both of these mimetic modes: '*only I* have written this', it proudly declares, and contrarily but simultaneously, 'I have *only written* this'.[75]

For all its antagonism toward realist convention, *Money* manages to achieve mimesis by depicting the reality of subjective experience, or

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[72] David Lodge, 'Mimesis and Diagesis in Modern Fiction', in *After Bakhtin: Essays on Fiction and Criticism* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 25-44 (p. 41).

[73] Duggan, p. 88. Lodge, along similar lines, sees metafiction as a 'defensive response […] to the questioning of the idea of the author and of the mimetic function of fiction by modern critical theory'; see 'The Novel Now: Theories and Practices', in *After Bakhtin: Essays on Fiction and Criticism* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 11-24 (p. 19).

[74] Waugh, *Metafiction*, p. 101.

[75] It is perhaps this potential for stylistic technique to display virtues like honesty and humility that leads Amis to write, in praise of Nabokov, that 'style *is* morality: morality detailed, configured, intensified. It's not in the mere narrative arrangement of good and bad that morality makes itself felt. It can be there in every sentence' (*Experience*, p. 121).

rather the inaccessibility, by mediation, of that reality. It is, in its reflexivity, representative of the inescapability of representation. The fact that the text itself exemplifies this monopoly of mediation at the same time that it depicts it shows a kind of literary good faith or honesty. *Money*, if it is to attempt to comment without naivety on mediated reality, must admit the naivety it cannot escape; it must be self-referential in regard to its own mediation. To repeat Derrida's phrase once again, it 'must have the form of that of which it speaks'.

As discussed in the previous chapter, artistic mimesis inevitably falls short of its ultimate object. Amis's postmodernist techniques provide a remedy -- a *pharmakon* -- for this shortfall not by somehow bridging the gap of representation but by indicating its presence with a sort of deliberate failure. He creates what Waugh describes as the 'fundamental and sustained opposition' of metafiction: 'the construction of a fictional illusion (as in traditional realism) and the laying bare of that illusion'.[76] Amis's self-referentiality both mitigates and exacerbates the mimetic shortfall, because its disruption of realist convention is carried out with what is nevertheless referential truth-to-life, something like the tricky forthrightness of René Magritte's caption: '*Ceci n'est pas une pipe*'. As Bernard writes, Amis's confrontation with convention is 'indicative of the irreducible gap existing between fiction and the excesses of our world', and amounts to 'an ontological meditation on the elusiveness of meaning'.[77] Bernard's claim attributes to a novel like *Money* a mimetic efficacy that arises from what she calls the 'dedefinition of mimesis', a self-critical mode that enables 'fiction to revisit the concept of reference' even as it interrogates it.[78] Thus it is by sustaining doubt about the possibility of mimesis, by proceeding in cognisance of rupture, that a text

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[76] Waugh, *Metafiction*, p. 6.
[77] Bernard, p. 142.
[78] Bernard, p. 144.

like *Money* performs mimesis. And yet, of course, this performance can only occur to the extent that it is provisional, announcing its own insufficiency. Bernard puts this paradox in appropriately oxymoronic terms, asserting that 'if fiction still retains its hermeneutic power, the certainties it imparts are precarious'.[79]

There is an inherent epistemological scepticism in an artistic mode that presents its content with the condition of this precariousness. However, though in the case of *Money* it develops out of Amis's use of typically postmodernist aesthetics, this sceptical doubt regarding the final knowability of the world pre-dates the postmodern moment as such. It reiterates the scepticism that has attended novelistic discourse from its early stages, in which its dialectical interplay with naive empiricism helped to establish the generic conventions of novels in general. Lodge writes that 'the novel came into existence under the sign of contradiction', pointing out the way eighteenth-century English novels appropriated 'the form of documentary or historical writing' in fiction to achieve their effects.[80] Following this thread through the history of the novel, Lodge continues, 'The ambivalent and sometimes contradictory relationship between fact and fiction in the early novel persists into its classic and modern phases'. This continuity, which is a continuity of epistemological orientation rather than of formal strategies, attends novels regardless of their specific content or historical moment, and it manifests itself, unsurprisingly, as a kind of schism:

> Novelists are and always have been split between, on the one
> hand, the desire to claim an imaginative and representative truth
> for their stories, and on the other the wish to guarantee and

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[79] Ibid.

[80] Lodge, 'The Novel Now', p. 17. Here Lodge is paraphrasing Lennard J. Davis's *Factual Fictions*; see chapter one.

defend that truth-claim by reference to empirical facts: a contradiction they seek to disguise by elaborate mystifications and metafictional ploys such as framing narratives, parody and other kinds of intertextuality and self-reflexivity or what the Russian formalists called 'baring of the device'.[81]

The tendency of mimesis toward duplicity is discernible at two points in Lodge's description: first in the tension between the subjective and objective 'truth' sought after by novelists, and second in the generic features such a tension incites, which manage to be at the same time obscurantist 'ploys' and candid revelations of the mechanisms of fiction. As has been suggested previously, it is the novel's paradoxical referentiality, the odd state of novelistic mimesis being at odds with itself, that allows for the productive variability of the genre, precisely because this is the source of its open-endedness.

The novelistic mode announces itself and its content as constructed and provisional, and it is this transparency that drives its mimetic capacity, independently of specific novels' interaction with the conventions of Realism. The truth of novelistic representation lies first and foremost in its confessional self-revelation. It has been proposed previously that the generic identity of the novel involves realism, but of a kind that is responsive to the dialectical tension between empirical and sceptical epistemologies. Thus, the novel, by a variety of means, inevitably calls attention to the duplicity and reversibility of mimesis and the falling short from the object such a condition causes -- in effect preserving and diminishing this deficiency with one and the same gesture. It is as a result of this tenuousness that the novel can be characterized with the Bakhtinian vocabulary of polyvocality and open-endedness. Waugh, for

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[81] Lodge, 'The Novel Now', p. 18.

example, cites the Bakhtinian dialogism of the novel when she claims that 'metafiction is a tendency or function inherent in *all* novels'.[82] The novelistic text foregrounds its epistemological incompleteness and separation from the finality of absolutes. This provisionality can arise in the form of didactic moralizing that depends covertly on moral relativism, as in *Roderick Random*, or as an ideologically-loaded aesthetic of multiplicity that interweaves the anxieties of individual subjectivity, political advocacy, and Christian struggle for salvation, as in the Galesia trilogy.

In *Money*, the same condition of provisionality (and a comparable satirical corrective) invests Amis's use of metafiction and the free play of signifiers. Motifs like fragmentation, alienation, confusion, intoxication, and deceit depict Self inhabiting a world of epistemic corruption, living in a state in which unproblematic access to understanding is impossible. Because Self is the narrator, the reader's access to the fictional world of *Money* is correspondingly degraded. However, this image of deferral is present precisely as a depiction of the experiential world, so that it reflects by virtue of its distortion. A similarly productive contradiction resides in Amis's use of authorial involution. The inclusion of the Martin Amis character, together with the many other techniques that foreground an authorial presence, at once confirms and denies the mimetic reflection of an exterior world within the confines of the text. The text admits its own mediation. The result of the self-reflexivity of *Money* is a candour that materializes by means of dissimulation, a transparency that reveals the provisionality of the novel's representational capacity without fully disallowing such representation. It should be emphasized here that, had

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[82] Waugh, *Metafiction*, p. 5. While all novels harbour this capacity, Waugh explains that an overtly metafictional novel '*displays* and *rejoices in*' the multiplicity that a more monological novel must actively suppress (*Metafiction*, pp. 5-6; see also pp. 66-67).

Amis chosen to write a novel without the techniques cited above, other features of the text would necessarily, if less obviously, have made an analogous reflexive gesture toward provisionality, because, as the preceding discussion of eighteenth-century novels has suggested, to do so is an inevitable component of extended fictional narratives that mediate subjective individual experience in the world.

The novel is generically inclined to admit provisionality. The mediating apparatus of such an admission is variable, but it nevertheless carries over a generic identity with some degree of continuity through multiple permutations. Derrida describes this process when he writes that genre involves 'the identifiable recurrence of a common trait by which one recognizes, or should recognize, a membership in a class'.[83] The mark of the novel recurs with every novel, but the means by which it might do so are variable, and so the iteration of this 'common trait' takes place as a mimetic re-making -- a simultaneous repetition and revision. To echo the words of Melberg in the previous chapter, 'Repetition repeats what has been, but turns it into something else'.[84] The mark of the novel, therefore, is mimetic in two distinct, interrelated ways. On the one hand, the common feature shared by novels is a foregrounding of the provisionality of human understanding by means of reference to individual subjectivity. As a special mode of realism, this is mimesis. On the other hand, because this foregrounding functions as a generic marker, it refers via repetition to a generic identity that supersedes the particular text, while at the same time it provides a new and unique instantiation of that identity. Because it is a re-making, this is once again mimesis. In effect, the novelistic epistemological stance does a sort of referential double duty:

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[83] Jacques Derrida, 'The Law of Genre', in *Acts of Literature*, ed. by Derek Attridge (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 221-252 (pp. 229-229).
[84] Arne Melberg, *Theories of Mimesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1995), p. 37.

it is itself a form of mimesis, and its presence fosters a further mimetic relation between the individual text and its classificatory taxon.

Derrida terms this second action the 're-mark' of genre, the means by which a text declares its membership in a certain group:

> A defense speech or newspaper editorial can indicate by means of a mark, even if it is not explicitly designated as such, 'Violà! I belong, as anyone may remark, to the type of text called a defense speech or an article of the genre newspaper-editorial'.[85]

Similarly, a novel, by exemplifying the novelistic stance, announces itself to be a novel. The re-mark of genre is in this capacity a rather straightforward affirmation. However, because it is a mimetic figure, this badge of membership is of course prone to duplicity. The action of mimesis is one of *being like* rather than *being*, and so even as a novel announces its relation to the novelistic, it alienates itself. It locates the novelistic at a remove. As Derrida writes of the generic re-mark, 'Such a distinctive trait *qua* mark is [...] always *a priori* remarkable'.[86] Prototypicality is always elsewhere than the single, specific instance. This is precisely why a text can cite within itself its own generic mark; the mark is not identical to the text itself.

Inherent in the relation between general principle and specific instance is the inevitable shortfall that attends any mimetic relation. There remains between a novel and its generic identity *as* a novel a gap, a gap of the same kind as that which lies between an object and its image. In Derrida's discussion of genre, this gap shows itself as a 'paradox', one he likens to an image of a blinking eye:

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[85] Derrida, 'The Law of Genre', p. 229.
[86] Ibid.

> The re-mark of belonging does not belong. It belongs without belonging, and the 'without' (or the suffix '-less') which relates belonging to non-belonging appears only in the timeless time of the blink of an eye. The eyelid closes, but barely, an instant among instants, and what it closes is verily the eye, the view, the light of day. But without the respite or interval of a blink, nothing would come to light.[87]

The mark of genre, along with the text that bears it, is not identical to the genre it signals. This distance allows for similarity, the family resemblance that makes genre classification possible, but it also makes each specific text's generic status unsettled, because provisionality always inheres in likeness. Consequently, Derrida writes of 'the designation "novel"' that 'it gathers together the corpus and, at the same time, in the same blinking of an eye, keeps it from closing, from identifying itself with itself'.[88] The 'blink' that Derrida describes is a strategy for dealing with the mimetic shortfall of the generic relation, in which the singular instance can never give a full account of, or fully be accounted for by, the normalizing strictures of genre. The generic category is acentric. To recognize and read a text as a novel, one must approach that text as an iteration of an already extant genre, and yet the nature of that genre is open to the innovative amendment performed by the specific text. Thus, integral to the designation of a text as novel (and indeed to any assertion of genre-identity) is the implicit affirmation that the individual instance overflows its classificatory boundaries, because it both falls short from and makes new the genre it references.

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[87] Derrida, 'The Law of Genre', p. 230.
[88] Derrida, 'The Law of Genre', pp. 230-231.

The novel therefore makes its mimetic reach both toward the empirical world and toward an abstract generic category. Along with resemblance, these novelistic mimeses inevitably establish a separation from their objects. It can be said, then, that the dialectical tension between scepticism and empiricism which inheres in the novelistic mode extends outward, beyond the epistemological orientation of certain novels, or even of all novels, to include the genre designation itself. A novel is novelistic only provisionally, by means of representing something other than and exterior to itself.

This embattled connection between singular instance and general category underlies any genre designation. However, in the case of the novel, it occurs in the presence, and as a direct result, of textual features that foreground the epistemological consequences of the mimetic shortfall. Thus the confessional capacity of the novel, in which it exposes its own provisionality, implicates its generic identification as well. In this way the novel is inherently, generically self-critical; it acknowledges the *ad hoc* condition of its own status as novel, a status that is in turn substantiated by this selfsame admission. Like the presence of Martin Amis in the fictional world of *Money*, the generic mark of the novel at once undermines and enables reference beyond the bounds of the text. There is therefore imbedded in the genericity of novels a metafictional mechanism, an admission of their duplicity that by its very reflexivity achieves a corresponding integrity.

Chapter 5

Helplessly culpable: Ian McEwan's *Saturday*

It is conceivable that a reader might happen upon the Vintage UK paperback edition of Ian McEwan's novel *Saturday* never before having heard of the title or author. Helpfully, the book provides its own frame of reference. In addition to illustrating a scene from the first few pages, the cover announces that *Saturday* is 'the no. 1 bestseller', and that the *Observer* has found it to be 'Dazzling … profound and urgent'. In effect, it has secured both popular and critical acclaim. The inside covers and four full pages of excerpted reviews corroborate this double success, assuring potential readers that the novel is both entertaining and edifying, a 'Hitchcockian thriller' that 'belongs to the tradition of *Ulysses* and *Mrs Dalloway*'. The chorus of reviewers even provides a thematic introduction: it is a novel that interweaves public and private realms, managing simultaneously to be 'a portrait of an age' and 'a brilliant character study'. McEwan himself is crowned 'the supreme novelist of his generation' in a blurb from the *Sunday Times*, and several other reviewers make similar assertions with only marginally more reserve. Perhaps to emphasize the basis of such plaudits, the publisher lists -- twice -- eleven of McEwan's previous works.[1] Thus before even laying eyes on McEwan's prose, this hypothetically benighted reader will have been briefed by the novel's paratextual frame, inducted into an apparent consensus of opinion toward *Saturday* as an artful and important novel and Ian McEwan as a novelist of the highest order.

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[1] Ian McEwan, *Saturday* (London: Vintage, 2006), front matter. Subsequent page references appear in the text. The quotations are attributed to, respectively, the *Washington Post*, *Financial Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, and *Frankfurter Allgemeine*.

This sort of enthusiasm is to be expected in the front matter of any best-selling paperback novel. In the case of *Saturday*, however, the image of McEwan and his work projected by publishing house marketing executives is, though partial, relatively accurate. From even the very early stages of his writing career, when he studied as a postgraduate under Malcolm Bradbury and Angus Wilson at the University of East Anglia, McEwan composed fiction that, if not unanimously praised, was certainly well recognized. Though much of his early work was subject to reductive readings due to its transgressive subject matter, McEwan seems to be an author who, as David Malcolm claims, 'has always been taken seriously by reviewers'.[2] His first published collection of short stories, the 1975 *First Love, Last Rites*, earned him the Somerset Maugham Award, and many literary honours have followed, including the 1988 Man Booker Prize for *Amsterdam*. He has been nominated four other times for the Booker, most recently in 2007 for *On Chesil Beach*.[3] McEwan's respect within the literary community is matched by his popular success. His novels feature on bestseller lists and are a staple of reading groups. They have been adapted for cinema and television and marketed as appropriate for literary curricula at secondary and university levels.[4] In Dominic Head's phrase, it is his 'ability to make the serious popular, and the popular serious, that

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[2] David Malcolm, *Understanding Ian McEwan* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, 2002), p. 3. Kiernan Ryan provides a pointed criticism of early reviewers' tendency to caricature McEwan as 'the sick delinquent confrère of Genet, Burroughs, and Céline' or to reduce his developing social and political concerns to 'an exemplary tale of moral maturation' in *Ian McEwan*, (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1994), p. 4.

[3] [anon.], 'Who's Who in the Man Booker Prize: 1969-2009 Winners, Shortlisted Authors and the Panels of Judges Who Chose Them', (2009) <http://www.themanbookerprize.com/downloads/Whos_who_2009-0.pdf> [accessed 08 December 2009]

[4] McEwan's official promotional website recommends study guides and other secondary materials for students, teachers, and reading group participants: <http://www.ianmcewan.com>. For a treatment of *The Child in Time*, *Enduring Love*, and *Atonement* as curricular materials, see Margaret Reynolds and Jonathan Noakes, eds, *Ian McEwan: The Essential Guide* (London: Vintage, 2002).

indicates McEwan's importance, as a writer who has helped reinvigorate thinking about the novel within and without academia'.[5] He does not lack competitors, but a claim may be, and often is, made for his status as the foremost novelist in Britain today.[6] For obvious reasons, McEwan merits a central position in discussions of contemporary fiction. In part because of this prominence, McEwan is of special relevance to the aims of this study.

The previous chapters have attempted to set forth a descriptive account of a novelistic epistemological stance, an attitude toward knowledge and the knowability and communicability of human experience that is exemplified by novels. This account is drawn from novelistic fictions which, in their respective ways, challenge generic definitions even while reinforcing them. Smollett's and especially Barker's texts stand at what is either the historical frontier of the genre or, at the very least, a watershed moment in the longer history of novelistic cultural practice. By virtue of this situation, the novelistic fiction of the eighteenth century is necessarily experimental. Further, it relates to present notions of the novel only when considered retrospectively, and so cannot provide insight

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[5] Dominic Head, *Ian McEwan* (Manchester: Manchester University, 2007), p. 2.

[6] For example in early 2005, following the success of *Atonement* and supporting the publication of *Saturday*, such praise for McEwan was a staple of interviews and reviews. Examples include: Ruth Scurr, 'Happiness on a Knife Edge', *The Times*, 29 January 2005, <http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/books/article507285.ece> [accessed 18 December 2009]; Jasper Gerard, 'Interview: Jasper Gerard Meets Ian McEwan', *Sunday Times*, 23 January 2005, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/article505214.ece> [accessed 22 November 2009]; Catherine Deveney, 'First Love, Last Writes', *Scotland on Sunday*, 30 January 2005, <http://news.scotsman.com/ViewArticle.aspx?articleid=2599187> [accessed 22 November 2009]; Lee Siegel, 'The Imagination of Disaster', *Nation*, 11 April 2005 <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20050411/siegel> [accessed 27 October 2009]; Laura Miller, 'The Salon Interview: Ian McEwan', *Salon.com*, 9 April 2005 <http://www.salon.com/books/int/2005/04/09/mcewan/index.html> [accessed 17 November 2009]; and Jeffrey Brown, 'Conversation: Ian McEwan', *NewsHour*, (13 April 2005) [television interview and transcript] <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/entertainment/jan-june05/mcewan_4-13.html> [accessed 22 November 2009].

into the genre it informs without also raising the spectre of anachronism. In contrast, contemporary novelists compose to (and against) a tradition of novel reading and writing that has become engrained in the Western cultural landscape. For example, Martin Amis has presented his work as corrective of that of his predecessors and peers.[7] Beyond any formal self-consciousness, modern novels are inevitably metafictional inasmuch as they are accessible as novels. An eighteenth-century novel must be fraught with genre issues because it was born without its own tradition; a contemporary novel, conversely, must struggle not to be subsumed by the tradition that bears it. Of course, these apparently opposed stances are in effect two sides of the same coin. The relation of the individual iteration to the genre it references always invests itself with the precarious tension of particularity, of mimesis.

This agonistic relation between text and genre is useful because exploring those sites of resistance at which a text butts against categorical generalities helps to highlight the way the specific instance participates, even if antagonistically, in the general principle. Of course, to treat the novel completely requires an examination of all novels, a Sisyphean task surpassing any methodology. It must suffice, then, to rely on individual texts as makeshift prototypes, vantage points from which to sketch the boundaries of a large and indefinite canon. However, although a description of the novel can be extrapolated from its generic margins in this way, any general principle that might be suggested must endure within, and not just along, those margins. To this end, the later novels of Ian McEwan are promising candidates. McEwan is eminent as a novelist,

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[7] Christopher Bigsby, 'Martin Amis', in *New Writing*, ed. by Malcolm Bradbury and Judy Cooke (London: Minerva, 1992), pp. 169-184 (p. 107); Mira Stout, 'Martin Amis: Down London's Mean Streets', *New York Times*, 4 February 1990,
<http://www3.nytimes.com/books/98/02/01/home/amis-stout.html>
[accessed 06 March 2010] (para. 26 of 39); see previous chapter.

true, but more importantly he is eminently central to the cultural practices of the British novel as it lives today, carrying on but also adapting the tradition, as attested by his combined critical and commercial success. While canonicity is not bestowed upon a literary work with any degree of certainty until long after its first appearance, McEwan's centrality is as near an analogue to canonicity as any writer of his generation could currently claim. If some description of novelistic epistemology is to be hazarded, it should be applicable, and amenable, to McEwan's novels.

This channels the discussion back to *Saturday*. As should have been made clear above, it is first of all a secure representative of McEwan's unanimously acknowledged position as 'novelist'. Simply put, whatever definition one might favour for the novel, it would be difficult to claim *Saturday* is not one. Beyond literary celebrity, *Saturday* offers another convenience: a narrative and thematic emphasis on many of the epistemological issues that underlie the generic form of the novel across its lifetime, as considered throughout the previous chapters. (This should become evident in the material that follows.) Also, *Saturday* is recent enough to provide some closure to the scheme of historical extremities deployed in this study. It is one of McEwan's most recent novels, followed only by the novella *On Chesil Beach* (2007) and the recently released *Solar* (2010), and it has only just begun to elicit a more considered critical response than can be found in its reviews. For all of these reasons, *Saturday* is significant to a consideration of what the novel 'does'.

As the breathless reviewers quoted in the paperback's first pages make clear, *Saturday* is plotted to entertain. McEwan has noted that 'contemporary novelists have a great burden laid upon them, which is what Henry James said the novelist's first duty is: to be interesting'.[8] In

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[8] Laura Miller, para. 46 of 80. McEwan cites the same quotation in Daniel Zalewski, 'The Background Hum: Ian McEwan's Art of Unease', *New*

the case of *Saturday*, McEwan sustains this interest by deploying a classic

suspense-making device: the reader is acutely aware of a threat to the

protagonist, who nevertheless proceeds in apparently blithe ignorance of

the looming danger. As Michael Dirda remarks in a review excerpted in

the front matter, this is indeed a 'Hitchcockian' device.[9] (The famous

director himself makes this kind of discrepancy of awareness the central

feature in his model suspense scenario: a group of people have a chat

about baseball, all the while unaware of a threat that is clearly visible to

the audience -- a bomb ticking beneath their table.)[10] The hapless

innocent of *Saturday* is the affluent London neurosurgeon Henry Perowne,

who is faced with dangers abstract and distant as well as concrete and

personal. Unlike the unwitting victims of Hitchcock's bomb, Perowne is

somewhat cognisant of his peril, though to what degree is not completely

apparent. Part of the task McEwan lays out for both Perowne and the

reader is the evaluation of the various dangers Perowne faces. How

severe might they be? What responses do they demand? The inherent

uncertainty of these threats, along with the potential disparity between the

respective evaluations made by protagonist and reader, cultivates a

suspenseful desire to discover more, if not for Perowne himself then

certainly for the reader.[11]

The desire for disclosure, 'to know what happens next', is a

common enough motivation for the audiences of fictional narrative. In the

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Yorker, 23 February 2009,
<http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2009/02/23/090223fa_fact_zalewski> [accessed 11 February 2010] (para. 8 of 116).
[9] Michael Dirda, 'Shattered', *Washington Post*, 20 March 2005,
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/gog/profile/ian-mcewan,1110462/critic-review.html> [accessed 08 January 2010] (para. 3 of 16).
[10] George Stevens, ed., 'Alfred Hitchcock', in *Conversations with the Great Moviemakers of Hollywood's Golden Age at the American Film Institute* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), pp. 256-277 (p. 259).
[11] Head notes that McEwan's use of the present tense also contributes to the suspense of the novel and draws together the experience of narrator and reader; *Ian McEwan*, pp. 192-193.

case of *Saturday*, though, McEwan's use of suspense foregrounds this desire for knowledge, in the reader and protagonist alike, in a manner that resonates with the novel's thematic makeup. McEwan depicts a type of knowledge, specifically Perowne's ongoing process of coming to know the world, in inextricable interaction with moral responsibility, his way of being in the world.

In the tone-setting opening scene of the novel, Perowne wakes before sunrise to see 'a meteor burning out in the London sky' (p. 13). Continuing to observe, he struggles to establish the scale of what he sees. Perhaps it is actually a comet, 'not hundreds but millions of miles distant'. When 'he revises the scale once again', Perowne determines that what he sees is neither a meteor nor a comet, but rather something much closer and consequently more frightening. A plane is on fire, descending on the Heathrow flight path 'that he himself has taken many times' (p. 14). As Perowne builds an explanation of what he sees and begins to consider its ramifications, the reader follows his questions and false starts, discovering what happens only in fragments. Perowne, true to his scientific proclivities, deduces what he can methodically, with active and reflexive reasoning.

Even after Perowne realizes what he sees, McEwan withholds the word 'plane' for a few more lines, delivering the image obliquely and from inside out, in the form of Perowne's memory of the familiar pre-landing ritual of 'adjusting his seat-back and his watch' and of the subtle anxiety that always attends flight, the knowledge that if something goes wrong, 'there will be no half-measures' (pp. 14, 15). As the plane takes shape in Perowne's consciousness, it is representative of an association the reader will likely already have made, the sinister aura large aircraft have acquired since the terrorist attacks of 11 September. No longer 'innocent', they

seem either 'predatory or doomed' (p. 16).[12] With this prompt, Perowne's

thoughts shuttle between perspectives, first considering the morbid

alienation of 'watching death on a large scale, but seeing no one die', then

back to the position of an individual victim on board, with an empathetic

question posed in the second person: 'To escape the heat of that fire

which part of the plane might you run to?' (p. 16). As it will throughout

the novel, the rational activity of Perowne's mind, his self-critical cognitive

habit of testing hypotheses, leads him to an affective sensitivity.

As his day progresses, Perowne will learn more about the burning

plane in dribs and drabs gleaned from television and radio news. The

truth of the matter is not especially alarming: the aircraft is laden with

mail, not passengers, and the crew handles the fire, caused by a

mechanical failure, competently and safely. But from the moment

Perowne recognizes what he sees, he begins imbuing the fire with personal

and social significance, considering what he sees from multiple scales and

vantages, and evaluating the reliability of his own understanding. McEwan

thus introduces a device that will comprise the greater part of the novel, in

which the events of Perowne's experience trigger self-conscious, free-

associative reflection. Perowne's contemplation of the plane also sets out

the thematic binaries that will underpin the entire narrative -- among

them the impingement of larger public events upon the domestic, personal

sphere and the interplay between the rational and affective capacities of

humanity -- and the always shifting condition of the individual

consciousness as it navigates these opposed but interwoven aspects of

experience.

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[12] McEwan has remarked that *Saturday* 'is written in the shadow' of 9/11;
'the general tone is in part set by this new world situation we find
ourselves in'. See Carlos Caminada, 'Ian McEwan, Finishing New Novel,
Ponders World After Sept. 11', *Bloomberg.com*, (15 July 2004)
<http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=a4L6SJH6
SmN0&refer=europe> [accessed 10 December 2009] (para. 15 of 29).

Standing at his bedroom window, as yet ignorant of the fire's cause or severity, Perowne's thoughts on the plane culminate in a many-layered sense of his own subjectivity. Sliding between various scales of experience as he ponders the burning plane, Perowne explores different avenues of coming to know what is happening. In addition to the two discrete points of view he imagines -- doomed passenger and distant witness -- he considers what action he should take as responsible citizen (calling emergency services), as medical professional (calling the hospital in which he works), and as husband (waking his wife, Rosalind, to reveal the event to her). Perowne's concerns are entrenched in his sense of self; he projects himself into a hypothetical first-hand experience of the fire, then considers ways he ought to react. However, he conscientiously avoids the egocentrism of an overly credulous reliance on his senses. He knows, for example, that part of what he sees could be 'a trick of vision' (p. 16). He imagines the reaction of a witness 'inclined to religious feeling', who might see the fire as a message from a supernatural power, an indulgence he disdains as 'an excess of the subjective, the ordering of the world in line with your needs, an inability to contemplate your own unimportance' (p. 17). His rationality seems to Perowne to allow for a kind of humility -- in the form of deference to chance and randomness -- that would be eroded by grandiose beliefs in a hidden order.

As his frequent re-imaginings of scale demonstrate, Perowne is cautious of being led into fallacy by this 'anthropic principle', yet he is cautious too of the disempowerment that might attend fatalistic disinterestedness (p. 17). He attempts to walk a line between apathy and self-aggrandizement, moderating the detachment of rationalistic objectivity with humanistic empathy. It is an uneasy balance, and one that immediately begins to disclose an ethical dimension:

He feels culpable somehow, but helpless too. These are
contradictory terms, but not quite, and it's the degree of their
overlap, their manner of expressing the same thing from different
angles, which he needs to comprehend. Culpable in his
helplessness. Helplessly culpable. (p. 22)

This is the dilemma of the self-aware subject -- the not-quite-
contradictory state of seeking certainty while settling, always, for
provisionality. It is the troublesome kernel from which springs the
novelistic sense of human understanding, discernible in all three of the
fictions explored thus far. For Perowne, this preoccupation appears most
clearly as the problem of accommodating uncertainty without relinquishing
responsibility, the problem of helpless culpability. It is a problem he
attempts to defer after seeing the fire -- he decides at last simply to close
the shutters and turn his attentions to his household -- but it will
overshadow Perowne's actions for the rest of his Saturday, creating a
sense of sustained unease that resonates beyond its source in the fear of
plane crashes or terrorism.[13]

On 15 September 2001, *The Guardian* published a column by
McEwan in which he considers at the level of the individual the Anglo-
American shock at the terrorist attacks of four days before. The scene he
envisions is very much like Perowne's experience: 'Waking before dawn,
going about our business during the day, we fantasize ourselves into the

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[13] The connection between the burden of uncertainty and violence was of
particular currency in the media that week. Three days earlier, United
States Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, when asked for evidence
connecting Iraq to terrorism or weapons of mass destruction, had implied
that Iraq's 'unknown unknowns' constituted a threat, adding that 'absence
of evidence is not evidence of absence'; see United States Department of
Defense, 'DoD News Briefing -- Secretary Rumsfeld and Gen. Meyers'
[transcript], (12 February 2002)
<http://www.defense.gov/Transcripts/Transcript.aspx?TranscriptID=2636
> [accessed 15 January 2010] (para. 158, 198 of 208).

events. What if it was me?' Envisioning the situation of the victims is a natural human reflex, in McEwan's description. More importantly, such a projection 'is the nature of empathy, to think oneself into the minds of others':

> If the hijackers had been able to imagine themselves into the thoughts and feelings of the passengers, they would have been unable to proceed. It is hard to be cruel once you permit yourself to enter the mind of your victim. Imagining what it is like to be someone other than yourself is at the core of our humanity. It is the essence of compassion, and it is the beginning of morality.[14]

The violence of the hijackers was possible only because they had deadened this natural inclination to hypothesize the reality of other people. Through pathological thinking, predicated in part on a 'fanatical certainty', they had induced a numbing 'failure of the imagination'.[15]

This conception of imaginative empathy, in which a cognitive practice makes possible a moral sense, fits neatly with the sentiments McEwan furnishes for Perowne as he ruminates in his bedroom on the state of the post-9/11 world. Additionally, and as Head has remarked, it shows 'a startling similarity' with the consciousness-based morality elaborated in much greater detail in the philosophical works of another novelist, Iris Murdoch.[16] Murdoch builds her philosophy of morals on a framework of metaphysics rather than evolutionary psychology, but like

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[14] Ian McEwan, 'Only Love and Then Oblivion. Love Was All They Had to Set Against Their Murderers', *Guardian*, 15 September 2001, p. 1.

[15] McEwan, 'Only Love and Then Oblivion', p.1. This is not strictly a post-2001 philosophy. McEwan sets forth a similar notion in interviews from 1994 in the journal *Études Britanniques Contemporaines* and in the *Financial Times*; quoted respectively in Head, *Ian McEwan*, p. 9, and in Bernie C. Byrnes, *Ian McEwan's* Atonement *and* Saturday (Nottingham: Pauper's, 2006), p. 106.

[16] Head, *Ian McEwan*, p. 9.

McEwan she places the cognitive activity of an individual consciousness at its centre.

For Murdoch consciousness, simply by virtue of being aware, already values what is perceived. She provides the example of a mother who, through 'self-criticism' and the application of 'careful and just *attention*', reappraises her attitude toward her daughter-in-law, whom she had previously disliked.[17] The mother's change in perception, her mere noticing, prior to any outward change such noticing might precipitate, is already a moral event. As Maria Antonaccio explains, 'This correlation [between consciousness and value] provides the basis for a moral ontology that includes the reality of others as the paradigmatic locus of value'.[18] In their reliance on reflective self-awareness and concern with epistemic access to a reality beyond the self, McEwan and Murdoch's senses of the moral are inclined toward humility and empathetic interest in the other. Antonaccio indicates this connection in Murdoch:

> The reality of others is for Murdoch the preeminent instance of knowledge of the real, a knowledge that shatters the moral solipsism of the ego and connects the self with the good.[19]

McEwan's published remarks, particularly in his *Guardian* column on the 2001 attacks on New York, show a similar conception of ethical consciousness, though without Murdoch's argument for the ontological reality of goodness.

To return specifically to *Saturday*, Perowne too sees avoiding solipsism, which for him is accomplished by practising conscientious

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[17] Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* (London: Routledge, 1970), p. 17. See also Maria Antonaccio, *Picturing the Human: The Moral Thought of Iris Murdoch* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2000), pp. 86-95.
[18] Antonaccio, p. 95.
[19] Ibid.

rationalism -- that is, by seeking certainty yet accepting only provisionality -- as a means to morality. In effect, Perowne, as self-aware subject, embodies a dialectical tension between the two opposed impulses considered in the first chapter under the labels naive empiricism and extreme scepticism. His world is knowable but never fully known. Acknowledging the incompleteness of his own understanding, Perowne grasps for insight by imagining and attempting to assimilate the experience of others, yet he does so while at the same time doubting any insight he might achieve as potentially fallacious, because it is accessible only though his own situated consciousness. Thus, understanding, in both the epistemic and empathetic sense, involves an ongoing receptivity to that which is not self.[20]

In her essay 'The Sublime and the Good', Murdoch uses Kantian terminology to underscore the way in which what is essentially a stance of self-critical openness to provisionality and incompleteness can foster an attention to the reality of other people, making the individual other into a kind of epistemo-ethical sublime:

> What stuns us into a realisation of our supersensible destiny is not, as Kant imagined, the formlessness of nature, but rather its unutterable particularity; and most particular and individual of all natural things is the mind of man.[21]

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[20] The significance of this 'ongoingness' of understanding will be further considered below.

[21] Iris Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics: Writings on Philosophy and Literature*, ed. by Peter Conradi (London: Chatto & Windus, 1997), p. 215. Unless otherwise specified, references to Murdoch pertain to this collection. In another essay published the same year, 'The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited', Murdoch reiterates the idea of the other as, not the only, but 'the most important form' of the Kantian sublime (p. 282).

An encounter with otherness prompts a humbling revision, a new degree of self-awareness for the subject, and thus it serves to make compassion possible by dissolving solipsistic certainty. Elsewhere she remarks that 'Tolerance is connected with being able to imagine centres of reality which are remote from oneself'.[22] In these terms McEwan and Murdoch appear to agree: imaginative openness is both the result of and the means to compassionate humility in the face of otherness. Unlike Murdoch, Perowne does not single out the mind of an other as the ultimate and unreachable asymptote of knowledge; in fact he has 'faith' that science, itself a method of systematized doubt, holds the promise of finally securing some 'irrefutable truth about consciousness' (p. 255). (Events later in the novel will reveal the extent to which the other-as-sublime still shapes Perowne's experience.) However, though he does not seek out its most potent expression in the manner of Murdoch, Perowne's sense of subjective epistemological uncertainty as he experiences the world is clearly the source and sustenance of his ethical posture.

Herein lies one cause of Perowne's sense of responsibility. The capacity for empathy, rooted as it is in an ongoing way of thinking, is susceptible to the malignancy of other, fallacious, ways of thinking. The result of this vulnerability is that the 'anthropic principle' that the narrator of Saturday classifies as 'a problem of reference' amounts to a kind of seed of evil. From the irrational comfort of certainty, that 'inability to contemplate your own unimportance', can arise a cold and murderous self-centeredness (p. 17). Thus, scepticism is safety; uncertainty becomes a precondition of compassion. Urged by a desire for knowledge, one would seek to imagine the subjective experience of some exterior other only after recognizing a deficiency -- the incompleteness of one's own understanding.

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[22] Murdoch, p. 29.

The humility of self-critical subjectivity, because it is precedent to imaginative empathy, defends against a manner of thinking that, beyond its initial irrationality, is potentially deadly. It follows that the sense of responsibility Perowne feels when he witnesses the burning plane is not only the particular responsibility to react appropriately in an emergency, but also the more general responsibility to maintain a sense of perspective, to remember that his experience of the event is contingent and partial. He must play both sceptic and empiricist. He must remember, in other words, that he is in a certain fashion both culpable and helpless.

The particular Saturday on which Perowne has awakened so early is one in which a troubled sense of responsibility will find a touchstone in public spectacle. It is 15 February 2003, the day of record-breaking public demonstrations in London and around the world in opposition to the military invasion of Iraq. For Perowne, the turmoil of the Middle East is insulated by distance in much the same way as is his vision of the burning plane. It intrigues him enough that he has sought out books on the subject, and it is a source of discussion with his family and colleagues. However, as with the plane, Perowne's acute awareness of the uncertainty of the Iraq invasion (the justification for which, in 2003, was as obscure as its possible consequences) leads him into an ambivalence that precludes a specific response. He is personally acquainted with a victim of Saddam Hussein's depravity, and after 'compulsive reading up on the regime', believes that opposition to the impending war amounts to support of the dictator's crimes (p. 72). Yet he feels he can see the other side of the debate as well. 'The marchers could be right', he admits to himself, and credits his ambivalence to 'a roll of the dice'; it is the result of his having chanced upon the information and experiences that inform his opinion (p. 73).

As a result of this double awareness, Perowne is compelled to disagree with anyone whose opinion of the war seems too confident. When he talks with Jay Strauss, his American and staunchly pro-war anaesthetist, 'a man of untroubled certainties', Perowne 'finds himself tending towards the anti-war camp' (p. 100). Similarly, when he sees Tony Blair on television, the Prime Minister's assurances seem hollow. Blair could be lying, even to himself: he 'might be sincere and wrong' (p. 141). Perowne's uncertainty is thus attributable not to outright distrust, but rather to a nagging cognisance of the deceptive nature of human understanding. McEwan has remarked that Perowne's indecision makes him something of a 'Hamlet figure'; he is defined, and to a great extent confined, by his uncertainty.[23]

Whenever Perowne considers the protestors, his suspicion of certainty is at it most intense. As he argues the topic with his daughter Daisy, the only character in the novel who attends any part of the demonstration, he insists that the protestors are wilfully ignorant about the brutality of the regime they are in effect defending:

> Why else are you all singing and dancing in the park? The genocide and torture, the mass graves, the security apparatus, the criminal totalitarian state -- the iPod generation doesn't want to know. Let nothing come between them and their ecstasy clubbing and cheap flights and reality TV. But it will, if we do nothing. You think you're all lovely and gentle and blameless, but the religious nazis loathe you. What do you think the Bali bombing was about? The clubbers clubbed. Radical Islam hates your freedom. (p. 191)

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[23] Mariella Frostrup, *Open Book*, BBC Radio 4, (30 January 2005) [radio interview] ~6:16
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/arts/openbook/openbook_20050130.shtml> [accessed 22 December 2009]

His contempt is strong enough to lead him into uncharacteristic irrationality, even to the point of parroting the Bush administration's fatuous refrain about freedom-hating Islamists.[24] But, as his outburst implies, it is not the opinions of the marchers that so inflame Perowne; it is their apparent comfort with those opinions. He has earlier declared as much to himself, imbedding a concession to the anti-war stance in a condemnation of the jubilant protest:

> If they think -- and they could be right -- that continued torture
> and summary executions, ethnic cleansing and occasional genocide
> are preferable to an invasion, they should be sombre in their view.
> (pp. 69-70)

However, instead of solemnity Perowne sees heaps of protest tat for sale, 'folded banners and cards of lapel buttons and whistles, football rattles and trumpets, funny hats and rubber masks of politicians' (p. 61). The commercialism, the 'cloying self regard' of the slogans, indicate to Perowne not only an insipid superficiality, but also a smug claim for 'an exclusive hold on moral discernment' (pp. 72, 73). The protestors' manner betrays their uninformed laziness. 'It's likely most of them barely registered the massacres in Kurdish Iraq, or in the Shi'ite south', Perowne grumbles to himself (p. 73). But far more damning than their ignorance is their failed self-criticism. Had they fully explored the reality of their cause, Perowne implies, they might support it still, but their support would be solemn and troubled by doubt. They would find themselves championing not unilateral goodness, nor even a definitely lesser evil, but

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[24] When not challenged by his daughter, Perowne can of course distinguish between the goals of Hussein's regime and those of Al Qaeda; see for example p. 73.

only the grim hope that non-intervention might yield a comparatively smaller harvest of atrocities. They would recognize, with a collective wince to corroborate Perowne's own discomfort, the contingency and partiality of their knowledge.

The immorality of the protest, in Perowne's estimation, becomes visible therefore not in its content, but in its affect. To be so untroubled, so assured, requires a shirking of the responsibility Perowne feels so acutely to be a product of subjective existence itself. Certainty comes only as a consequence of a preference for blindness -- to one's helplessness and culpability alike -- that can engender not just ignorance but also terrible violence. It is this pathological certainty that unites the various objects of Perowne's scorn -- religious zealots, terrorists, anti-war protestors, and dictators. For Perowne, to believe that the world is precisely as one understands it to be is a comfort far too decadent, and ultimately too dangerous, to be moral.

Yet as much as he recoils from the comforts of epistemic illusion, Perowne is not averse to pleasure. Materially, he enjoys all the benefits that come with his position as a highly successful neurosurgeon. His well appointed home in Fitzrovia, his luxury car, his fine wine and food, these are components of Perowne's routine. He is lucky enough, too, to wholeheartedly delight in the work that provides him with such a high standard of living. He is also wealthy by less tangible measures. He is in a marriage of unwavering faithfulness and love with Rosalind, his beautiful wife of comparable professional success. They have two young adult children, each of them talented, charming, and successful in their own ways. All of the family enjoy excellent physical and mental health. In spite of the worrying affairs of his day, Henry Perowne is of such sanguine disposition that he is prone to wax rhapsodic about his razor, gleaming like an 'industrial gem', or the engineering marvel that is his electric kettle,

which in his eyes is so well conceived that it seems to portend utopia: 'The world should take note: not everything is getting worse' (pp. 57, 69).

Deeply suspicious of, even disgusted by, the levity of the anti-war protestors, and yet surrounded by an abundance of his own joys and comforts, Perowne may seem to exhibit a degree of inconsistency. This is the reading of John Banville, who in a famously scathing review of *Saturday* finds the 'cloying self-regard' imputed to the demonstrators to be equally apparent in the cushy middle-class lifestyles of 'Perowne in his cream-upholstered Merc, and fair Rosalind of the shampooed hair'.[25] Though he is far too conflicted to carry a sign through the streets of London, in many other respects Perowne leads an extraordinarily untroubled life. Indeed, it is a life likely far less troubled than the lives of many of the protestors whose apparent consumerism and ideological ease so offends him. Ellis Sharp sees in this disparity evidence of what he calls McEwan's 'sleight of hand':

> Those who take the trouble to travel to central London and march against the war are self-centred consumers. Those who spend that Saturday doing other things like playing squash or shopping or playing their guitars are not self-centred but superior creatures possessed of a more complex inner life.[26]

When Sharp strips away the rationalizing intimacy of the narrator's omniscience, the purpose of Perowne's actions (and the actions of his musically gifted son, Theo) seems more egoistic: creating pleasure for

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[25] John Banville, 'A Day in the Life', *New York Review of Books*, 26 May 2005, pp. 12-14 (p. 12).
[26] Ellis Sharp, 'The Politics of Ian McEwan's "Saturday"', *Barbaric Document* (05 February 2005) <http://barbaricdocument.blogspot.com/2005/02/politics-of-ian-mcewans-saturday_04.html> [accessed 19 December 2009] (para. 46 of 74).

himself. There is no crime in a man trying to enjoy his weekend, of course. However, when that man is contemptuous of those who -- misguided, superficial, and inappropriately festive though they may be -- spend their day engaged with distinctly larger-scale issues, he risks slipping from conscientious uncertainty to facile knowingness. Zoë Heller makes explicit this apparent connection between material comfort and self-centredness, writing that Perowne's 'multitude of blessings, coupled with his confidence in the certainty of scientific progress, gives rise to a contentment that verges perilously on complacency'.[27]

Yet surely anyone, even a rich neurosurgeon living in a domestic paradise, is entitled to an opinion. What is so irksome to these critics about Henry Perowne's ambivalence toward the invasion of Iraq? A comment by Sophie Harrison offers a clue. Of Perowne's family, she quips, 'Hearing about them is like reading one of those Christmas round robins in which you learn that Charlotte got five A*s in her A-levels and is now studying Cantonese in her time off from the orphanage'.[28] Superficially, this criticism may appear to be unfair. Unlike dear Charlotte's overbearingly proud parents, Perowne is not advertising his good fortune for others to admire. However, he shares with the writers of tactless holiday letters a type of satisfaction that blinds him to the self-serving nature of his outlook. This blinding satisfaction is not, in Perowne's case, that of someone who feels immanently deserving of every boon (though a whiff of that sentiment may steal into his thoughts from time to time). Rather, the satisfaction that blinds Perowne is, perhaps counter-intuitively, his satisfaction with dissatisfaction. That is, Perowne is so alert to the dangers of certainty that he has become certain of his

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[27] Zoë Heller, 'One Day in the Life', *New York Times*, 20 March 2005, pp. G1, 10-11 (p. 10).
[28] Sophie Harrison, 'Happy Families', *New Statesman*, 24 January 2005, pp. 48-49 (p. 48).

uncertainty. Though he disdains the contentment of the anti-war marchers, he too is content -- content to be discontented, to withhold judgement, remaining unsettled and therefore assured. As a result, Perowne's comfort becomes a cipher of inauthenticity, to enough of a degree that Dennis Lim, writing in *The Village Voice*, can scoff, 'A stereotypical hand-wringing bourgeois liberal, he luxuriates in a convenient ambivalence that flatters itself as complexity'.[29] Perowne's critical consciousness of his subjectivity, in itself a precondition of humility, becomes the grounds for a distinctly non-humble -- because ultimately self-indulgent -- ambivalence.

Indeed, the form of Perowne's humility is itself an indication of what might be deemed a second self-indulgence in Perowne's comforting worldview. As McEwan first sets out the rationale behind Perowne's attitudes, along with his distrust of over-certainty arises a sense of being subject to chance. This deference to contingency motivates the imaginative projection that, as McEwan attests, 'is the nature of empathy'.[30] Gazing at the burning plane, Perowne considers that he himself could have been on the plane, about to die at the hands of terrorists. But his imagination can only reach so far. Perowne never ventures to consider that, but for the caprice of chance, he also could have been aboard the plane, not as a hapless victim, but as a terrorist about to murder the other passengers.

Two months after the attacks of 11 September, the writer John Berger composed an essay, framing a poem, which imputed suicidal terrorism to a particular depth of despair:

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[29] Dennis Lim, 'The Life of Brain', *Village Voice*, 8 March 2005, <http://www.villagevoice.com/2005-03-08/books/the-life-of-brain/> [accessed 19 December 2009] (para. 6 of 8).
[30] McEwan, 'Only Love and Then Oblivion', p. 1; see above.

> This despair consists of what? The sense that your life and the
>
> lives of those close to you count for nothing. And this is felt on
>
> several different levels so that it becomes total. That is to say, as
>
> in totalitarianism, without appeal.

He continues:

> These are seven levels of despair -- one for each day of the week -
> - which lead, for some of the more courageous, to the revelation
>
> that to offer one's own life in contesting the forces which have
>
> pushed the world to where it is, is the only way of invoking an *all*,
>
> which is larger than that of the despair.[31]

For Berger, to work against the phenomenon of suicidal violence requires
an act of imagination. He concedes that, 'It is hard for the First World to
imagine such despair', but contends that ignoring this imaginative
challenge will end in strategic failure.[32] Ignoring that challenge is just
what Perowne does. Unlike the anti-war movement, the spectre of radical
Islam, though it looms in the background of his thoughts throughout the
novel, is to Perowne a faceless horror into which no empathetic projection
can penetrate. Thus, albeit to a lesser degree than the callous terrorists
envisioned by McEwan, Perowne exhibits a failure of the imagination. As
Bernie C. Byrnes writes, 'he suggests that "they" should empathise with
"us" and stop hurting and frightening "us". Nowhere does he make an
attempt to empathise with "them"'.[33]

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[31] John Berger, 'Seven Levels of Despair', in *Hold Everything Dear:
Dispatches on Survival and Resistance* (London: Verso, 2008) pp. 3-5.
(pp. 4, 5).
[32] Ibid.
[33] Byrnes, p. 112. This applies to Perowne an assertion which Byrnes uses
to characterize McEwan himself. Her claim is legitimate, considering

McEwan writes that Perowne 'takes the conventional view' of violent Islamists:

> The pursuit of utopia ends up licensing every form of excess, all ruthless means of its realisation. If everyone is sure to end up happy for ever, what crime can it be to slaughter a million or two now? (p. 34)

The word 'sure' performs a twofold function here. It plants destructive certainty into the mouth of a hypothetical zealot, and in doing so it also assures Perowne that he is in the right. He has convention on his side, after all, and if the motivation behind fanaticism is such elementary irrationality, then (surely) there is little demand for an empathic projection into the abjection that fosters it.

McEwan reports that Perowne has read 'Fred Halliday's book', (*Two Hours that Shook the World, September 11, 2001: Causes and Consequences*) finding in it the argument that 'the New York attacks precipitated a global crisis that would, if we were lucky, take a hundred years to resolve' (pp. 32-33).[34] The solution Halliday offers to this debacle hinges on 'reasoned argument and an engaged scepticism toward emotive claims in international affairs'.[35] The appeal of such a proposal to Perowne is obvious, but it requires a dose of optimism along with its admirable reason. In the words of Head, Halliday's suggestion is 'premised on a questionable faith in the benign aspects of US influence and the global extension of capitalist democracy', with an expectation that such

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McEwan's many public statements of opinion on the issue, but it is drawn from, and thus perhaps more appropriate to, Perowne and the voice that narrates him.

[34] Halliday makes an almost identical pronouncement; see *Two Hours that Shook the World, September 11, 2001: Causes and Consequences* (London: Saqi Books, 2002), p. 24.

[35] Halliday, p. 27. See also pp. 191-192.

development will unfold according to 'a universal set of values that might transcend the global ideological stand-off'.[36] Even more unfavourable for Perowne's stance than the confident faith required by such a project is its conspicuous flattery: in order for the state of the world to improve, people should become more Perowne-like. What better salve for a nagging sense of helpless culpability than the suggestion that simply being oneself bolsters the cause of liberal humanism? Perowne's assured dismissal of radicalism as a symptom of the irrational 'anthropic principle' is undoubtedly founded on sincere hope for the common good, but, at least to some extent, it conceals at its heart a preference for his own ease.

When dealing with a subject less obscured by popular paranoia, Perowne recognizes the way pragmatism sometimes nudges ethics aside. Visiting a fishmonger, he is unsettled by the writhing crabs and lobsters, imagining that they would be 'howling' in terror if they could. He turns away to look at the fish, but despite 'their unaccusing stare' he is bothered by the ethical implications of his knowledge of neurology. Fish have 'polymodal nociceptor sites just like ours' -- they feel pain. Yet despite his qualms about animal suffering and the state of the 'emptying seas', Perowne has no plans to give up fly-fishing or preparing fish stews for his family. As he selects ingredients for his evening meal, he reflects on the moral manoeuvring this entails:

> The trick, as always, the key to human success and domination, is
> to be selective in your mercies. For all the discerning talk, it's the
> close at hand, the visible that exerts the overpowering force. And
> what you don't see... (p. 127)[37]

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[36] Head, *Ian McEwan*, p. 185.

[37] When Perowne eventually cooks the mussels he has purchased during these reflections, McEwan once again cites this selectivity of

Perowne the rationalist has no rationale, only a 'trick', an empty ellipsis.

Troubled by the dismal spectres of politics and the environment, Theo

remarks to his father that 'the bigger you think, the crappier it looks'. The

way to happiness, Theo concludes, is simple: 'think small' (p. 33-34).

Perowne seems to have taken his son's advice to heart. There are times,

he declares to himself, when wilful ignorance is necessary for

contentment.

In an interview McEwan describes this sort of selective mercy as a

means of containment:

> We can be desperately, genuinely concerned about the misery
>
> created by the tsunami in the middle of the Indian Ocean, then 20
>
> minutes later we're having a nice time drinking a glass of wine with
>
> a friend. These things go in boxes.[38]

In a world where misery can always be found somewhere, some degree of

compartmentalization is an unavoidable part of getting on with life.

Indeed, in a contrary way it is a mark of compassion, for only a cold heart

needs no protection. However, in a text overshadowed by terrorism and

war, Perowne is prepared to acknowledge his defensive blindness only

partially, and only in regarding the trivial (to most) subject of seafood.

McEwan would seem to be inviting criticism of his protagonist's

complacency.

Critical attacks on Perowne's ambivalence in effect charge him with

hypocrisy, because he condemns in others what he permits in himself.

Motivated as he is by a distrust of dangerously fallacious certainty,

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compassionate attention: 'If they're alive and in pain, he isn't to know' (p. 177).
[38] Gerard, para. 22 of 26.

Perowne finds that the safest, most comfortable position is one of abstention. He is a truly compassionate person, and rational too, but he is careful to extend these cognitive tools only within a familiar, practicable scope. In opting for this kind of security, Perowne is making a choice based not on what he believes to be right -- he does not deign to know enough for that -- but rather on what is least troubling, what feels best. From the safety of his uncertainty, Perowne decries the demonstrators' complacency on precisely these terms, supposing that those whose placards declare 'Not in My Name' are merely 'demanding to feel good, or nice' (p. 72). Daisy sees this double standard, accusing Perowne of evasive hedging: 'You're saying let the war go ahead, and in five years if it works out you're for it, and if doesn't, you're not responsible' (p. 188). In shaping his attitude to the impending invasion and its detractors around his own affective ease, he has undermined the rationalism he so frequently celebrates, and he has exposed his own indulgence in the solipsistic certainty he finds so deplorable among peaceful activists and violent radicals alike. David Wiegand reads this double standard as a kind of disconnection, writing that Perowne suffers from 'the delusion that he somehow exists separately from the world'.[39] To his unbecoming gratification, Perowne has backed into the very trap he sought to avoid.

But perhaps some critical compassion is now due. If Perowne is a hypocrite, he is an unwitting one. The inconsistency of his ethical disposition is not calculated deceit, but rather the result of his own subjective, contingent understanding -- the very same condition, it should be remembered, that makes possible his ethical stance in the first place. In this light, a circularity materializes: that which allows for Perowne's

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[39] David Wiegand, 'Nowhere Man: Aloof Surgeon's Detachment Shatters in Ian McEwan's New Novel', *San Francisco Chronicle*, 20 March 2005, <http://articles.sfgate.com/2005-03-20/books/17365980_1_henry-perowne-cat-lifts> [accessed 19 December 2009] (para. 4 of 14).

understanding (whether affective or intellectual) allows also for his *mis*understanding. It is this circle which has ensnared him. From this situation arises the question of responsibility Perowne formulates when he contemplates his helplessness and culpability, those 'contradictory terms, but not quite' of his subjectivity (p. 22). It is not in Perowne's power to see all of his own shortcomings, let alone to remedy them. The degree of Perowne's hypocrisy is proportionate to his complicity in his blindness. Yet the magnitude of Perowne's moral failure must be tempered by a failure of another, related kind -- the flawed and provisional nature of his knowledge.

The conditions of this provisionality are obscure to Perowne, but as the preceding discussion shows, they are not altogether invisible. To the reader, they are clearer still. McEwan uses a free indirect style of narration, so that descriptive passages focusing on minute details of Perowne's surroundings blur into long digressive stretches that seem to verbalize his unarticulated impressions. But Perowne, though he is prone to narrativizing his life, is not the narrator of the novel. McEwan introduces moments of irony, of caricature even, that impose a gap between Perowne and the narrator, and thus also between Perowne and the reader. This separation attests to the limits of Perowne's understanding (though it does not necessarily draw them concretely). The narrator allows the reader to peer into Perowne's mind, but not without insinuating tonal reminders that the reader resides at a critical distance, peering in from without, and that Perowne is a separate, bounded, and limited entity.

One prominent feature of the diction of *Saturday* is McEwan's liberal use of medical jargon. Work is exceedingly important to Perowne, and many pages of the novel are dedicated to relating surgical procedures like the transsphenoidal hypophysectomy that first brings Rosalind into his

life (pp. 43-44). This specialized language emanates from Perowne's side
of the narrative gap -- an accomplished neurosurgeon need not use lay
terms as he thinks to himself. As if to indicate that the professional
terminology is the mark of a peculiar way of understanding the world,
McEwan even has Perowne apply it creatively: when he spots an early-
stage heroin addict in Fitzroy Square, he muses that her drug use 'will
bind her as tightly to her misery as an opiate to its mu receptors' (p. 65).
Perowne's personal life gets the scientific treatment too. Describing his
careful courtship of Rosalind, who was then struggling to cope with the
death of her mother, Perowne recalls that he had to proceed cautiously, 'at
the old-fashioned pace of a slow loris' (p. 47). Matters of love and grief
seldom call for obscure zoological allusions, and this reference to the slow
loris -- a teddy-like primate whose bulging eyes give it a look of perpetual
astonishment -- seems especially inappropriate. However, for someone
like Perowne, steeped in the study of life sciences, the awkward image
seems sweetly earnest. Whereas the narrator's words tend toward a
reserved elegance, these ungainly constructions announce themselves as
entirely Perowne's.

McEwan's free indirect style allows these two voices to intermingle,
so that descriptions of surgery do not read like lab reports. One surgical
scene describes 'the removal of a pilocytic astrocytoma', a type of brain
tumour, with a hint of aesthetic delicacy:

> Finally it lay exposed, the tentorium -- the tent -- a pale delicate
> structure of beauty, like the little whirl of a veiled dancer, where
> the dura is gathered and parted again. (pp. 9, 11)

Of a longer extract that includes this passage, Wiegand remarks that,
'McEwan's writing is sublime and poetic, even if we have to look up some

of the words'.[40] To research *Saturday*, McEwan famously shadowed London neurosurgeon Neil Kitchen for two years, and this cooperation between a man of letters and a man of medicine is reflected in the hybrid register of many passages.[41] The double voice of the narration, deemed 'a kind of Anglo-Latin creole' by Marek Kohn, allows for a double expertise, in which a literary and a medical understanding can collaborate.[42] The separateness of these two voices is not concealed by their complementarity, though, as Perowne's more strained figurations show.

In fact, though he harbours a deep appreciation for music, Perowne is a near philistine when it comes to literature. Both his daughter and his father-in-law, the punningly named John Grammaticus, are successful poets, and yet he has no concept of metre, and even the word 'stanza' has him reaching for a dictionary (pp. 200, 136). This literary ineptitude makes up a thematic constant in the novel, lasting from the opening scene through to the final page. It is consistent enough that Banville suggests 'Perowne's ignorance may be intended as a running gag':

> Are we really to believe that an intelligent and attentive man such as Henry Perowne, no matter how keen his scientific bent, would have passed through the English education system without ever having heard of Matthew Arnold, or that any Englishman over fifty would have no acquaintance with the St. Crispin's Day speech from *Henry V*, if only through Laurence Olivier's ranting of it in the wartime propaganda film of the play?[43]

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[40] Wiegand, para. 9 of 14.
[41] Kitchen is the first of several specialists whom McEwan thanks in his acknowledgements section (p. 282).
[42] Marek Kohn, '*Saturday* by Ian McEwan: Grandeur of the Mind Over Matter', *Independent*, 4 February 2005, p. 28.
[43] Banville, p. 13. The *Henry V* allusion to which Banville refers appears in *Saturday* on p. 125; the Arnold allusions are considered more fully below.

Banville's remarks are made with undisguised contempt; he sees
Perowne's literary ignorance as a failure of craft on McEwan's part, a
jarring inconsistency of tone.[44] Such may be the case, but the joke (and it
is certainly a joke) has another effect as well. Because it is made at
Perowne's expense, it draws together the narrator and the reader,
emphasizing their difference from Perowne and his steadfastly left-brained
sensibilities.

For instance, Perowne's unfamiliarity with Matthew Arnold, so
vexing to Banville, is presented with deliberately comic pacing. After the
climactic scene in which Daisy recites 'Dover Beach', Perowne is under the
illusion that the poem was Daisy's own composition. Hearing
Grammaticus refer to it as the work of 'Arnold', he innocently enquires,
'Arnold who?' (pp. 229-230). The same mechanism that drives the novel's
suspense -- a knowledge differential -- is here used for humorous effect,
an effect not missed by the family poets, who both laugh. But the joke is
not finished; after a beat Perowne mutters, 'You know, I didn't think it was
one of your best' (p. 230). This second punchline is delivered out of the
characters' hearing, available only to the reader, who can laugh at what
has amused Daisy and Grammaticus, but also at what they have missed --
Perowne's naive verdict on the quality of Matthew Arnold's poetry.
McEwan deploys a similar technique in an earlier scene. Upon
encountering 'The Ballad of the Brain on my Shoe', a poem Daisy wrote
after observing his work in the operating room, Perowne is bemused. With
stunning literal-mindedness he protests to himself that 'his daughter was
present for a straightforward MCA aneurysm. No grey or white matter was
lost' (p. 139). McEwan's eminent neurosurgeon here plays the part of the
obtuse, poorly-socialized boffin. The omniscience of the narrator allows

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[44] Banville adds to the passage quoted above the claim that the 'gag' 'is
the only instance of humor in the book, if humor is the word' (p. 13).

for a clear view of the disparity between Perowne's scientific perceptiveness and his literary insensibility.

From out of this epistemic divide, some amount of flattery is aimed at the reader. Here is a man -- a rich, successful, happy man -- whose personal reflections often present vocabulary that, as Kohn notes above, will require most readers to seek out a dictionary. Yet, these same readers, who it can be assumed have at least a passing interest in literature, can console themselves by remembering that Perowne is also a man who must look up words like 'stanza'. Beginning with an epigraph from Saul Bellow's *Herzog*, McEwan provides ample opportunity for readers to take note of their own literary cultivation. At one point, for example, explaining his distaste for magical realism, Perowne relates examples of the sort of fiction that has annoyed him. He alludes to Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and *The Satanic Verses*, along with Günter Grass' *The Tin Drum* and McEwan's own *The Child in Time* (pp. 67-68).[45] He does so without mentioning any names or titles, as if to provide a puzzle for the reader's amusement.

At another point, when the text presents some lines from Daisy's poetry, they are in large part lifted from two published works by Craig Raine (p. 50).[46] Reviewer Mark Lawson comments on this intertextual flourish -- 'It's a matter of debate whether it's the reader or the writer who is being too clever here' -- highlighting, if a bit disapprovingly, the way the text's overt self-referentiality confederates the narrative voice and the

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[45] This is one of several instances in which Perowne's opinions indicate that he might have a more sophisticated grasp of literature than he lets on. Other examples include his praise for William James over Henry James (p. 58), his recall of a scene from Saul Bellow's *The Dean's December* (though he remembers only that it comes from an 'American author', pp. 122-123), his observations on the temporality of poetry reading (p. 129), and his informed recall of squabbles relating to literary awards and the publishing community (p. 130). The Bellow allusion is noted in Zalewski (para. 61 of 116).

[46] McEwan credits Raine in his Appendix (p. 282).

reader.[47] Even the mention of a pub called the Jeremy Bentham can be

read as an invitation to make vague intertextual connections, encouraging

in the reader a self-congratulatory sense of dextrous erudition.[48] If

Perowne's opaque technical jargon imposes an intimidating distance

between reader and protagonist, McEwan uses literary allusion to maintain

that distance while reassuring readers that they need not feel bested by

Perowne in every respect.

Perowne's quasi-philistinism fits into a larger scheme of gently

ironic characterization, which serves to underscore the limitations of his

understanding. Upon seeing a council worker sweeping gutters, he begins

to ponder twentieth-century changes in class-consciousness:

How restful it must once have been, in another age, to be

prosperous and believe that an all-knowing supernatural force had

allotted people to their stations in life. And not see how the belief

served your own prosperity -- a form of anosognosia, a useful

psychiatric term for a lack of awareness of one's own condition. (p.

74)

McEwan situates these lines only a few paragraphs after the passage in

which, with the unintended self-parody discussed above, Perowne berates

the consumerist mentality he detects among the protestors, their 'cloying

self-regard' (p. 72). To heighten the parodic effect, his notion of classist

'anosognosia' occurs to him as he approaches his privately garaged

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[47] Mark Lawson, 'Against the Flow', *Guardian*, 22 January 2005,
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2005/jan/22/bookerprize2005.booker
prize> [accessed 17 November 2009] (para. 12 of 13).
[48] Siegel, for example, considers it significant that the pub bears the name
of 'the famous philosopher of self-interest' (para. 11 of 28). It should be
noted, though, that the Jeremy Bentham is a real London pub, located
exactly as in McEwan's description. Martin Amis mentions the same pub in
Experience (London: Jonathan Cape, 2000), p. 315.

Mercedes S500, recalling fondly the way he learned to enjoy the 'vague satisfaction' of driving it. Again, McEwan tenders a punchline: when Perowne climbs in, the car's stereo greets him with 'sustained, respectful applause' (p. 76). Perowne himself is of course oblivious to the irony, which only serves to reinforce this sly ribbing from the narrator. Only the reader and narrator are in on the joke, sharing something akin to the amused glances that might pass between guests at a dinner party in which the host has become foolish after a bit too much wine.[49] Such amusement may be affectionate, but it necessarily involves a trace of censure as well.

In such an atmosphere even incidental details can take on a satirical timbre. Perowne's sense of vision, for example, can seem to allegorize his epistemological short-sightedness, as when, stepping out of his house, Perowne sees that 'only one half of the square -- his half -- is in full sunlight' or when he notes that the curtains in his windows 'have a way of cleanly eliminating the square and the wintry world beyond it' (pp. 71, 181). It is clear that narrator and reader are observing Perowne from a different plane, an exclusive vantage from which they can see the shortcomings and inconsistencies that remain invisible to him.

Perowne's lapse regarding Arnold is finally pushed to the verge of ridiculousness. Even after 'Henry learns the name of the poet, Matthew Arnold, and that his poem that Daisy recited, "Dover Beach", is in all the anthologies and used to be taught in every school', he continues to suffer his mental block (pp. 231-232). McEwan writes on the last page of the narrative that 'Henry has yet to find out whether this Arnold is famous or obscure' (p. 279). In the midst of an otherwise poignant and meditative

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[49] As also occurs at such dinners, some staid guest insists on behaving as if nothing funny has happened: *The New Statesman*'s Sophie Harrison detects in *Saturday* not even 'the tiniest nod to the possibility of pretension' (p. 49).

dénouement, the narrator cannot resist this parting wink at the reader, one last try for a conspiratorial chuckle.

So how damnable of a hypocrite is Henry Perowne? In *Saturday*, the vast majority of the text mediates the consciousness of the protagonist as refracted through the aestheticizing lens of the narrator. As such, it reproduces not only his sight but also his blindness, the lapses in his conscientious awareness of his own subjectivity. It is in part this blindness that those critics who find Perowne unsympathetic interpret as smug self-satisfaction or alienating privilege. But there are cracks in this façade, critical footholds that grant access to a vantage from which these blind spots become visible and thus open to critique. The largest of these cracks, the gap between Perowne and the narrative voice, supports not only a critical but more specifically a humorous vision of Perowne's limitations, one which, because of its good-naturedness, might be seen to pardon Perowne in a way that a more po-faced reading of his flaws (like those offered by Banville and Sharp) cannot.

Perowne himself feels a sense of compassion attached to this kind of distanced observation. When he first sees pedestrians crossing the square beneath his window, it is as if they are his charges; he 'watches over them, supervising their progress with the remote possessiveness of a god' (p. 12). Observing the young addict mentioned above, he is moved to a compassionate sensibility by seeing just what she does not -- the physiological tics of addiction and poor health, the toxic relationship with her male companion. With a paternalistic impulse, he even considers 'going after her with a prescription' (p. 65). For Perowne, one of the joys of his work is derived from knowing what others are desperate to learn, as happens 'when he comes down from the operating room like a god, an angel with the glad tidings' for a worried family (p. 23). In such moments, his is an epistemologically-centred goodwill. His sense of pathos grows

out of a perceived disparity of knowledge in which he feels his advantage as a sort of divinity. And yet, as has been discussed in earlier chapters, such *imitatio Dei* can be the stuff of tribute or travesty. In his early morning reflections, Perowne touches upon deities and dictators alike, commenting, as he shifts from hoping for sex with Rosalind to pondering the childishness of Saddam Hussein, that 'even despotic kings, even the ancient gods, couldn't always dream the world to their convenience' (p. 38). Then, his desire for his wife fulfilled, he exults in a pleasure that, it seems to him, must be 'the envy of gods and despots' (p. 50). Perowne knows of course that he is neither of these, but he does not know -- indeed he cannot know -- just where he falls in the spectrum between magnanimity and hubris.

The constitution of Perowne's self-awareness, dependent as it is on the provisionality of his understanding, is both his indictment and his defence. In his weekend wanderings, his domestic interactions, his political ruminations, Perowne is able to explore his subjectivity, both in terms of the situatedness of his own understanding as well as his susceptibility to contingency, while enjoying the luxury of inaction. Perowne feels but does not answer the question of culpability. He simply drifts, remaining -- perhaps strategically -- partially blind. The possibility that he wields his blindness inappropriately is announced by McEwan's narrative technique, and those reviewers who condemn Perowne as a self-serving hypocrite depend largely upon that announcement for their readings, even if they believe it to be unintentional.

That is only one possibility, however. Contrarily, one might read the selectivity of Perowne's mercy as the necessary condition of his being merciful at all. Those lapses in his self-criticism might seem forgivable when viewed from the critical distance established by the narrative mode, because they result from his inescapable subjectivity. Like Perowne as he

gazes down upon the dramas of Fitzroy Square, the reader might feel the benevolence of superior vantage, smiling sympathetically on Perowne's shortfalls as the narrator nudges and winks. This is the position assumed by critics like Malachi O'Doherty and Yvonne Zipp, both of whom declare Perowne to be an overall 'decent man', and by Ruth Scurr, who writes of McEwan in *Saturday*, 'Artistically, morally and politically, he excels'.[50] Of course to presume that Perowne must be either good or bad is to set up a false dichotomy. Though Perowne cannot know where he stands in the cline between these extremes, the text turns the question to the reader, for whom Perowne is more transparent than he is to himself. To what extent is he culpable -- or helpless? Having raised the question, the text sets about inviting a judgement; as happens so often in McEwan's oeuvre, the protagonist faces a traumatic turning point.[51] Perowne encounters a threat much more immediate than war or terrorism and thus more demanding. He is put on trial, in a sense, by being forced to take action.

Perowne's trial occurs in two stages, with the first in a public setting. Driving to meet a colleague for a squash match, he is involved in a minor traffic accident with a small-time tough named Baxter. Baxter and his two cronies attempt to extort money from Perowne, and the

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[50] Malachi O'Doherty, 'It Was the Brain that Did It', *Fortnight*, 434 (March 2005), 26.; Yvonne Zipp, 'One Wild Day in a Doctor's Life', *Christian Science Monitor*, 22 March 2005, <http://ezorigin.csmonitor.com/2005/0322/p15s01-bogn.html> [accessed 08 December 2009] (para. 5 of 15); Scurr, (para. 10 of 10).

[51] For examples of the notion that McEwan's plots rely on pivotal crises, see Lawson, (para. 7 of 13); Caminada, (para. 9 of 29); Zalewski, (para. 50 of 116); and Bryan Appleyard, 'The Ghost in My Family', *Sunday Times*, 25 March 2007, <http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/books/article1563161.ece> [accessed 18 December 2009] (para. 3 of 44). Judith H. Dobrzynski mentions a 'bit of somewhat irritating shorthand [used] to describe Mr. McEwan's widely varied writing: the notion that each of his works hinges on a single moment that changes everything'. McEwan similarly dismisses this critical trope: 'All it really says is that in my novels something happens. [...] It's a truism, really. It's true of any novel'; see Dobrzynski, 'He's Not "MacAbre" Any Longer', *Wall Street Journal*, 20 November 2007, p. D8. See also Head, *Ian McEwan*, pp. 11-12.

confrontation briefly becomes violent, but when Perowne's medical expertise allows him to make a humiliating snap diagnosis of Baxter's degenerative neurological disease -- Huntington's chorea -- the ensuing confusion allows Perowne to escape. Perowne reflects on the confrontation sporadically throughout his day, but he seems blissfully unaware of what McEwan subtly telegraphs to the reader: Baxter is tailing Perowne, seeking revenge (pp. 140, 146, 152, 175).

The pursuit unfolds in the generic idiom of the thriller, with the reader's more informed perspective providing suspense. Significantly, this knowledge differential also contributes yet another instance to McEwan's ironic portrayals of Perowne. Hours after the accident, with his chest still sore from Baxter's fist, Perowne catches a glimpse of what appears to be Baxter's BMW in his rear-view mirror. In a parody of a suspense film's look-behind-you moment, Perowne is almost laughably unconcerned, idly musing that 'it's not impossible that it's Baxter, but he feels no particular anxiety about seeing him again. In fact, he wouldn't mind talking to him'. Then, apparently as distractible as he is affable, Perowne immediately forgets what he has seen when 'his attention is caught by a television shop' (p. 140). This scene supplies a clear link between the trauma-as-trial plot and Perowne's epistemological limitation -- a reminder that what McEwan offers to be judged is Perowne's struggle at the intersection of knowledge and responsibility. Depending on the humour of the reader, Perowne's nonchalance could read as either helplessness or culpability -- Perowne as vulnerable innocent or naive fool.

The second stage of the trauma unfolds when Baxter finally attempts his revenge. It happens in the evening, when the Perowne family -- including Daisy and Grammaticus, freshly arrived from their respective haunts in France -- have assembled for dinner. With a toady called Nigel in tow, Baxter bursts into the scene of domestic serenity

brandishing a knife. Perowne's thoughtful reticence, his propensity to choose postponement over decision, is suddenly obsolete. When Baxter breaks Grammaticus's nose, Perowne feels a sense of awakening: 'Until now, Henry suddenly sees, he's been in a fog' (p. 209). His fatalistic awareness of chance, previously a means of self-absolution, no longer works to insulate Perowne from responsibility. He sees Baxter's intrusion into his home as the culmination of a long chain of influences, stretching from the microscopic vanishing point of Baxter's genotype and extending far enough to include, crucially, Perowne's own actions. This latter realization comes in no uncertain terms -- 'Perowne himself is also responsible' (p. 210):

> Why could he not see that it's dangerous to humble a man as emotionally labile as Baxter? To escape a beating and get to his squash game. He used or misused his authority to avoid one crisis, and his actions have steered him into another, far worse. (p. 211)

With the crisis still taking place, Perowne berates himself specifically for failing to see, for attempting in a demanding moment to slink away into his habitual pleasures. Such guiltiness could catalyse a triumph over ambivalence, but it is not yet enough for Perowne.

Though he has begun to see a glimmer of personal responsibility, Perowne understands Baxter only as tangle of contingencies, an automaton of biological determinism gone haywire with the misalignment of a tiny chromosomal cog. As the ordeal continues, however, Baxter's unpredictability will testify to his own agency, his personhood, even as it corresponds perfectly with Perowne's diagnosis. Baxter makes as if to rape Daisy, forcing her to strip in front of her terrorized family. Then, catching sight of the publisher's proof of her first collection of poems,

Baxter inexplicably orders her to 'read out your best poem' (p. 219).

Daisy, in a poet's act of defiance or defence, instead recites 'Dover Beach'

from memory.[52] Intrigued and none the wiser to her act of protective

plagiarism, Baxter demands a second reading, and after the increasingly

confident Daisy complies he is awestruck: 'Baxter says eagerly, "How

could you have thought of that? I mean, you just wrote it." And then he

says it again, several times over. "You wrote it!"' (p. 223). Baxter's initial

curiosity about, and then deep and innate love for, poetry may seem

improbable. Banville certainly believes so, finding in this development 'a

level of bathos that is hard to credit'.[53] However, indelicate though it

might be as an authorial technique, Baxter's literary sensitivity is a key

component of Perowne's trial.

Precisely because of its improbability, it demonstrates Baxter's

agency. Neither Perowne nor the reader could have foreseen Baxter's

sudden literary turn. Indeed, the reader, having been flattered for his or

her literary perception for over two hundred pages, is especially unlikely to

expect this same power of appreciation to become Baxter's claim to

humanity, but so it does. Baxter is up to this point a rather two-

dimensional character, capable of projecting either menace or, because of

his chronic disease and chronically disloyal henchmen, poorly concealed

vulnerability. Yet he has access to a kind of aesthetic experience, a depth

of consciousness, that Perowne cannot fathom. As Siegel writes, 'The

moment created by Arnold's poem [...] proves the elusive existence in

Baxter of an imaginative sympathy that is even stronger than Henry's own

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[52] Arnold's poem resonates with the thematic content of *Saturday*
sufficiently that McEwan includes the full text as an appendix (p. 281).
[53] Banville, p. 14. Baxter's poetic susceptibility might also be behind
Jennifer Reese's complaint that 'the violent confrontation late in the
narrative may be the silliest, most overwrought climax McEwan has ever
cooked up': 'Saturday', *Entertainment Weekly*, 6 April 2005,
<http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,1043917,00.html> [accessed 19
December 2009] (para. 8 of 9).

kindness'.[54] Baxter provides striking evidence that, though seriously

damaged, he is more than mere surface, that he is -- and can see -- more

than is visible even to Perowne's penetrating understanding. He is

determined to some extent by his pathology, but he is not therefore

devoid of personhood.

Baxter's wonder, that mark of his tormented humanity, initiates his

undoing. Made optimistic or at least credulous by a flash of literary

transcendence, he turns his attention back to Perowne, attempting to

extort from him access to experimental treatments for his Huntington's

disease. (This is a fiction Perowne has used to distract Baxter since their

first encounter in the street.) Only moments before, Baxter had dismissed

Perowne's insinuations, declaring, 'It isn't possible. I know it isn't

possible' (p. 216). But having been somehow swayed by the poem, he

falters in his scepticism. He marches Perowne upstairs to his office,

declaring, as much to himself as to Perowne, 'I know they're keeping it

quiet', as if to wish away the hopelessness of his condition (p. 225). Left

alone with the others, henchman Nigel loses his nerve and flees. Theo

and Perowne then manage together to 'fling [Baxter] down the stairs' (p.

227). This sudden, violent act of self-defence could appear wholly

unambivalent -- father and son acting in concert to disable their

antagonist -- yet even in this seemingly resolute act, Perowne's role is

assigned to him, not chosen. He lures Baxter upstairs with no more fully-

formed motive than to draw him away from the others. It is Theo, in fact,

who takes the lead in executing the crucial throw; in the instant that

precedes it, 'He makes an inarticulate shout, which sounds like a

command' (p. 227). Perowne is instructed to act as he does; he simply

follows orders, behaving as circumstance and reflex dictate, drifting on a

current of contingency. And so his trial continues.

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[54] Siegel, para. 27 of 28.

Having helped to crack Baxter's skull, Perowne is later called in to the hospital to mend it. As if to finally make the case that Perowne can take a stand even when not forced to do so by the point of a knife or the command of his son, McEwan depicts him resisting his characteristic ambivalence:

> There are other surgeons Jay can call on, and as a general rule, Perowne avoids operating on people he knows. But this is different. And despite various shifts in his attitude to Baxter, some clarity, even some resolve, is beginning to form. He thinks he knows what it is he wants to do. (p. 233)

What he wants is to save Baxter's life, which he accomplishes in an operating-room set piece, but he also wants something more. After the operation, in yet another moment of decision, Perowne's charity extends even beyond the generous dispensation of his professional skills.

Taking Baxter's pulse after the operation, Perowne lingers for a moment with his hand on Baxter's wrist:

> Far more than a quarter of a minute passes. In effect, he's holding Baxter's hand while he attempts to sift and order his thoughts and decide precisely what should be done. (p. 263)

In the act of taking a pulse, physical contact is necessarily light and superficial. Yet from this minimal point of contact the pulse, 'those soft footfalls', broadcasts the inmost movements of Baxter's vitality (p. 263). The blood pulsing in his wrist also suffuses his fatally flawed brain, the source of a cruelty and a sensitivity that both outstrip Perowne's own understanding. This moment of touch signals an intellectual and moral

confrontation that Perowne has heretofore successfully avoided. Even with the gesture's air of medical authority, and even as he stands conscious, rational, and compassionate over a man who is none of these, Perowne must finally acquiesce to Baxter's incomprehensible core, his sublime otherness. Perowne's intellectual rigour in this case offers him a glimpse of Baxter as a kind of darkness visible. In the final pages of the novel, McEwan comes closest to explaining Perowne's rationale:

> No one can forgive him the use of the knife. But Baxter heard what Henry never has, and probably never will, despite all Daisy's attempts to educate him. Some nineteenth-century poet […] touched off in Baxter a yearning he could barely begin to define. That hunger is his claim on life, on a mental existence, and because it won't last much longer, because the door of his consciousness is beginning to close, he shouldn't pursue his claim from a cell, waiting for the absurdity of his trial to begin. (pp. 278-279)

For Perowne, Baxter is 'an unpickable knot of affliction', a vanishing point at which individual knowledge and understanding give way to the sublime unknowability of subjective personhood (p. 272). Faced with this humbling blind spot, Perowne relinquishes Baxter's fate to the contingency of disease; he decides not to press criminal charges.

In doing so he enacts yet another of his principled abstentions, but in this case he enjoys none of the insulating distance he felt when witnessing an airborne accident or considering the tribulations of terrorism and war. Baxter's violence has impinged directly into Perowne's home, his personal sphere, imperilling his entire family, and so Perowne has demonstrated that he can wield his rationalistic compassion even in close

quarters. Moreover, because Perowne's pardon of Baxter constitutes a surrender to contingency, it is a declaration of humility. It is an admission of ignorance -- of not knowing Baxter, of not knowing what he deserves, and ultimately of not knowing the extent to which Perowne's choices led to Baxter's crime:

> Is this forgiveness? Probably not, he doesn't know, and he's not the one to be granting it anyway. Or is he the one seeking forgiveness? He's responsible, after all; twenty hours ago he drove across a road officially closed to traffic, and set in train a sequence of events. (p. 278)

Perowne does not decide to protect Baxter from prosecution because he is certain such a course is right; rather, he does so because, not knowing what is right, he refuses to dictate a corrective. Perowne tells himself that this refusal is not 'weakness' but 'realism' (p. 278). In fact, since it is active rather than passive -- Perowne plans out how best to suggest his decision to Rosalind and how he might use his professional connections to ensure Baxter's comfort -- Perowne's decision is less a refusal than a recusal. This is his moment of decisiveness, such as it is. He directly and actively acknowledges his own limitation.

Because Perowne's previous moments of ambivalence allow him a rather comfortable inertia of conscience, it seems to some reviewers mentioned above that he cultivates his assumed ignorance as a protective self-pardon. Yet in the case of violent, pathetic Baxter, when the easiest course of action, the one expected by the police, by his family, and surely by society in general, would be prosecution, Perowne nevertheless perseveres in his uncertainty. Because it is the more consistent, his conscientious reticence might be said to supersede his complacency.

Thus, Perowne's encounter with the inscrutable otherness of Baxter, with the reality of his difference, allows Perowne to make a gesture of compassion that to some extent defends against the charges of hypocrisy arising from his previous indecisiveness.

The effectiveness of this defence, however, is indeterminate. Perowne himself considers that allowing Baxter to live out his impending 'descent into nightmare hallucination' in a hospital could be a kind of revenge. His comments on forgiveness in the passage quoted above suggest that his apparent compassion might be more of his characteristic self-protection -- a way to avoid the guilt of 'whipping a man on his way to hell' (p. 278). Perowne's motives are obscure even to himself, and yet if his trial is to come to a close, they must be hypothesized. Perowne's uncertainty calls for an intervening act of jurisprudence from an external agent, that is, from the reader.

If the reader is to make this judgement, if Perowne's trial is not to be after all a mistrial, then there is an obstacle to be overcome: namely, the incompleteness of the reader's own understanding. Andrew Bennett writes that 'it is no doubt a truism [...] to say that we are, by definition, or that we should be, ignorant as we begin a poem or story'.[55] McEwan's use of suspense is the most prominent testament to the importance of readerly ignorance in *Saturday*, but it is not the only one. One reads to discover what happens next, but also to get to know diverse literary elements like characters, setting, and style. The activity of reading begins with, in Bennett's terms, a 'search for enlightenment'.[56] Ultimately, one reads because one wants to encounter in a text something that is not already present in one's own mind. Why else read? To undertake the task

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[55] Andrew Bennett, *Ignorance: Literature and Agnoiology* (Manchester: Manchester University, 2009), p. 35.
[56] Bennett, p. 36.

of reading is thus, at some level, a confession of nescience, a confession that, in the case of *Saturday*, precedes any judgement.

In constructing his protagonist, McEwan opens Perowne's mind to the reader, but he does not make visible the motives and values of Perowne's decisions. These remain as obscure to the reader as they are to Perowne himself. Furthermore, the nature of Perowne's capacity to notice the limitations of his own understanding, a faculty which Murdoch proposes is the prime mover of moral action, is never quite brought to light. He may be helpless to see more than he does; he may be wilfully, culpably blind. What this finally means for the possibility of determining Perowne's standing as a moral being, and what is likely already clear enough from the diversity of opinion among those critics who have been tempted into passing judgements, is that certainty is out of reach. The text encourages many inferences, but all conclusions are finally underdetermined.

This obscurity makes for a paradoxical union: in spite of their marked separation, Perowne and the reader are in fact in a similar predicament. Confronted with a complex and incomplete data set, they are incited to decisive action by circumstance. For Perowne, this state of affairs schematizes several events of his experience well before the climactic home invasion, among them the sight of the burning plane, the various issues of terrorism and war, his perpetual self-analysis -- even the disconcerting realities of seafood. Likewise, the reader is confronted with a text which creates the same sort of problem it depicts, providing provisional support for mutually exclusive interpretations, then posing, in the form of the plotted trial, an open interrogative: which will it be then?

Indeed, following Perowne's example, one might shift perceptual scales and imagine the scene from a different vantage. From another degree of distance the conceit of the trauma-as-test is itself only the

product of certain (rather unsubtle) interpretive choices among a vast and indeterminate multiplicity of options. Consequently, the reader, focusing on some aspects of the text at the expense of others, choosing this or that reading because it is somehow more rewarding, re-enacts a behaviour that, when performed by Perowne, might be labelled hypocrisy (or pragmatism, one hastens to add). Both Perowne and the reader, in their respective contexts, must be selectively attentive, and therefore also sporadically blind, in order to navigate through what they would understand. They are thus helpless, incapable of attaining certainty, since there always remains more to be considered, other hypothetical perspectives from which to scan the details. Yet also they are culpable, because what they perceive and understand, though perhaps delivered to them on a current of contingency, has finally been admitted to their understanding through their selective agency.

This is not to insist that no readerly judgement is possible; a cursory glance at some newspaper reviews has already pre-empted such a contention. Rather, it is to claim that a universal condition of all the many readings made available by the text is that they are uncertain. They are quite literally inconclusive; no single interpretation can be set forth without revealing what Paul de Man has termed a 'residue of indetermination'.[57] Any reading of Perowne must admit, if perhaps covertly, the possibility of rebuttal, revision, and complication. Navigating the aporetic text, seeking a position from which to pass judgement on Perowne, the reader must sift out from the textual evidence only those elements that support a preferred conclusion. The reader must practise selective attention. Hypocritically or for the sake of pragmatism, outliers and exceptions cannot be given equal weight; they must be relegated to

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[57] Paul de Man, 'The Resistance to Theory', in *The Resistance to Theory*, ed. by Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1986), pp. 3-20 (p. 15).

an interpretive blind spot. One must mimic Perowne in order to condemn or exonerate him.

The hermeneutic unfinalizability of the text makes it into an analogue of the 'unutterable particularity' Murdoch locates in the mind of the other.[58] Rather than the radical otherness of another human being, in Perowne the reader encounters a created image of this otherness, enhanced by and embedded within the interpretive otherness of literary textuality. The likeness to sublime human alterity that a created artefact might bear does not go unnoticed by Murdoch. Art offers, for Murdoch, the possibility of 'the apprehension of something else, something particular, as existing outside us', an aesthetic experience with a moral import.[59] Of the best art she writes that 'in its genesis and its enjoyment it is a thing totally opposed to selfish obsession'.[60] Murdoch explains that among other arts, literature is particularly well equipped to create a kind of attentive openness. She cites first of all tragedy but also the novel as forms which bring about 'compassion, love: the non-violent apprehension of difference'.[61]

Writing at a time when Bakhtin's work was virtually inaccessible to scholars in the West, Murdoch formulates her conception of 'great novels' in terms of their representation of heterogeneous particularities:

> There is in these novels a plurality of real persons more or less naturalistically presented in a large social scene, and representing mutually independent centres of significance which are those of real individuals.

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[58] Murdoch, p. 215.
[59] Murdoch, p. 216.
[60] Murdoch, p. 370.
[61] Murdoch, p. 218.

This kind of conscientious realism amounts to 'a display of tolerance':

> A great novelist is essentially tolerant, that is, displays a real
> apprehension of persons other than the author as having a right to
> exist and to have a separate mode of being which is important and
> interesting to themselves.[62]

Murdoch finds this quality to be at its most prominent in novels of the
nineteenth century, typified in her opinion by Tolstoy. She is careful,
however, to detach this 'greatness' of the novel from any particular socio-
historical determinant while at the same time preserving its generic
affiliation. It is, she writes, 'a value which I think belongs, or has
belonged since at least the eighteenth century, to prose literature as
such'.[63] Bennett, like Murdoch, finds ethically-loaded images of a
'multiplicity of subjectivities' in the novel, a feature that 'seems to present
us with a way of coming to know the *otherness* of others, of knowing
others *as* others, of knowing anyway the otherness of people in books'.[64]
The value Murdoch, and to a lesser extent Bennett, seeks to illuminate,
then, is not a formal feature per se, but rather the moral consequence of
an epistemological stance, one which is drawn from attentiveness to the
real via multiplicity and subjectivity. It is a consequence, in other words,
of novelistic understanding.

However, such a conception of the morality of the novel harbours a
discernible tension between its components. Murdoch describes the
capacity to apprehend sublime otherness as inhering in 'prose literature as

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[62] Murdoch, p. 271.
[63] Murdoch, p. 272.
[64] Bennett, p. 102. It is noteworthy that Bennett, again like Murdoch,
locates the epitome of this novelistic capacity in nineteenth-century fiction
-- in Bennett's case 'the Victorian "classic realist" novel and its subsequent
traditions' -- but then expands this claim to include the genre more
generally (pp. 102-103).

such', yet she also singles it out as the elusive attainment of only a handful of 'great' novelists. This presumably leaves a sizeable assortment of also-rans, novels which bear the potential for moral vision in their generic makeup and yet fall short of Murdoch's novelistic ideal. The most successful works -- those that reveal in its profoundest sense the truth 'that other people exist' and so successfully realize 'a vast and varied reality outside ourselves' in their treatment of human subjectivity -- may nevertheless fall short of their potential through no fault of their own. Murdoch explains:

> It is the spectacle of this manifold, if we can actually apprehend it, which is not easy, which brings the exhilaration and the power and reminds us, to use Kant's words, of our supersensible destiny.[65]

Access to the sublime subject comes only on the condition of Murdoch's 'if'. In order to fully exert its moral force, the work of art must manage not only to body forth this subjectivity in its own content, but also to weather the capricious subjectivity of the actual living person who perceives the work from without.

In applying this vulnerability to the case of the novel, a responsibility can be seen to fall on the shoulders of the reader, who must choose to seek out a certain difficult type of knowledge, must remain continually open to otherness. Considering the demands it makes of whomever it touches -- the individuals it portrays as well as the individuals who create and consume those portrayals -- the moral apparatus of the novel would seem to be quite fragile, perhaps something of a fiction in its own right. What bearing could this evanescent value of the epitomized novel have on real, flawed, individual novels?

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[65] Murdoch, p. 282.

The question can be approached with a consideration of the notion of Perowne's helpless culpability and the correspondence, noted above, between Perowne and the reader. In grasping for a more whole understanding of his world, Perowne uses his imaginative power as a means of stepping outside the limitations of his own situatedness. However, because the power of selfless projection always emanates from the foundation of the very subjectivity it seeks to exceed, this grasping after understanding also enables, and perhaps even self-servingly validates, Perowne's blindness and self-deception. Of course some degree of pragmatism is indispensable, since no matter how extensive his compassionate vision might be, final, absolute understanding is beyond his capability. For any and all individuals, the gesture of reaching outward toward certainty cannot be completed. The responsibility Perowne feels is essentially the obligation to continue an incompletable task, and the morality he exemplifies exists, to the extent that it does exist, by virtue of its 'making do', its ongoingness and provisionality.

In his final confrontation with the helpless Baxter, Perowne gets his most humbling glimpse of the futility of striving for certainty combined with a demonstration of the importance of that striving -- and its inevitable shortfall -- for his humanity. As Murdoch writes, 'To understand other people is a task which does not come to an end'.[66] For Perowne, Baxter, as sublime individual, stands as a sort of object lesson in epistemological and moral subjectivity. Perowne does not know, and so cannot choose, what is right. Rather, he opts for what seems, provisionally, subjectively, to be the best available choice. This is the paradoxical core of his well-intentioned hypocrisy: just as it is his consciousness of the limitations of individual subjectivity that allows for the moderation of those limitations, it is also his self-aware falling short of

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[66] Murdoch, p. 283.

ideal morality that constitutes his living, practicable morality, for better or worse.

As various reviewers of *Saturday* demonstrate, evaluating this pragmatic selectivity calls for a counterpart subjectivity to that of Perowne. Any reading of a literary text, including those presented in this chapter, takes place against a background of other possibilities. This interpretive plurality makes possible a sense of the personhood of characters, a sense substantial enough that Murdoch can speak of them as 'real individuals' when, it need hardly be mentioned, empirically speaking they are not. The image of subjectivity comes about by means of hermeneutic indeterminacy, creating in an ideal character, or more broadly in an ideal text, an aesthetic/interpretive asymptote, that is, an artefact that cannot be exhaustively and finally comprehended.

The clearest connecting route between novelistic representation and an ethical stance, as described by Murdoch (along with the connection implied between subjective understanding and ethics by McEwan in *Saturday*) makes as its focus the alterity of other thinking human beings. As Bennett writes, 'The novel [...] is based on the possibility (and therefore on the problem, the difficulty) of knowing others'.[67] Because of the duplicity of mimesis, a fictional human being can function in much the same way. Dorothy J. Hale considers related arguments for the ethical import of literary representations of subjectivity.[68] She proposes that character is the locus of the ethical implications of novelistic representation:

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[67] Bennett, p. 102.
[68] Hale examines the work of Martha Nussbaum, also considering several poststructuralist theorists whom she calls 'new ethicists': 'J. Hillis Miller, Gayatri Spivak, Judith Butler, Derek Attridge, Geoffrey Galt Harpham, and Michael André Bernstein'. See Dorothy J. Hale, 'Aesthetics and the New Ethics: Theorizing the Novel in the Twenty-First Century', *PMLA*, 124.3 (May 2009), 896-905 (pp. 902, 899).

The representation of character in the novel is never free of the threat of instrumentality, either from the subjective source of narration or from an objectification posed by literary design. Fictional characters are proposed as 'human' precisely by the perceived limitation from both sources that novelistic form places on their autonomy. Fictional characters can be felt to be no different from real human beings to the degree that their functional positionality seems like a restriction of their subjective potentiality.[69]

Thus, again, the shortfall that inheres in mimetic representation becomes the means to its representational efficacy. A novelistic character, necessarily constrained by the nature of literary representation, will function because of this constraint as an avatar of subjective otherness (and so for Murdoch's purposes is 'real' enough). The reader's role, though it unfolds on a different scale or plane, is schematically analogous to Perowne's: the subjective individual grasps for certainty and falls short.

De Man examines a literary fall, Keats's *The Fall of Hyperion*, and finds that the 'undecidability' of the text, even that of just its title, instigates a readerly fall as well:

Faced with the ineluctable necessity to come to a decision, no grammatical or logical analysis can help us out. Just as Keats had to break off his narrative, the reader has to break off his understanding at the very moment when he is most directly engaged and summoned by the text.[70]

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[69] Hale, p. 903.
[70] De Man, pp. 16-17.

If reading is to take place, that decision must in some fashion still be made, though without full and final understanding. In other words, the reader makes do, interpreting the text provisionally, producing a reading that is partial in two senses -- it is incomplete and it is an expression of preference. The reader is helpless to avoid this responsibility, but the burden is also an opportunity. For if, as Murdoch proposes, the morality of the novel predicates itself on the sublime potential of represented reality, then some amount of interpretive failure or shortfall is in fact crucial to its function. Indeed, Bennett presents this hermeneutic inexhaustibility or 'opacity' as constitutive of 'what we learn, or what we can learn, from books'. He proposes that 'epistemophilia' -- the readerly desire for 'enlightenment' mentioned above -- is 'shadowed by its other, by what we might call anepistemophilia or even by epistemophobia, by the desire not to know -- or by the desire to know, to take cognisance of, nescience'.[71]

If a work of art is to make some gesture toward the supersensible, then a final, futile unreachableness must inhere in the experience of that work. When Perowne finally confronts the ultimate unknowableness of the other in the form of Baxter, it urges him to an act of compassionate recusal, a humble recognition of his own epistemic limitation. His selectivity of attention and his blindness are all he can draw upon, and so he makes of them what he can, choosing the provisional best. A novel reader, experiencing characters and their world through active, imaginative projection, can never project so totally as to arrive at final, certain understanding, and it is in this humbling shortfall that the moral potential of the novel rests. The selectivity of attention that self-aware subjectivity requires is thus not only an obstacle to moral vision, but also

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[71] To support this claim, Bennett specifically cites de Man's 'The Resistance to Theory', along with T. S. Eliot and Maurice Blanchot (p. 36).

its foundation. Murdoch describes the incompleteness of the work of art in terms broad enough to include even the most fully realized novel:

> Because of the muddle of human life and the ambiguity and playfulness of aesthetic form, art can at best only explain partly, only reveal almost: and of course any complex work contains impurities and accidents which we choose to ignore.[72]

One should not forget that art is made by men and women as fallible as those who behold it. It is this 'mortal nature' of the work, of its ongoing life, that allows it to function as powerfully as it does.[73] Indeed, it phrases an equal and complementary truth to reconfigure Murdoch's statement: art *is at its best* when it only explains partly, for without some incompleteness, some gap into which a reader might fall, there would be very little enduring value (and few values) to the work.

If, as occurs with Perowne, the reader's effort toward understanding results at times in delusion or indulgence, such is inevitably the nature of situated, human, moral life. As Murdoch observes, neither partialness nor partiality are antithetical to moral growth:

> Schopenhauer, who thought moral change was almost impossible, said that virtue usually consisted of pride, timidity, desire for advancement, fear of censure and fear of the gods. Yet, so mixed up are we, pride, fear of disgrace, and intelligent (one might even say well-intentioned) hypocrisy, can lead to genuine change.[74]

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[72] Murdoch, p. 460.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Iris Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1992), p. 332.

The reader must approach a text humbly in order to make sense of it, seeking certainty while settling for provisionality. Precisely because of this recourse to expediency, there is a moral consequence to the novel. To assume this epistemological stance amounts to a declaration of subjectivity, of being one among many, of disclaiming the egotism of both solipsism and authoritarianism. A novelistic way of knowing, even if it is confined to the act of reading that engenders it, even if it is only provisional or even hypocritical, requires a deferential posture.

Afterword

In a thesis in which the notion of inconclusiveness is so pivotal, the absence of a conclusion is perhaps forgivable. In lieu of attempting closure, I would like to suggest what might be the possible next step for the arc I have traced up to this point. I have claimed that a special type of scepticism, the condition of epistemological provisionality, is integral to the novel, bound up in the mimetic figurations that make it recognizable even as it remains formally variable and dynamic. I have attempted to indicate the possibility of an ethical consequence to this provisionality, namely a posture of self-aware deference to alterity that results from the recognition of the incompleteness of one's understanding. I believe this posture can be found to have a political consequence as well.

For the most part, I have drawn the ethical implications of novelistic understanding from the novel's representation of otherness in human subjectivity, though I have attempted to indicate that the novelistic epistemological stance is rooted more deeply in the genre than in the figuration of character alone. The novelistic text itself, because of the heteroglot, dialogical nature of the genre, because of the nature of mimesis as a *pharmakon*, and because of the variability of literary reading, presents an epistemological horizon to the reader, and with the same consequences as those which arise from the representation of sublime human subjectivity. The inevitable falling short of representation from its object, the necessary limitations of understanding that are the condition of situatedness within multiplicity -- these challenges to positivism and to certainty would persist even in a hypothetical novel without characters, narrated by a chorus of disembodied shades. The novelistic way of knowing derives from the conspicuous insufficiency of novelistic

representation. It must gesture outside of itself, toward alterity, because it is never quite enough. Thus it is ongoing, refusing finality or ossification. Thus also it is tinged with the ironic; because its last word has never yet been uttered, all that it speaks is spoken in the shadow of a potential amendment or reversal. The most serious, straightforward novel is an imitation of seriousness. It cannot lay claim to a final truth or prohibit contrary readings because even the gravest mask is still a mask -- perhaps it covers the face of a trickster. This is why the novel can say so much. What the novel says, it says provisionally, precariously, with a caveat, with an asterisk.

But this statement too must be made without certainty. Something like the provisionality that I have so far characterized as novelistic can be traced beyond the confines of the genre it marks, into the larger realm of the literary, and beyond that to the aesthetic in general. Derek Attridge's notion of literary singularity allows for a model of artistic production and reception in which the individual work arises out of but exceeds its originating cultural contexts, so that it becomes a point, or rather a process, of engagement with alterity, 'a peculiar nexus within the culture that is perceived as resisting or exceeding all pre-existing general determinations'. Singularity is 'always open to contamination, grafting, accidents, reinterpretation, and recontextualization', and it is 'eminently imitable'.[1]

Because it involves a confrontation with otherness, singularity points to an epistemological horizon. It preserves within itself a reference to what lies beyond it; it harbours a kernel of the unknown. Attridge writes that 'attempts to do justice to a work's singularity' require 'showing that even the fullest explanation does not exhaust the work's

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[1] Derek Attridge, *The Singularity of Literature* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 63.

inventiveness, that this type of reading necessarily fails'.[2] Both the production and the reception, therefore, of the singular work require 'attention to and affirmation of otherness', a responsive attitude that has an ethical correspondence: 'treating literature as literature means being hospitable and generous'.[3] The irruption of alterity enacted by the apprehension of singularity also has political repercussions:

> The other exposes a reality or truth of which the culture and its subjects were unaware, and unaware for reasons that are far from arbitrary. This uncovered reality may be pleasant; it may equally be unpalatable or even dangerous. Its occlusion is likely to be in the interests of those in power, and, as the history of censorship shows, it may be politically unacceptable to state authorities. [...] Yet the revelation of the hidden costs of a culture's stability, the bringing to fruitfulness of seeds that had lain dormant, the opening-up of possibilities that had remained closed, is -- however risky -- a good in itself, particularly when the process is a continuous one, allowing no permanent settling of norms and habits, and therefore no single structure of dominance and exclusion.[4]

The openness to the other that Attridge describes, which entails the ethical and political effects mentioned above, is founded on humility. It involves a self-aware admission of epistemic limitation, an acknowledgement of unknowing, and it is ongoing, unfinalizable.

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[2] Attridge, *The Singularity of Literature,* p. 82.

[3] Attridge, *The Singularity of Literature,* p. 126. Attridge clarifies this correspondence: 'There is no necessary correlation between being a good reader [...] and being a good person'; however, 'some of the same values are at work in both spheres' (p. 130).

[4] Attridge, *The Singularity of Literature,* p. 137.

The singularity of literature rehearses an epistemological stance that Lorenzo Infantino calls 'gnoseological fallibilism'. Simply put, this is the recognition that all is not known. Applied politically, though, this sceptical truism 'destroys the myth of the "great legislator"', because 'since rulers are ignorant and fallible as are all men, they should have limited power'. Human institutions fall into the range of this scepticism as well, for if 'no one knows how to solve all the problems of social life, society cannot have a prescribed order'.[5] Order becomes an open-ended process of provisional improvements. When the recognition of fallibilism is stifled, 'truth is no longer the temporary and always partial result of a continual confrontation between "conjectures and refutations", but the uncontestable verdict of a privileged source of knowledge'.[6] Because it emphasizes the shortfall between *ad hoc* structures of order and their Platonic ideals, the receptivity of the responsible reader, when translated into the political sphere, opposes a unilateral, hierarchical 'right'. The literary is inherently democratic because it denies the finality of any claim upon the 'last word'. It problematizes human access to totality, and in doing so it undermines the totalitarian illusion of access to the absolute.

If a case is to be made for the political ramifications of the novel as a genre, it could be made in these terms. Read against the consideration of the novel that has guided my discussion up to this point, Attridge's claims about aesthetic singularity and its political significance indicate that novelistic provisionality is one species of an epistemo-ethical potentiality that pervades all literary discourse, even 'all creative shapings of

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[5] Lorenzo Infantino, *Ignorance and Liberty* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 5. For a discussion of Infantino's relevance to the centrality of ignorance in literature, see Andrew Bennett, *Ignorance: Literature and Agnoiology* (Manchester: Manchester University, 2009), pp. 233-237.

[6] Infantino, p. 129. Infantino's argument, in which he seeks to challenge the authoritarianism of Plato, draws upon the work of Friedrich von Hayek.

language'.[7] The generic mark of the novel is thus not provisionality itself as an abstract ideal, but the novel's particular means of both articulating and instantiating that provisionality, which it does by staging problems of mimesis and subjectivity. These problems are typified by, but not restricted to, representations of the other as human individual. They are in fact the substance of the novel's identity -- arising from its self-referential, sceptical modes of representation independently of the content of any particular novel -- and so they allow the novel to reiterate the threat that any literary artefact poses to totalitarianism in an especially deeply-entrenched formulation. The very genesis of the genre was energized by an anti-hierarchical appropriation of high and low, a relativization of literary standards, and so, like the dubiously reformed Roderick Random, the novel has shown that even the conventions that perpetuate it and grant it salience are mutable and impermanent. As Marthe Robert writes, 'A novel's conservatism may be expressed in its political bias or its ideology, but its democracy resides in the very movement that enables it to exist'.[8] The novel is generically anti-totalitarian.

I do not wish to impute a utopian magic to the novel, or to claim that the cultures that have developed and perpetuated novelistic fiction are privy to a special wisdom. There are without doubt elements of the genre that tend to monologism and absolutism. (In a bit of trivia that

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[7] Attridge, *The Singularity of Literature,* p. 130. Like Bakhtin's dialogism, Attridge's conception of the disruptiveness of literariness can function as a defining condition of a literary work or as a latent capacity in language itself: 'Language that is recognizably deviant, lexically, syntactically, or stylistically, does not simply register a degree of distance from a norm for artistic effect but raises questions about the stability of *any possible norm*'; see Derek Attridge, *Peculiar Language: Literature as Difference from the Renaissance to James Joyce*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 184.

[8] Marthe Robert, 'From *Origins of the Novel*', in *Theory of the Novel: A Historical Approach*, ed. by Michael McKeon (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, 2000), pp. 57-69 (p. 69).

Henry Perowne would surely relish, even Saddam Hussein fancied himself a novelist.)[9] Nevertheless, the various viewpoints amassed in this thesis attest -- provisionally -- to the novel's anti-totalitarian inclination, the articulation of which is available only as an ongoing project of discovery, requiring openness to provisionality. As such, the novel and its theorizations provide a set of tools that can offer insight into literary aesthetics, but also, by their very existence, can present a challenge to structures of hegemony and domination. This is a challenge that deserves the sustenance of critical attention.

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[9] [anon.], 'Saddam's New Book: "Begone, Accursed One!"', *The Middle East Media Research Institute* (30 May 2003) <http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/0/871.htm> [accessed 29 August 2010]

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