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THE POSTMODERN STRUCTURE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation seeks to present a reductive definition of the concept of literary modernism. As such, I identify the metaphor of the postmodern structure of consciousness, as the best tool by which to both identify and understand postmodernism in its literary expression. This is done through an analysis of epistemological and ontological questions, considered specifically in the genre fiction categories of detective fiction and science fiction respectively. Those genres were specifically chosen as they best exemplify texts which have epistemological and ontological dominants, and through an analysis of the genres themselves, and their inherent structures, I argue that one can see how the postmodern structure of consciousness comes to serve as the best means by which to understand our contemporary society. Through the structural nature of this understanding that I see this as reflective of a postmodern understanding of society, I argue that postmodernism allows for the change sought after within society as currently constructed, and this project identifies the structural means by which such change can come about.

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What is Postmodernism?

We are already beyond postmodernism, it's dead, dead and gone, don't you know.

Raymond Federman, *Aunt Rachel's Fur*

We are at the end of postmodernism. So it has been argued for the past twenty years (at least), since a conference held in Stuttgart in 1991 with the title *The End of Postmodernism: New Directions*. Recently, Stephen Burn published a book on a contemporary writer, *Jonathan Franzen at the End of Postmodernism* (2008)[1] which argues that certain works around the end of the twentieth century contains aspects that moved, in some sense, beyond that of postmodernism. Others have argued that postmodernism has 'died'[2] or has been passed over (or superseded). Neil Brooks and Josh Toth edited a volume which presides over its wake, *The Mourning After: Attending the Wake of Postmodernism*. Even Brian McHale, one of literary postmodernism's prime theorists, wrote an article in 2007 entitled 'What was Postmodernism?', the title of which was taken directly from John Frow's article of the same name from 1997. However, it seems, there has been no definitive definition of what postmodernism is (or was). Yet, in order to assert that we are at end of pomo, it seems we need to know what precisely we are at the end of (and how we would determine that this is, or was, the end). It is time to go back and look for a definition.

The need for this definition is also found in (postmodern) literature itself. In decrying the death of postmodernism, or the end of the period, many of these works are looking for the 'next thing'. McHale, tellingly, quotes Raymond Federman's novel *Aunt Rachel's Fur*, which has a character who asks that very question:

> It was sad to see postmodernism disappear before we could explain it, I kind of liked postmodernism, I was happy in the postmodern condition, as happy if not happier than in the previous condition, I don't remember what that was called but I was glad to get out of it, and now here we are again faced with a dilemma, what shall we call

[1] Lise Mortensen was recently awarded a PhD on a thesis entitled *Towards a Revival of Representation: Ekphrasis in the Contemporary Novel at the end of Postmodernism*, which argues for a post-postmodern reading of David Foster Wallace and Richard Powers.

[2] Alan Kirby's article "The Death of Postmodernism and Beyond" in *Philosophy Now* 58 (Dec 2012) is just one the latest of many examples.

> this new thing towards which we are going, this new thing I haven't seen yet, did you see it Gaston, what can we call it, postpostmodernism seems a bit too clumsy, and popomomo not serious enough (Federman 245).

One of the things that Federman presents here is the idea that postmodernism was never fully explained, and yet at the same time there is a need to move beyond, to look 'post-' postmodernism to another era, which has been (as was postmodernism) called many things but which seems to be concentrating (sadly enough) on the term of postpostmodernism.[3]

The idea of using the prefix post-, for a second time, not only makes the phrase seem ridiculous, but also brings up many of the same problems that arose with the original use of the term postmodernism (Federman was a proponent of surfiction, for example, which did not catch on). Jean-François Lyotard elucidated a number of the problems with the idea of post-[4], explaining that it carries in a number of its iterations, firstly, a chronological connotation, "the sense of a simple succession, a diachronic sequence of periods in which each one is clearly identifiable" (Lyotard, "Note" 76)[5], as well as, secondly, an implication of the end (e.g. of history, or the 'modern project') and, finally, the sense of the Greek term ana-, meaning back or against (a reaction against modernism, in which we have reached a point 'beyond' or 'above' from which we can gain insight upon looking back, representing a break, spatially, between modernism and its successor). The multiple interpretations of the prefix leave the concept ambiguous and this compounded issues that were not consistent with iterations of postmodern theory, exacerbating concepts like periodization and direct parallels with the modernist project, while simultaneously adding a taint of decadence. Scholars of the

[3] The terms 'new sincerity' and 'post-ironic' are also found. See Adam Kelly in 'David Foster Wallace and the New Sincerity in American Fiction' (based on a sentiment identified in Wallace's 'E pluribus unum') and Tore Rye Andersen's ''Ned med oprøret!: David Foster Wallace og den postironiske'.

[4] To be clear, Lyotard is, in this article, presenting a series of standard understandings of postmodernism of which he is critical. I am reiterating his summary because I both find them accurate articulations of those viewpoints, with which we both disagree (though sometimes for different reasons), and well summarized.

[5] While Lyotard himself does not view postmodern in the 'sense of simple succession' he does, in this 'Note' retain the idea of postmodernism having moved beyond, so while he eschews 'rupture' he critically speaks of that term as a 'way of forgetting or repressing the past, that is, repeating it and not surpassing it' (76). The idea of surpassing 'modernity' is also progressive and modern (which Lyotard rightly points out elsewhere in the article) and I will return to this notion in my discussion of transcendence and Ihab Hassan later in the chapter.

postmodern have had to grapple with all three of these, as well as many other definitions, in attempting to understand the mode. Frow's text is telling in this regard as it asserts the temporal aspect of postmodernism, claiming that "the paradoxical result of this is that, since this 'post-' must be a real *alternative* to modernism, it must be based upon a different temporality: not that of novation but that of stasis. It must be the end of history" (Frow 141, original emphasis). For Frow, as in the explanation by Lyotard, one aspect of the term 'post-' relates specifically to the chronological sequence, which underscores the oft cited need for dates of the beginning and the end of postmodernism (McHale puts the start in 1966 ('year zero') and notes that Federman posits Dec. 22, 1989 as the time of death, coinciding with the passing of Samuel Beckett (McHale, 'What' 3, 1)).Yet, the very ambiguity of meaning surrounding the idea of post- carries over to the rest of the concept of postmodernism. This term has been evoked countless times, and with seemingly as many different underlying definitions in mind. In the Arts section of the *New York Times*, in 1997, Richard Rorty evoked post-modernism as an idea which was losing altitude.[6]

> It's one of these terms that has been used so much that nobody has the foggiest idea what it means. It means one thing in philosophy, another thing in architecture and nothing in literature. It would be nice to get rid of it. It isn't exactly an idea; it's a word that pretends to stand for an idea. Or maybe the idea that one ought to get rid of is that there is any need to get beyond modernity (Rorty).

Rorty argues that the term has, essentially, no meaning (especially as a literary concept), and only *seems* to stand for something substantial. Terry Eagleton, similarly, in *The Illusions of Postmodernism*, argues that "postmodernism is such a portmanteau phenomenon that anything you assert of one piece of it is almost bound to be untrue of another" (Eagleton viii). Thus, neither of these scholars (who represent examples of both proponents and critics of postmodernism) would agree that postmodernism has been convincingly defined, and they are among the many scholars who contend that it resists definition.

[6] Interestingly, modernism was also listed as one of these concepts, by Witold Rybczynski, professor of urbanism at the University of Pennsylvania, demonstrating perhaps that modernism itself is not dead yet.

Burn, in his book on Jonathan Franzen attempts to define the 'new thing', post-postmodernism, and in so doing, in his opening chapter 'Mapping the Territory,' lays out the end of postmodernism based on author reactions, changing focuses in contemporary literature, and chronology (in the 1990s) and then posits a tentative definition of post-postmodernism which both elaborates on the uncertainty of the new definition and is based on the definition of postmodernism in the first place, which he presents as already considered uncertain. "Obviously the haphazard and conflicting deployment of the term already suggests that it will be no more precise than its predecessor, postmodernism. It's hard to feel good about the explanatory value of a term whose usage collapses the differences between such different writers and context" (Burn 18). In positing his definition, he resorts to a similar structure to that of Ihab Hassan, in his widely published article 'Toward a Concept of Postmodernism.' Hassan's article consists of a list of tentative definitions posited at the beginning (or at least in the middle of) the postmodern period and first published in 1982, which is relatively late if accepting McHale and Federman's dates. Yet, Hassan discusses the definition of postmodernism as too early to finalize as he is writing in 'its relative youth, indeed brash adolescence' (Hassan 87). As such, it is an interesting selection of a model to follow, as Burn describes postmodernism as both having a fixed set of characteristics and a nearly similarly fixed contradictory status, thus reifying the uncertainty and caveats of Hassan's attempt at a definition of postmodernism, even while posing his own tentative definition of post-postmodernism.

So, while it is perhaps too early to definitively define the new thing, post-postmodernism, I argue that it is now that we both have the perspective and need to define postmodernism. This dissertation proposes to do just that, providing a reductive definition for postmodernism, and drawing specifically on examples of literary postmodernism to elucidate

the definition, one which can then be extrapolated to other fields as a model for how the postmodern consciousness is organized. So, what is literary postmodernism, after all?[7]

> Clearly, then, the time has come to theorize the term, if not define it, before it fades from awkward neologism to derelict cliché without ever attaining to the dignity of a cultural concept.
> (Hassan, *Pluralism in Postmodern Perspective*, Critical Inquiry 12.3, 503-520)

Literary Postmodernism

Postmodernism is a popular term, but has proven a difficult concept to decisively define. McHale, in *Postmodernist Fiction*, attempts to address this concern by applying the conceptual tool of the 'dominant,' the focusing component of a work. He claims that postmodernism can be understood in opposition to modernism, because the dominant of such fiction changes from epistemological to ontological (McHale, *Postmodernist* 9-10). In contrast to the encyclopedic exhaustiveness of his first approach, in a later work, *Constructing Postmodernism*, McHale "proposes multiple, overlapping and intersecting inventories and multiple corpora; not *a* construction of postmodernism, but a plurality of constructions" (McHale, *Constructing* 3), while at the same time continuing and expanding the first work, presenting the dominant shift as one of the means of constructing postmodernism. Similarly, Ihab Hassan proposes to define postmodernism through reference to modernism, either by using lists of characteristics, or through the use of a neologism, "indetermanence," which is a construct of the "two central, constitutive tendencies in postmodernism" (Hassan 92), namely indeterminacy and immanence. He defines indeterminacy as a "complex referent that these diverse concepts help to delineate: ambiguity, discontinuity, heterodoxy, pluralism, randomness, revolt, perversion, deformation" (Hassan 92). Immanence is "a term that [Hassan] employ[s] without religious

[7] I have chosen to limit myself to literary postmodernism, as I believe that project alone is already a vast enterprise, and that the term postmodernism, as noted, has been used in widely different ways not only within fields, like literature, but in interdisciplinary methodologies as well.

echo to designate the capacity of mind to generalize itself in symbols, intervene more and more into nature, act upon itself through its own abstractions and so become, increasingly, im-mediately, its own environment" (Hassan 93). The compound of these concepts, extended by his delineation of the characteristics of each tendency, forms his understanding of postmodernism. Finally, Lyotard also conceives the distinction between the modern and the postmodern as primarily an epistemological one. The modern is defined as "any science that legitimates itself with reference to a metadiscourse of this kind making an explicit appeal to some grand narrative" (Lyotard, *Postmodern* xxiii), whereas the postmodern is simply defined as the "incredulity towards metanarratives" (Lyotard, *Postmodern* xxiv). While each of these theories is satisfying to a degree, they all present some facet of a seemingly larger understanding of postmodernism. Further still, while each of them has valid points, the various theories presented do not cohere, and in fact, are in some ways contradictory. Through the use of the metaphor of the rhizomatic labyrinth, I provide a model by which postmodernism can be more fully understood.

Postmodernism represents a different 'structure of consciousness' (to use William Spanos's term), the structure of which can be defined as a structureless structure and is best epitomized by the metaphor of the rhizome. I call this *the* postmodern metaphor, as I contend that elucidating the characteristics of the rhizomatic labyrinth, and viewing postmodern literature with this in mind, incorporates other attempts at definitions or explanations of this phenomenon. The rhizome as concept was coined by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in 1976 in *Rhizome: Introduction* and then presented again as the introductory chapter to the second volume of their *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* project, *A Thousand Plateaus*. The concept, further elucidated by Umberto Eco in *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, will be shown to encompass those concepts of the postmodern mode postulated by Ihab Hassan and Jean-François Lyotard, as well as theories proposed by Jean Baudrillard, Roland

Barthes, Patricia Waugh and Linda Hutcheon. Furthermore, the use of techniques like intertextuality, metafiction, pastiche, playfulness and the mixing of genres, can likewise be understood and explicated in a new way with reference to this structural paradigm.

McHale, first in *Postmodernist Fiction* and later in *Constructing Postmodernism* offers, as I do, a reductive definition, rather than a list of techniques, characteristics or the use of a single technique or methodology as a synecdoche for the broad aspects of the mode. While I greatly admire the idea of a reductive definition, and propose one myself, I believe there is a flaw in McHale's definition. Namely, he suggests that it is the dominant of a fiction, reflected in the type of questions suggested (epistemological rather than ontological) which is determinate. I contend that it is not the questions – posed by the generic nature of the literature in question – but the response (or lack thereof) to those questions, and the structure which explains how questions and potential answers are understood. Thus postmodernism, in operating with a postmodern structure of consciousness, (re)presents the uncertainty when faced with both epistemological and ontological questions (and a host of other philosophical questions) and thus conforms to a different structure of consciousness, one in which answers to those questions are not simply left unanswered but are ruled out. There is, simply, absolute uncertainty to those philosophical questions in postmodernism, as we have no vantage point in the rhizome from which to answer such questions with any objectivity.

Essentially I am arguing that both epistemological and ontological dominants are present in postmodern fiction, which I argue entails the failure of McHale's definition. Thus, I offer an alternative definition, which I contend provides a tool for understanding the postmodern condition, and literary postmodernism specifically. The postmodern structure of consciousness has numerous characteristics and traits, but a fundamental one, vis-à-vis McHale's definition is that modernism operates on the assumption of answers and postmodernism operates without a search for answers. Both uncertainty (epistemological

lack) and indeterminacy (ontological lack) are traits of postmodern fiction, and can be understood in terms of the postmodern structure of consciousness. This moves beyond Lyotard's definition in *The Postmodern Condition* in that it addresses concerns beyond the epistemological. It also both incorporates aspects of Hassan's definition (indeterminacy) and is able to explain how immanence operates, but provides a fundamental means of explaining why both of those traits are characteristic of postmodernism. In addition, by using the rhizome as a structure of consciousness, I elucidate the characteristics associated with postmodernism and postmodern theory (e.g. metafiction, intertextuality), and provide an underlying justification of not only why those aspects are so prevalent, but addressing the way in which they are utilized and presented differently than in other fiction (e.g. modernist). The call for a 'mapping' of postmodernism, or a spatial metaphor, is outlined below.

> Today, however, it may be space more than time that hides consequences from us,
> the 'making of geography' more than the 'making of history'
> that provides the most revealing tactical and theoretical world.
> (Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 1)

The Call for a Spatial Metaphor

One of the major turns with the advent of postmodernism is the reconsideration of how knowledge is understood, which has led to a call to change this understanding. Edward Soja, in *Postmodern Geographies*, makes this turn explicit. He argues that "the discipline imprinted in a sequentially unfolding narrative predisposes the reader to think historically, making it difficult to see the text as a map, a geography of simultaneous relations and meanings that are tied together by a spatial rather than a temporal logic" (Soja 1). Soja's understanding of the historical trend towards positivistic, logical, understandings of conceptual frameworks is not new, and harkens back centuries, to the development of modern philosophy and the modern era generally (with its ever shifting chronological boundaries – consider the notion of the Early Modern in English Literature and Culture, as well as Renaissance literature in Italy,

which dates back to the 1300s). Soja suggests that we need to understand the text, and specifically the philosophical text, not linearly – the structure of a novel, for example – but as a map, spatially. Yet, this map that he proposes is also not as representational as those maps of traditional geography, but represent "a geography of simultaneous relations and meanings that are tied together" (Soja 1). Soja is not alone in this search for a spatial metaphor, so we will now explore the various calls, from Jameson, Eco, Deleuze and Baudrillard, and present why they too argue that a spatial metaphor is most appropriate, and how they have attempted to map the space of postmodernity.

Postmodern Space, or the Cognitive Mapping of Late Capitalism

In *Postmodernism: or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Fredric Jameson outlines the historical stages of capital, rooted in Marxist theory. Each phase, market capitalism, monopoly capitalism (or the 'stage of imperialism') and the postmodern stage of late capitalism, is afforded a spatial metaphor, as he notes "that the three historical stages of capital have each generated a type of space unique to it" (Jameson 409). The classical phase of market capitalism is reflected with the grid, "a space of infinite equivalence and extension" and "geometrical and Cartesian homogeneity" (Jameson 410). In this space, the individual has a direct relationship to his surroundings, a one to one correspondence with things on a level with which the individual can have a straightforward connection. Essentially, he argues that the lived experience of the individual (the authentic) corresponds to the larger structural system (the truth) in market capitalism. However, in the next phase, monopoly capitalism, the individual is displaced from an understanding of his own labor, and thus his experience is disconnected from truth. As Jameson explains, "there comes into being, then, a situation in which we can say that if individual experience is authentic, then it cannot be true; and that if a scientific or cognitive model of the same content is true, then it escapes individual

experience" (411). This disenfranchisement of the individual gives rise, for Jameson, to literary movements like modernism(s), in "an attempt to square this circle and to invent new and elaborate formal strategies for overcoming this dilemma" (411). The disconnect between authenticity and truth is not brought about by a failure of the model of representation, but by the distance provided between the individual and the possibility of a more global knowledge. "The truth of that limited daily experience of London lies, rather, in India or Jamaica or Hong Kong … those structural coordinates are no longer accessible to immediate lived experience and are often not even conceptualizable for most people" (Jameson 411). Essentially, in the spatial model of modernism, here less a grid than a global network of connections, the individual does not have access to the entire picture at once (at least not for 'most people'), but knowledge is fundamentally available.

Throughout the text, Jameson proposes the idea of cognitive mapping as a means to understand the structural model of the stage of late capitalism. This model is meant to allow an understanding and analysis of the concept of representation as it has changed from the relatively simple classical market structure, through the modernist stage of imperialism, and into the postmodern era, "on a higher and much more complex level" (Jameson 51). This type of mapping is not meant to be "mimetic in the older sense" (51), but is meant to "enable a situational representation on the part of the individual subject to that vaster and properly unrepresentable totality which is the ensemble of society's structures as a whole" (51). Jameson intends the project of cognitive mapping to represent the structure that he finds in postmodernism in cultural studies, and hopes through its application to provide a structural metaphor for the global complexity of postmodernism. The problem with this formulation is that it attempts to use a recognizable mimetic structure (the map) to present the structure of a "new space [which] involves the suppression of distance (in the sense of Benjamin's aura) and the relentless saturation of any remaining voids and empty places" (412) as well as a

space which is “simultaneously homogenous and fragmented” (413). Clearly Jameson wants to map out the territory of the space of late capitalism and believes that it is mappable. However the project of cognitive mapping seems to have been doomed from the beginning, by its very metaphorical origins.

> In contrast, what I have called cognitive mapping may be identified as a more modernist strategy, which retains an impossible concept of totality whose representational failure seemed for the moment as useful and productive as its (inconceivable) success. The problem with this particular slogan clearly lay in its own (representational) accessibility. Since everyone knows what a map is, it would have been necessary to add that cognitive mapping cannot (at least in our time) involve anything so easy as a map; indeed, once you knew what ‘cognitive mapping’ was driving at, you were to dismiss all figures of maps and mapping from your mind and try to imagine something else (409).

This attempt, which I describe as late modernist, reflects an attempt to use modernist tools to describe the postmodern world. This attempt is flawed, as the tools in use do not adequately reflect new understandings of reality in the postmodern era. It is an attempt which allows for a limited understanding of the territory while both fundamentally misunderstanding some of its characteristics and misreading its potential to do more than serve functions, which Jameson laments the absence of, acknowledging the loss of any form of mimetic representation and understanding. At the end of his foundational text in postmodern theory, Jameson essentially calls for the mapping of the space; the space he feels still lacks a structural metaphor by which it can be more sufficiently understood.

> I take such spatial peculiarities of postmodernism as symptoms and expressions of a new and historically original dilemma, one that involves our insertion as individual subjects into a multidimensional set of radically discontinuous realities, whose frames range from the still surviving spaces of bourgeois private life all the way to the unimaginable decentering of global capital itself. Not even Einsteinian relativity, or the multiple subjective worlds of the older modernists, is capable of giving any kind of adequate figuration to this process, which in lived experience makes itself felt by the so-called death of the subject, or, more exactly, the fragmented and schizophrenic decentering and dispersion of this last (413).

While the older modernists do not have a means of 'giving adequate figuration,' I argue that there are spatial models elsewhere in postmodern theory that provide the type of structural metaphor for postmodernism that Jameson is calling for.

> The order that our mind imagines is like a net,
> or like a ladder, built to attain something.
> But afterward you must throw the ladder away,
> because you discover that,
> even if it was useful, it was meaningless.
> (Eco, *The Name of the Rose*, 599-600)

The Name of the Map: The Skein, The Maze, and The Net

In *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, while elucidating his concept of encyclopedia competence, Umberto Eco identifies three distinct types of labyrinth, which correspond to the spaces of Jameson's stages of capital. Each of these labyrinths represents, for Eco, a spatial metaphor for a type of knowledge (or for the semiotician, a system of signs). These three metaphors are rich and nuanced, in that they provide insight based not only in their original application, but also through their associated characteristics. Furthermore, these metaphors can be applied across a vast number of fields, from cultural studies (as we have seen with Jameson), to linguistics, in philosophy and throughout the arts and humanities.

The first labyrinth represents a classical phase, and Eco earlier associates this concept with the dictionary. This labyrinth, "the first, the classical one, was linear" (Eco, *Semiotics* 80). In this type of labyrinth, modeled on the Cretan maze of the Minotaur, there is only one entrance, one path, and one goal. "Structurally speaking … it is a skein, and, as one unwinds a skein, one obtains a continuous line" (80). Thus, despite any potential turns or twists, it presents a system by which there is, and remains, a fundamental one-to-one relationship between the signified and signifier, as well as absolute possibility of complete knowledge on a relatively local level. This type of labyrinth is associated with classical forms of writing, either prior to the modern era traditionally or in certain genres in their classical formulation.

The second type is the mannerist labyrinth, in which there are multiple paths and choices, which potentially could prevent one from reaching the goal or center of the labyrinth. This allows for a system whereby one could get lost, and reflects the larger, global scale that Jameson described in his own second phase. Eco identifies it with the term *maze*: "A maze displays choices between alternative paths, and some of the paths are dead ends. In a maze, one can make mistakes … Some alternatives end at a point where one is obliged to return backwards, whereas others generate new branches, and only one among them leads to the way out" (81). There are differences between the latter and the former, classical labyrinth, namely the possibility of choice, and the potential for error in judgment. However, both of these types assume a single goal, and subsequently a single 'correct' path by which to arrive at this goal. This presupposes a definition of truth as an essential and unwavering concept that is independent of factors pertaining to the participants in the labyrinthine structure, whether or not such participants have knowledge of this structure or access to the truth.

Eco associates the final type of labyrinth with the term *net*. The net identifies a structure that unlike the classical and mannerist labyrinths, contain neither a single identifiable goal, nor, consequently, a single correct path by which to arrive at any particular point. "The main feature of a net is that every point can be connected with every other point, and, where the connections are not yet designed, they are, however, conceivable and designable. A net is an unlimited territory" (81). This conception of the labyrinth is closely associated with the rhizome, a vegetable metaphor utilized by Deleuze and Guattari to describe their vision of the means by which books should be written and knowledge can be understood (Deleuze 10). This third type of labyrinth, which I call the rhizomatic labyrinth, is the type with which postmodernism has an affinity.

Eco summarizes the characteristics of his rhizomatic labyrinth, based on a description by Deleuze and Guattari.[8] First, "the rhizome has its own outside with which it makes another rhizome; therefore, a rhizomatic whole has neither outside nor inside" (Eco, *Semiotics* 81). Here Eco is trying to explain Deleuze and Guattari's two levels of the use of a rhizome, the first of which corresponds to a two-dimensional 'plane of consistency', which has its own rhizomatic logic. The second level, which Eco calls a 'rhizomatic whole,' reflects the combination of various planes of consistency via lines of flight, which transforms otherwise disconnected rhizomes into an infinitely interconnected rhizomatic whole. It is this latter which I call the rhizomatic labyrinth and which I identify as the structural basis of the postmodern structure of consciousness.[9] This structure would then be infinite, and as such cannot be comprehended in its entirety. It would require a perspective from outside the rhizomatic whole to accurately portray all of its particularities, but its three-dimensional nature does not allow for the panopticon point-of-view possible in the cases of the classical and mannerist labyrinths. In these first two structures, the conceptual figure of a tower[10] would be sufficient to allow either the character or the reader access to an outside view of the labyrinthine structure. In a rhizome, however, this panoptic view would not be possible.

Subsequently, a global description of the rhizomatic labyrinth, as afforded by an outside perspective, is impossible. This leads to the second characteristic: "a structure that cannot be described *globally* can only be described as a potential sum of *local* descriptions" (Eco, *Semiotics* 81). Using this approach, and within the postmodern structural framework, it would not be possible to describe the entirety of the structure, only the piece with which any given subject were familiar. The whole of the rhizomatic labyrinth could be alluded to, and, perhaps using induction, described as a product of similarities, what Eco calls elsewhere

[8] For lack of space, I only discuss those characteristics which are most pertinent to this discussion. Eco's summary is very clear, and my use of the rhizome assumes his descriptions of its attributes.
[9] This discussion of Deleuze's points will be taken up, and applied, later in the chapter.
[10] The metaphor of the tower is taken from John Barth as utilized in James Robert Klein's Dissertation *The Tower and the Maze: A Study of the Novels of John Barth*.

'structural homologies' (*Opera Aperta* 48), with the characteristics of the section known. Yet the infinite nature of the rhizomatic labyrinth also calls into question the very nature of a global description, as finding the 'end' or limit by which one could describe an entirety is also ruled out. Given the uncertainty of such a hypothesis, the rhizomatic structure would seem to also require a disavowal of the type of truth statements that seem possible in a classical or mannerist labyrinth, for which the right path or a correct goal is possible. As such, the rhizomatic labyrinth, if applied to knowledge structures or socio-historical descriptions, would then render doubtful any blanket truth statement or assumption made upon either the path undertaken or the result, or aim, of such actions. Actions could, at best, have local or specific consequences and any larger impact, if possible, would remain either speculation or completely unknown.

This third, epistemological characteristic of the rhizomatic labyrinth also becomes apparent in Lyotard's analysis of the postmodern condition. Lyotard questions the very basis of knowledge systems, claiming that they themselves fail to obtain the perspective necessary to create the legitimation required by a knowledge claim. He asserts that the best that can be understood is a variety of "narrative language elements" (*Postmodern* xxiv) that at best are combined to give local descriptions. His argument gives rise to an "incredulity towards metanarratives" (xxiv) as those 'local narratives' become self-reinforcing absent a legitimating perspective. While he suggests critics of postmodernism would assert that such local descriptions could be combined to map the rhizomatic whole from within, Lyotard argues that these descriptions are incommensurable, unable to be combined in this fashion. Lyotard's analysis suggests that the 'little narratives' themselves function within a rhizomatic labyrinth, from which no man has the perspective to see the whole. In this system, such a questioning of truth, such incredulity, is a consequence of this structure, and it is precisely the postmodern structure of consciousness which accounts for Lyotard's knowledge structure.

We will return to Lyotard later, and consider the impact of the rhizomatic labyrinth as a metaphor for the postmodern structure of consciousness on his understanding of the postmodern condition.

Lyotard, however, does not call into question all narratives, or even all knowledge. The rhizomatic labyrinth still allows for local knowledge, without the benefit of an overarching metanarrative. Eco uses the rhizomatic labyrinth as a model for "an encyclopedia as a regulative semiotic hypothesis" (*Semiotics* 82) and suggests that this is the best model for understanding knowledge in a "universe of semiosis, that is, the universe of human culture" (83). Essentially, his encyclopedia could be understood as a series of weblinks, constantly changing and evolving, with no discernable pattern or controller. In presenting postmodern knowledge, in this fashion, he provides us with a model by which one could understand the functions of postmodern knowledge, and the structure of that knowledge follows the pattern of the rhizomatic labyrinth, and thus, using my terminology, Eco's encyclopedia operates under a postmodern structure of consciousness. The consequences of such a structure are often described, especially by its critics, as falling into the trap of relativism, in which knowledge becomes so individualized as to be unable to be shared. Eco elaborates though, that "such a notion of encyclopedia does not deny the existence of structured knowledge; it only suggests that such a knowledge cannot be recognized and organized as a global system; it provides only 'local' and transitory systems of knowledge, which can be contradicted" (*Semiotics* 84). It is essentially not local knowledge that is precluded in Eco's postmodern model, but rather the organization and systemization of knowledge.

> An intersection, at right angles, shows another entirely similar street: the same roadway without traffic, the same high, grey houses, the same closed windows, the same deserted pavements. At the corner of the pavement a street lamp is alight, although it is broad daylight. But the daylight is without brightness, making everything look flat and dull. Instead of the spectacular perspectives which these rows of houses ought to display, there is only a meaningless criss-crossing of lines, and the snow that falls continuously, removing all depth from the landscape as if this blurred view were a badly painted *trompe l'œil* on a flat wall. (Robbe-Grillet, *In the Labyrinth*, 11-12).

Rhizome – The Postmodern Metaphor

Deleuze and Guattari, in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, present a similar idea, limited not only to epistemological questions (as Eco presents with the idea of the encyclopedia), but also to all questions of "the organism, signifiance, and subjectification" (159). Their description of the model elaborates some of the points that Eco addresses more clearly, but also extrapolates the use of the idea of the rhizome to other fields. They operate with the concept of the book, a metaphor that both resembles and complements the encyclopedia metaphor used by Eco. The encyclopedia discusses the structure of knowledge on a grander scale, where Deleuze uses the book to refer more specifically to an individual, or an individual concept. Here too is the tripartite division of classical, modernist and postmodernist in play, as it was with both Jameson and Eco. Deleuze posits first the root book, a classical book which "imitates the world, as art imitates nature: by procedures specific to it that accomplish what nature cannot or can no longer do" (Deleuze, *Thousand* 5). This book works on binary logic, and he specifically claims that linguistics still functions in this mode. The second idea, with affinities to modernism, is the radicle, in which "the principal root has aborted, or its tip has been destroyed; an immediate, indefinite multiplicity of secondary roots grafts onto it and undergoes a flourishing development. This time, natural reality is what aborts the principal root, but the root's unity subsists, as past or yet to come, as possible" (Deleuze, *Thousand* 5). While it might seem that this modernist stance, in its 'indefinite multiplicity', resembles the "unrepresentable totality" that Jameson describes, what is fundamental to this concept is the unity of the root, even in the absence of the

understanding of its nature, or even in its loss or lack. The root remains as nostalgia, or as possible (which, with nostalgia's paradoxical look to the past in order to hope for the future, amounts to a similar conception), and thus remains the structuring principle for this metaphor. "The world has lost its pivot; the subject can no longer even dichotomize, but accedes to a higher unity, of ambivalence or overdetermination, in an always supplementary dimension to that of its object. The world has become chaos, but the book remains the image of the world: radicle-chaosmos rather than root-cosmos" (Deleuze, *Thousand* 6). As with Eco's description of the two first labyrinths, there remains in Deleuze's root/radicle paradigm, a unity in terms of the representationality of the world, and it thus maintains a structure of consciousness which allows for objective knowledge, identity, signifiance, subjects, etc.

The final structure is that of the rhizome, which represents a fundamentally different approach to understanding, a break from the concepts that are described as modernist. The root that is either present (in the classical form) or cut off (in the modernist form), was never present, and can never be present, using the metaphor of the rhizome. While both the root and the radicle represent attempts to provide a metaphor for a system that is already in place, what Deleuze calls a 'tracing,' the rhizome represents a possibility of mapping out the territory in a new way. "The rhizome is altogether different, a *map and not a tracing*" (Deleuze, *Thousand* 12, original emphasis). While using a similar term, the Deleuzean concept of map differs from Jameson's in its very representationality. The rhizome maps a territory in which all concepts are leveled on the same surface, and thus weighted equally. There is no hierarchy or privileging, in any objective sense, and any such 'arborization' would be done arbitrarily, thus becoming alterable (with limitations only through those of power relations, rather than natural or essential characteristics). He posits a metaphor for such a book, one modeled on the rhizomatic paradigm, as a single sheet of paper, on which one

could "lay everything out on a plane of exteriority of this kind, on a single page, the same sheet: lived events, historical determinations, concepts, individuals, groups, social formations. … [Such] texts, therefore, are opposed in every way to the classical or romantic book constituted by the interiority of a substance or subject" (Deleuze, *Thousand* 9). This, in many ways resembles the way that knowledge is located and organized in the information age of cloud computing and a decentralized, hypertext-based internet, in essence positing an entirely different structural metaphor, one which destabilizes the existing referentiality and hierarchies of philosophy and presents a dynamic, ever-shifting paradigm on which all things are not equal, but weighted in shifting and non-foundational ways which can be more easily manipulated and altered, given new attitudes, perspectives, information, or even contact with new individuals.

Deleuze uses the rhizome as a metaphor in several ways. As he describes it, individual subjects – both in terms of linguistics, psychoanalysis, other fields of knowledge, as well as in the construction of identity (his "bodies without organs" or "BwO") – are laid out as he describes the book, in a rhizomatic pattern which forms a "plane of consistency" (Deleuze, *Thousand* 9). These 'planes of consistency' are ordered in a way such that all points of identification, each of the 'lived events,' 'concepts,' 'individuals' are connected with every other, directly without a form of hierarchy, and without an imposed external order, a fixed order. This differs from the classical and modernist structure, which impose hierarchies and patterns to the knowledge systems being described or mapped. "Any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be. This is very different from the tree or root, which plots a point, fixes an order" (Deleuze, *Thousand* 7). Deleuze uses this structure both to map what we call the postmodern condition (in a new way, essentially a map of the interconnectedness of all nodes), and to expose previous attempts at mapping this condition as failed enterprises. The rhizome is one structure which does not try to impose an order, but

in which connections are ever changing (as all of the nodes are also constantly in flux) and each connection equally possible (or, as he argues, necessary). The previous paradigms and attempts, both the high modernist efforts and those I characterize as late modernist, are exposed through this structural metaphor as not offering a sustainable description of postmodernity.

The rhizome is further used, in Deleuze, to represent not only the structure of the 'plane of consistency,' but also how those planes interact with one another. Each plane is connected outside of itself through 'lines of flight,' which represent connections with other planes of consistency, essentially other fields and individuals. Those lines of flight, in connecting various planes, also function with a rhizomatic structure, with all connections equally possible (and necessary). Thus the flat rhizomatic planes of consistency are connected three-dimensionally with each other in a pattern which is also rhizomatic, but in all directions. In this way, diverse fields are also tied together without 'natural' modes of intersection using terminology and concepts from all fields. "Not every trait in a rhizome is necessarily linked to a linguistic feature: semiotic chains of every nature are connected to very diverse modes of coding (biological, political, economic, etc.) that bring into play not only different regimes of signs but also states of things of differing status" (Deleuze 7). My use of Deleuze's term employs this larger, three-dimensional conception of the rhizome, in carrying over the rhizomatic labyrinth as the metaphor for a postmodern structure of consciousness.[11] Deleuze uses the term rhizome to both describe the planes of consistency, and the larger rhizomatic whole including the lines of flight. More precision on Deleuze's part would have limited the potential for misreading, especially given that even at the level of the planes of consistency, there is truly no 'outside' as it also expands infinitely.

[11] One might also consider this four-dimensionally, taking into consideration time which becomes particularly relevant given shifting conceptions over time and, in particular, the challenges of historiographic metafiction and the emerging Neo-Victorian.

Deleuze's conception of an 'open book' is closely linked to Eco's attempt at describing a semantic rather than pragmatic encyclopedia. I believe the metaphors work in tandem, as they provide different insights into the range of this structural metaphor. The Deleuzean 'plane of consistency,' representing the book, concentrates on single fields of knowledge, which then interacts (through 'lines of flight') with other concepts. This can be viewed through the perspective of the reader, who, while free in the rhizomatic description of a single field (think of a single book in a library), making numerous, untethered connections. There is no hierarchy, no 'set' means, by which such a type of reading should occur, either within the book, or within the library. Eco's metaphor of the encyclopedia provides a different nuance to the rhizomatic structural metaphor. While the book remains linked to a closed off field (Deleuze distinguishes between items on a 'plane of consistency' and the lines of flight between them, even if both fields are described as rhizomes), the encyclopedia represents a collection of knowledge across fields, and seems to, using the library metaphor, represent something akin to a library itself (an image that Eco uses in his own fiction). The library then, represents the more three dimensional rhizome associated with the lines of flight, and represents a mapping of epistemology, one in which objective truths are unreachable. All connections are possible, probable, and in fact necessary, so in essence, they are all 'true'. All assertions, both within each book (in which all points are connected with each other) and between the books are debatable, as there is no inherent or imposed structure governing the library.

The rhizome can furthermore be related not only to concepts within groups or even systems of knowledge, but reaches to the broader question of representation as well. The book, according to Deleuze, represents not only the knowledge it contains, but is at one with its surroundings, altering systems of knowledge that have already been codified. In essence,

both the book and the world are ever changing nodes in a rhizome.[12] The rhizome is the metaphor which describes all of these possibilities, in postmodernity, and invoking the rhizome allows one to see previous paradigms as limited in comparison. One can map postmodernity, using a Deleuzean map, and through the characteristics of that map, come to a better understanding of how postmodernism, the aesthetic expression of postmodernity, comes to operate.

> … In that Empire, the Art of Cartography attained such Perfection
> that the map of a single Province occupied the entirety of a City,
> and the map of the Empire, the entirety of a Province.
> (Borges, *On Exactitude in Science*)

Mapping (hyper)reality: The Orders of Simulacra

Jean Baudrillard, in *Simulacra and Simulation*, looks at how such a map would operate. He opens his "Precession of Simulacra" with a discussion of Jorge Luis Borges' story "On Exactitude in Science", in which Borges, characteristically through an excerpt from a non-existent book, suggests a map "whose size was that of the Empire, and which coincided point for point with it" (Borges 325). Borges' map seems to signal the end to mapping, for as the cartographers move towards accuracy, the simulation and the Empire become one and the same, eliminating the need for the simulation.[13] Yet, as Baudrillard notes, this functions only as a second order simulacra, one which covers an existent reality, and one which does not reflect a postmodern understanding of contemporary society. "Today abstraction", he asserts, "is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror, or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of the territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real

[12] "The same applies to the book and the world: contrary to a deeply rooted belief, the book is not an image of the world. It forms a rhizome with the world, there is an aparallel evolution of the book and the world; the book assures the deterritorialization of the world, but the world effects a reterritorialization of the book, which in turn deterritorializes itself in the world" (Deleuze, *Thousand* 11).

[13] The need for simulation is removed, as there is no functional way to distinguish between the map and the territory. So, while Baudrillard argues that it is the map that remains (in an interesting reversal of Borges' story, and demonstrating the principle of the 'loss of the real'), it remains that one could distinguish between the real (now lost) and the simulacra (all that remains), a position which seems untenable.

without origin or reality: a hyperreal" (Baudrillard 1).[14] Baudrillard presents the hyperreal as something parallel to, or underlying, the structure of postmodernity itself.[15] In fact, he invokes hyperreal specifically to describe something akin to the postmodern condition, yet without suggesting that the term 'hyperreal' represents a new form of reality.

Hyperreality is a description in which there are no reference points, and indeed in which referentiality and representation have no structural vantage point. While conservative attempts at recuperating representative meaning suggest that the simulacra is a false representation, Baudrillard asserts that simulacra subsumes the very act of representation, which loses its viability within this structural paradigm. In describing simulation as all-encompassing within a hyperreal, he places hyperreality within the phases of representation:

> Such would be the successive phases of the image:
> It is the reflection of a profound reality;
> It masks and denatures a profound reality;
> It masks the *absence* of a profound reality;
> It has no relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum (Baudrillard 6).

The hyperreal reflects those stages in which there is not a 'real' referent, but instead there exist only simulacra, that is to say within both the third and fourth stages of the image, as stated above. In the first two stages, a 'profound reality' grounds the representative process, both in determining the accuracy of a first stage representation, and being used as a point of departure in a second order representation (like that of Borges).

[14] There are semantic problems with 'map' as we have discussed with the distinction between Jameson and Eco/Deleuze and here in Baudrillard in separating the use of the psychoanalytic term 'Real' from the concept of 'reality'. He wants to separate the status of society (the real) from its reality (as opposed to simulacra). Again, as in Deleuze, precision of terminology would have helped elucidate this argument. The hyperreal operates in a world without discernable reality (simulacra representing simulacra).

[15] Baudrillard never uses the term postmodern or postmodernity in *Simulacra and Simulation*. I am distinguishing here between postmodernism and postmodernity, the latter an understanding of social structures and the former an aesthetic representation of that understanding. I am also making a distinction between the hyperreal and the postmodern, which I view as related but not synonymous, which I will elaborate further within the chapter.

In describing the third stage, Baudrillard invokes a cultural artifact, the famous Disneyland example, and asserts that Disneyland serves a function of masking the lack of reality, not of Disneyland, but of America itself.

> But this masks something else and this 'ideological' blanket functions as a cover for *simulation of the third order*: Disneyland exists in order to hide that it is the 'real' country, all of 'real' America that *is* Disneyland (a bit like prisons are there to hide that it is the social in its entirety, in its banal omnipresence, that is carceral). Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, whereas all of Los Angeles and the America that surrounds it are no longer real, but belong to the hyperreal order and to the order of simulation (Baudrillard 12).

This posits a dilemma, as it stages hyperreality not as a status of society now, but as a development from a previous stage into the status of hyperreality. America cannot belong both to hyperreality and have previously been 'real'. Essentially, 'no longer real' is not a category that should exist in a hyperreal order, as that would assert that it is (or was) possible to distinguish 'real' and 'simulation', and thus reinforce those categories as functional. In hyperreality, however, 'real' and 'simulation' do not seem to carry any meaning. This stage requires a new means of speaking, as the words that have previously been used all seem to reinforce a hierarchy, allow for the possibility of a rediscovery (of the real, meaning, sincerity, etc.). Essentially, this should not be possible, as hyperreality seems to function with a postmodern structure of consciousness (at least at the fourth stage of the image), and thus there is no vantage point from which to discern these ideas. Reality did not precede hyperreality; it was always already a simulation. "The impossibility of rediscovering an absolute level of the real is of the same order as the impossibility of staging illusion. Illusion is no longer possible, because the real is no longer possible. It is the whole *political* problem of parody, of hypersimulation or offensive simulation that is posed here" (Baudrillard 19, original emphasis). As we will discuss later, parody and referentiality rely on an ability to distinguish precisely between illusion and reality, a situation which is complicated in hyperreality, and ruled out considering a postmodern structure of consciousness.

This represents not just a political problem, but a problem of communication. How do we justify our behavior in such a system? Can we have a metaphysics[16], an ethics? There is a fundamental difference between the third and fourth stages of the image in Baudrillard, and it is at this point in which I argue there is a distinction between the hyperreal and the postmodern. Baudrillard asserts, both in the description of the phases of the image, and in the Disneyland example, that the 'absence of a profound reality' is essentially knowable, that the simulation is identifiable as such, as NOT real. This distinction is not simply on a level of limitations in epistemology, in which we know that there is a real, but we don't know what it is. In the Disneyland example, a third order scenario, even if it is masked through the use of Disneyland, we can *know* that this is a simulation, and thus operate in a world in which such answers are in fact possible. When organizing our thoughts in such a manner, we are fundamentally operating in an arborescent methodology, what I call a modernist structure of consciousness and which parallels with Eco's maze and the Deleuzean radicle. In the postmodern structure of consciousness such assertions are not possible, as a distinction between simulation and real is not possible; the concepts collapse onto each other. I would argue that the fourth stage of the image reflects this, as it gives no pretense to a nostalgia for a distinction, all manifestations function at the same level (which Baudrillard, confusingly, labels simulacra).

This can be explicated further as Baudrillard presents the idea of a simulated crime, in an effort to show how simulation works. He suggests: "Simulate a robbery in a large store: how to persuade security that it is simulated robbery? There is no 'objective' difference: the gestures, the signs are the same as for a real robbery, the signs do not lean to one side or another. To the established order they are always of the order of the real" (Baudrillard 20). Given enough 'accuracy' – a term which is difficult because it is often used to reflect

[16] Baudrillard, of course, explicitly says we cannot have a metaphysics in this scenario. Since metaphysics is the study of the ultimate nature of reality, given the 'loss of the real', it follows that there is also a loss of metaphysics, or at very least a fundamental change in how it is understood.

representation, but here needs to be invoked only in terms of fulfilling predetermined expectations – the crime will always be taken as 'real' by the police. The political consequences of not asserting the reality of the crime, at very least, would be untenable. This is perhaps more topical if one replaces the idea of crime with terrorism. One can invoke the sense of terror through a mere simulation of an event, e.g. discussing a bombing of an airport, and in effect both the 'actual' bombing attempt and the discussion of it are 'acts of terror' as they have the same effect. There is no distinction between them, at least in the eyes of the law. Yet, Baudrillard asserts that this simulation, this parody of a crime, can be differentiated.

> Parody renders serious crime, because it *cancels out the difference upon which the law is based.* The established order can do nothing against it, because the law is a simulacrum of the second order, whereas simulation is of the third order, beyond true and false, beyond equivalences, beyond rational distinctions upon which the whole of the social and power depend. Thus, *lacking the real*, it is there that we must aim at order (Baudrillard 21).

Baudrillard asserts that in these types of third order simulations, in which the simulation does not refer to a supposed real but to a preexisting simulation, it no longer matters what really happens, as these scenarios "function as a group of signs dedicated exclusively to their recurrence as signs, and no longer at all to their 'real' end" (Baudrillard 21). This new end, as opposed to whatever end the bank robbers, hijackers, or terrorists supposedly intended, is simply power. Each of these simulations was used to reinforce a structural paradigm in which power dominated and an order was asserted. So, the lack of seeming reference, the multiplication of the simulations and seeming lack of foundation, masked an underlying order, and thus reestablished what I call a modernist structure. I call this stage late modernist, as it hints at the hyperreal, and even uses the invocation of the hyperreal, to assert its own order. This stage is demonstrable, as are the first two stages of Baudrillard's four stage system, but the last stage, of hyperreality itself, is much harder to exemplify. Part of this comes down to justification, for if the third order simulacrum could be used to reproduce a power paradigm, what creates power in hyperreality?

> This changes everything, because one can always ask of the traditional holders of power where they get their power from. Who made you duke? The king. Who made you king? God. Only God no longer answers. But to the question: who made you a psychologist? the analyst can well reply: You. This is expressed, by an inverse simulation, the passage from the 'analyzed' to the 'analysand,' from passive to active, which simply describes the spiraling effect of the shifting of poles, the effect of circularity in which power is lost, is dissolved, is resolved in perfect manipulation (it is no longer of the order of directive power and of the gaze, but of the order of tactility and commutation) (Baudrillard 41).

As we have seen in descriptions by Lyotard and Eco, this allows for power to not be overarching, but instead stem from 'inside' the system, having no more authority than that of the local, and only upon consensus by members on equal footing. Existing in the hyperreal, or on a 'plane of consistency', disdains anything that could be seen as a metanarrative, and instead reinforces the slippery and temporary nature of any assertion of meaning or identity. Power in the realm of the hyperreal, or using the rhizome as a structure of consciousness, in other words in postmodernism, is a matter of consensus and choice, rather than conformity and deviancy, crime and punishment. This concept plays out not only in epistemology, but in ethics, politics, and ontology, such as in the construction of identity. It has been called postmodern, but could just as easily be termed post-gender (in terms of identity) and even posthuman. In her description of the cyborg, Donna Haraway recognizes just this lack of historical construction because such a creature "has no truck with bisexuality, pre-oedipal symbiosis, unalienated labour, or other seductions to organic wholeness through a final appropriation of all the powers of the parts into a higher unity" (Haraway 150). In the hyperreal, a different understanding of one's individual identity, separate from an imposed (classical) or an identity constructed through exclusion and difference (modernist), moves into a concept of post-humanity.

Baudrillard argues that trying to describe the hyperreal is a problem for fiction itself. If that is the case, then a postmodernist aesthetics would prove untenable. His arguments are based on the representational nature of our understanding of, above all, literature.

> The models no longer constitute either transcendence or projection, they no longer constitute the imaginary in relation to the real, they are themselves an anticipation of the real, and thus leave no room for any sort of fictional anticipation …*nothing distinguishes this operation from the operation itself and the gestation of the real: there is no more fiction* (Baudrillard 122, emphasis original).

Baudrillard writes this specifically in relation to science fiction, a genre that has been invoked as strikingly parallel, and sharing elements (especially an ontological poetics) with that of canonically understood postmodernist fiction. Yet, Baudrillard makes distinctions between the types of novels, even within the realm of science fiction, which could represent the hyperreal. He furthermore collapses his numbers of simulations from four to three, seemingly collapsing the second and third order of simulacra. "To the first category belongs the imaginary of the *utopia*. To the second corresponds science fiction, strictly speaking. To the third corresponds – is there an imaginary that might correspond to this order?" (Baudrillard 121). As with the earlier examples of the staged crime, finding a model to represent Baudrillard's hyperreal seems, even conceptually, elusive. Those novels that even invoke simulacra, like many of the stories and novels by Philip K. Dick, do so at the risk of reinforcing an illusory/real paradigm (as science fiction often does, with its possible worlds, parallel universes, utopias and dystopias). A representation of the hyperreal in literature would have to reflect a world in which "the double has disappeared, there is no longer a double, one is always already in the other world, which is no longer an other, without a mirror, a projection, or a utopia" (Baudrillard 125).[17] Baudrillard suggests that, perhaps, novels like J.G. Ballard's *Crash* could be seen as "the current model of science fiction that is no longer one" (Baudrillard 125) because "*Crash* is *our* world, nothing in it is 'invented': everything in it is hyperfunctional" (Baudrillard 125). Invoking such a paradigm suggests that what would perhaps be needed to properly reflect the world of the hyperreal, is a literature that is, in some ways, still mimetic, but mimetic of a different structural paradigm, one that

[17] Again, language problems abound, as the hyperreal cannot function within a paradigm of 'no longer' as that always already does not exist (or has no referent for 'longer') but even my own metaphors ('reflect,' 'represent') expose an interesting tension between the theoretical and the practical.

reflects the mentality of those critics, theorists, artists and authors that operate in a hyperreal realm, one which does not hold fast to roots, or have nostalgic longings for them. While Baudrillard sees a possibility in Ballard, which could be further connected to William Gibson's cyberpunk texts (especially those set in a paradoxically dystopian present that are, arguably, more troubling than those future dystopias of *Neuromancer* and the Sprawl series), Deleuze considers his rhizomatic pattern to already be present in some literature, as early as the 1980s. "American literature, and already English literature, manifest this rhizomatic direction to an even greater extent; they know how to move between things, establish a logic of the AND, overthrow ontology, do away with foundations, nullify endings and beginnings" (Deleuze, *Thousand* 25). Thus, while looking at, or for, examples of literary postmodernism, I would argue that these novels which resemble the world of hyperreality, and which operate with a rhizomatic structure, represent the type of literature that is postmodern.

> it is nevertheless this structure of consciousness,
> which assumes the universe, the "book of nature,"
> to be a well-made cosmic drama, that determines the questions
> and thus the expectations and answers
> (Spanos, 'The Detective and the Boundary' 151)

A 'structure of consciousness'

In looking at literary history, with a specific focus on postmodernism, I posit three types of structures of consciousness, the characteristics of which present three ways of looking at the world. Based upon the tripartite historical periodization presented above, as well as analyses of the way in which novels from these periods are structured, they reflect the theories of Jameson, Eco, Deleuze and Baudrillard. William V. Spanos discusses the term 'structure of consciousness' in relation to an overarching metanarrative, a "recognition of the ultimately 'totalitarian' implications of the Western structure of consciousness – of the expanding analogy that encompasses art, politics, and metaphysics in the name of the security of rational order" (Spanos 155). I also use the term as an analogy, but reflecting different understandings

of art, politics and metaphysics, related to its underlying structural metaphor. Thus, each structure of consciousness – the classical, modernist, and postmodernist – reflects a set of characteristics corresponding to the structural paradigms on which they are based, and the consequences can then be extrapolated. Basically, I use the labyrinthine metaphors above as a model for the structures of the underlying philosophical principles, identity constructions, and world constructions of the novels themselves. While not being strictly chronological in nature, they do seem to develop in a natural progression. Once each structure has been conceived, however, they have historically been equally understood and believed in simultaneously. Thus, in the present age, it is possible to find novels which reflect each of the three consciousnesses, whereas prior to the modern age, it would have been premature to find texts that presumed to understand postmodernism in quite the same way.[18]

Thus, classical literature is characterized by a structure of consciousness that can be viewed as a skein. The world order found within these texts has specific answers to specific questions, represents a one-to-one relationship between fiction and reality, and characters, and the worlds they inhabit, are created on essential categories. It is in this world in which figures, like Achilles, can be identified with monikers (Peleus' son) which have specific and meaningful referents. Modern(ist) literature can be said to reflect a structure of consciousness of the maze, in which the authority governing the universe of classical literature is in doubt. Nietzsche's 'God is Dead' philosophy, or Barthes' 'Death of the Author' reflect the anxiety around which this structure of consciousness fluctuates, but rather than a loss of authority this structure operates as if the structure had authority and seeks a new means of keeping order.

[18] While there have been texts that seem to operate with a postmodern structure of consciousness prior to the current era, those have been identified in retrospect. I argue that it is both the author and the reader that have the potential to interact with the text via each of the various structures of consciousness, and thus critics with a postmodern mindset might interpret prior texts in this manner. The current era should not be read as the end of a teleological path towards enlightenment, but simply a stripping away of prior codified modes of thought, and the replacement of those with an open, skeptical, point of view. I do not argue that this is 'correct' (from what vantage point would one determine accuracy) but seems the best means of describing this literature, and arguably the structure of our current era.

The metanarratives that operate in this model can be replaced, but are never removed altogether, and even in their absence (however temporary) serve to hold the structure of the enterprise in place. The postmodern structure of consciousness is that reflected by the rhizomatic labyrinth, and operates in the hyperreal realm. Employing the rhizome as the metaphor for postmodernism shows that it represents a break from the structure of modernism, as the overarching principles which held sway in modernist thinking, even in loss or lack, are not important in a postmodern paradigm, as there is no referent by which such metanarratives can have authority or been seen as objectively true, operative, or meaningful.

While Jameson, Eco and Deleuze each propose a tripartite division, Baudrillard, in his stages of the image[19], also proposes a fourth category. I find this category especially intriguing, as it can be used to account for differences in the understanding of the postmodern literary canon[20] between previous approaches to postmodernism and my own. While there has been a great debate as to whether postmodernism represents a break or a continuation of the Modernist project, the examples used to draw the line have proved troublesome. McHale posits a number of texts in *Postmodernist Fiction* as "limit-modernist" (13) when they didn't fit into his division of modernist and postmodernist poetics (those texts which look both at epistemological and ontological issues). He models this concept on Alan Wilde's notion of "late modernism" which reflects for him a middle ground. "Reading appearances correctly is, in fact, the project of late modernism, its enemy not a failure to penetrate to some more authentic reality but a sort of cultural or psychological dyslexia, which blurs vision itself. Sifting appearances rather than plumbing depths: that is the nature of the enterprise" (Wilde 109). This term is also found in Charles Jencks, in architecture, representing a parallel track to postmodern architecture, in which late modernist architecture reflects a continuation or

[19] Baudrillard also uses a tripartite division elsewhere, both in the above mentioned article on science fiction, and in his fundamental 'Orders of Simulacra.'

[20] By this I mean both the identification of those literary texts as postmodern, but also how texts previously or currently understood as postmodern could be understood differently given different approaches (such as my own) or given a different structure of consciousness (modernist vs. postmodernist, for example).

next generation of the modernist project while postmodernism reflects a break or rejection of the tenets of the modernist 'less is more' philosophy (Jencks, 'Postmodern' 42). He furthermore argues neither modernism nor postmodernism is an isolated architectural phenomenon, but rather considers them as interdisciplinary concepts, as were the Enlightenment and Romantic concepts which preceded them. "Thus, the definition of Postmodernism that I have given above holds true for artists and, I believe, such literary figures as Umberto Eco, David Lodge, John Barthes, and Jorge Luis Borges, among many others" (Jencks, 'Postmodern' 42).

Thus, I would argue that while there are only three fundamental structures of consciousness, there is also something that I would like to call 'late modernism.' As it does for McHale, Wilde, and Jencks, this category represents an in-between category, but one which has more fundamentally in common with modernism than postmodernism, and thus, I argue operates with a modernist structure of consciousness. Similar to Baudrillard's third order simulation, which reinforces the modernist order by asserting the unreality of America (thus reasserting the existence of 'reality' even in its inversion)[21], late modernism proposes the rhizomatic structure of postmodernism, but only in an effort to 'deter' (in Baudrillard's sense) or assert a 'tipless' root, with an arborescent structure (to use the Deleuzean metaphor). Late modernism, in my conception, simply proposes postmodernism, but performs modernism, and thus its own structure, either philosophical or often formally, belies the discussions and allusions to a different structural metaphor. As will be discussed in subsequent chapters, this is often the case in Umberto Eco and Jorge Luis Borges, who Jencks proposes as postmodernists, but whom I identify as late modernist. A similar discussion could be had about Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, in which Vladimir and

[21] Baudrillard asserts that Disneyland is a fantastical construction, allowing the populace to understand that America itself is real. This is done to mask the fantastic nature of America itself, which is a simulation. I would argue that even asserting the simulacra nature of America, identified in contrast to a 'real', we are asserting the very existence of a 'real' against which one can argue America is not.

Estragon's wait seems to present a world without any overarching authority. Yet, they operate *as if* that authority, which is represented by the absent (or non-existent) Godot holds sway. The text is slightly at odds, allowing for readings in which their diegetic reaction could be seen as ridiculous for the audience, but internally reinforces a structure in which a modernist metaphor is operative.

> The object of this study is the condition of knowledge in the most highly developed societies. I have decided to use the word *postmodern* to describe that condition.
> (Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, xxiii)

What do the theorists say (and how do they fit)?

After establishing the need for a definition of postmodernism, and presenting the calls for a spatial metaphor, as well as elucidating those spatial constructions of postmodernism from which this project derives its understanding, this chapter seeks to present a reductive definition of postmodernism, based on the spatial metaphor of the rhizomatic labyrinth, as the means to understand the postmodern structure of consciousness. There are, of course, already numerous theoretical explanations of postmodernism, which is perhaps one of the most discussed terms in the past fifty years. In proposing my own theory, I feel it necessary to discuss at least some of the most prominent and taught theories of postmodernism, in order to demonstrate how my approach both complements and furthers those well-known modes of explanation. To that end, I will take up postmodernism as it is presented by Jean-Francois Lyotard, Ihab Hassan, Patricia Waugh, and Linda Hutcheon, each of whom have presented influential work within, respectively, philosophy and literary theory, cultural studies, literary studies and feminism, and literary postmodernism. This will then be followed by a discussion of certain characteristics, typical of postmodern literature, which are often used to define postmodernism, specifically metafiction, pastiche, intertextuality, play and irony. Finally, I

will present my own definition while discussing Brian McHale's groundbreaking work in *Postmodernist Fiction* and *Constructing Postmodernism*, highlighting the differences in our approaches and providing a map for the argument to be presented in the rest of the dissertation.

Lyotard and The Postmodern Condition

In his numerous writings on the subject, it could be argued that Lyotard presents two different visions of postmodernism, versions that are partially but not completely reconcilable. The first version, presented as an appendix to *The Postmodern Condition* in the short article 'Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?', argues one side of the well-known controversy of whether postmodernism is a continuation of or a break from modernism. In this response, Lyotard addresses the notion of the relationship between the two concepts, and explains that they are inextricably linked, that the postmodern is "undoubtedly a part of the modern" (Lyotard, *Postmodern* 79). In this articulation, Lyotard presents the postmodern as those periods in the development of human thought (which is presented linearly) in which the current conceptions of the way things are fall prey to skepticism. The resolutions of those periods of doubt are then classified as modern.

> A postmodern artist or writer is in the position of the philosopher: the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by preestablished rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining Judgment, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work. Those rules and categories are what the work of art itself is looking for. (80-81)

The first part of this quotation posits the philosopher similarly to the writer (the reader tackling a writerly text) in Roland Barthes conception of the writerly and the readerly. As Barthes states, "the writerly text is *ourselves writing*, before the infinite play of the world (the world as function) is traversed, intersected, stopped, plasticized by some singular system (Ideology, Genus, Criticism) which reduces the plurality of entrances, the opening of

networks, the infinity of languages" (Barthes 5, original emphasis). Lyotard presents the postmodern in the position of the avant-garde, a challenge to the conventions and rules laid forth for any age through a wiping away of the rules and starting anew. He considers the postmodern, in each of its iterations, as the 'first' state, and the modern as the subsequent reification of the rules and conventions developed by the postmodern artist. "A work can become modern only if it is first postmodern. Postmodernism thus understood is not modernism at its end but in the nascent state, and this state is constant" (Lyotard, *Postmodern* 79). This places the postmodern in an interesting position. Lyotard posits the relationship between the modern and postmodern as nearly opposites, but related in the terms of a dialectic, although presented in a manner in which the postmodern (the antithesis) is the original state. Eco presents a similar theory in *Postscript to The Name of the Rose*, in which he posits that postmodernism is akin to the Mannerist movement in late Renaissance Italy. "We could say that every period has its own postmodernism, just as every period would have its own mannerism (and, in fact, I wonder if postmodernism is not that modern name for mannerism as a metahistorical category)" (Eco, *Postscript* 66). Essentially, postmodern artists would be the ones pushing beyond accepted norms, into previously uncharted waters.

There are two paradoxes presented in these arguments. The first is that, in Lyotard's version, the postmodern must necessarily precede the modern. This is paradoxical in terminology alone, perhaps, but also seems to point to a teleological end goal of the postmodern project. In claiming that the postmodern artist is looking for a set of rules and categories, I argue that Lyotard assumes that such a set of rules and categories both exists and is discoverable. It further assumes that the modern artists, in contrast, would be those working within such set of rules and conventions, and not looking for different answers, or answers at all. This dichotomy relates much more to the project of modernism, exemplified by figures such as T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, than it does to that of postmodern artists, and

seems to take to heart Pound's call to 'make it new.' Similarly, many of the avant-garde artistic movements, now encompassed often under the rubric modernist, employed similar features, presenting their various contributions as the 'new' way to understand aesthetics, essentially codifying a new set of rules. Following this line of argumentation, artists creating movements like Dada and Surrealism would be considered postmodern, while those carrying such movements forth after the codification would become modern artists. Fredric Jameson, in his introduction to *The Postmodern Condition*, has similar concerns, stating:

> This very commitment to the experimental and the new, however, determine an aesthetic that is far more closely related to the traditional ideologies of high modernism proper than to current postmodernisms, and is indeed – paradoxically enough – very closely related to the conception of the revolutionary nature of high modernism that Habermas faithfully inherited from the Frankfurt School (xvi).

The reference to Habermas, in understanding Lyotard's position, is instructive here. In his essay 'Modernity versus Postmodernity' Habermas contrasts the classical and the modern. "With varying content, the term 'modern' again and again expresses the consciousness of an epoch that relates itself to the past of antiquity, in order to view itself as the result of a transition from the old to the new" (Habermas 3). In so arguing, he presents the idea, from the Frankfurt School, that the modernist project is one of improving upon the deficiencies seen in classical formulations, as new is always seen as improving upon the old. I argue that postmodernism, rather than functioning as Lyotard here suggests, works in a different manner than one which continues this helical pattern of constant revisiting and revising – essentially an extension of the modernist project. Rather, I argue, postmodernism breaks with that pattern to develop a different kind of aesthetics based upon a different way of looking at the situation. Essentially, while Habermas argues that modernism succeeds classical forms, in a cyclical pattern, I argue that postmodernism represents a subsequent break in that pattern, superceding the modernist project and presenting a different structure of consciousness by which the postmodern artist views the world. In other words, I take the other side of the well-

known controversy of whether postmodernism is a continuation of or a break from modernism, based on its structure. The terminology here is also instructive. While Lyotard's presentation contrasts the postmodern and the modern, Habermas is discussing the classical and the modern. All three concepts seem to be in play. While the use of the term 'nascent' in Lyotard's conception could be seen as problematic (with the imagery of birth, and the association of linear, chronological progress towards death), his description of the postmodern is not necessarily. Where Habermas views the classical as the codified rules, and modernism as an attempt to alter those rules and find better, more apt ones with which to improve upon deficiencies, Lyotard's postmodern seems to present a blank slate – the anarchic state before the rules coalesce into a state of modernism. The constructions of the classical, and subsequently the modern, are built upon a foundation of the postmodern, which represents the basic 'real' state described by Barthes as 'writerly' (though here applied to a vast array of philosophical, cultural and social categories, as well as writing). By setting up the modern as built upon the 'nascent' state of the postmodern, Lyotard acknowledges the man-made, constructionist nature of the modernist project, and the open rhizomatic nature of the postmodern condition. Thus rather than a cyclical, or helical, return to the nascent state, the postmodern represents the foundation upon which the artificial constructions of modern categories and metanarratives are temporarily (inevitably) constructed and from which they are, through time or shift in ideology, removed. That this state has only recently been recognized, and discussed in literature, does not diminish this explanation, even if it means we are using the clumsy moniker of post- to describe this state.

This pattern is more consistent with Lyotard's other articulation of postmodernism. In *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, first published in French in 1979 and subsequently in English in 1984, he develops the idea that postmodernism represents, if not a break, at least a reservation of judgments about grand narratives, the overarching means by

which we account for knowledge and other political underpinnings to our existence. In two oft-cited quotations, Lyotard lays out the basics of this argument. Firstly, he states, "I will use the term modern to designate any science that legitimates itself with reference to a metadiscourse of this kind making an explicit appeal to some grand narrative, such as the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth" (Lyotard, *Postmodern* xxiii). Complementarily, he then, "simplifying to the extreme, [defines] postmodern as incredulity towards metanarratives" (Lyotard, *Postmodern* xxiv).

By rejecting metanarratives, essentially Lyotard is removing the narrative basis for the legitimation of knowledge as we understand it. His essay places scientific knowledge and narrative knowledge in comparison, and concludes that while narrative knowledge provides its own justifications – its legitimation comes from the retelling of the tale itself, and doesn't appeal outside of this – scientific knowledge appeals to a larger metanarrative upon which to base its legitimacy. Ultimately, Lyotard concludes that such a metanarrative can only be justified upon its own terms, and cannot appeal beyond its legitimation narrative prescriptively. "Science plays its own game; it is incapable of legitimating the other language games. The game of prescription, for example, escapes it. But above all, it is incapable of legitimating itself, as speculation assumed it could" (Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition* 40). Essentially, science can identify and explain phenomena on its own terms, but cannot explain why one should draw conclusions and act upon the information provided.

Jameson, in reaction to Lyotard's move, suggests that rather than the grand narratives retreating from the stage, they become the underpinnings of our collective understanding of postmodern reality. In discussing the seeming contradiction between Lyotard's evocation of narrative in his argument about the legitimation crisis of science and the narrative crisis that postmodernism represents, in its incredulity, Jameson suggests an alternative reading.

> This seeming contradiction can be resolved, I believe, by taking a further step that Lyotard seems unwilling to do in the present text, namely to posit, not the disappearance of the great master-narratives, but their passage underground as it were, their continuing but now *unconscious* effectivity as a way of 'thinking about' and acting in our current situation. This persistence of buried master-narratives in what I have elsewhere called our 'political unconscious.'" (Lyotard, *Postmodern* xi-xii, original emphasis).

I would argue that Jameson here misrepresents the idea of incredulity towards metanarratives. While, as he posits, the same metanarratives that supported previous understandings of the world order (capitalism, religion, etc.) have not simply ceased to exist, and continue to prove influential if not for everyone, at least for the vast majority of the population, that does not mean that *postmodern* thought adheres to this understanding. The fundamental misunderstanding is that these narratives operate independent of the people who are to believe them, interact with them, support them, and reaffirm them. Jameson assumes that the political unconscious belies the loss of the metanarrative at the center of reality. This, I would argue, is only true for those that believe that there is such a center, or who choose to operate as if there is one (whether or not they have been presented with evidence to the contrary). Lyotard's postulation is for those in the *postmodern* condition, which I do not contend is necessarily a universal condition, but only for those that subscribe to a particular (here labeled postmodern) structure of consciousness. Jameson's assertion seems to place him in the realm of the late modern, in which he identifies the loss of metanarrative, but continues to seek it elsewhere, essentially reasserting and reaffirming its existence.[22]

Lyotard also argues that this phenomenon is common, if not fundamental, to our time. It may be, but contemporary thought – postpostmodern thought, for lack of a better term –

[22] Jameson's position here is aligned with Patricia Waugh's call for political action, found in her numerous articulations of postmodernism. While both Waugh and Jameson acknowledge the structure Lyotard advocates in *The Postmodern Condition*, which I call the postmodern structure of consciousness, they also want to assert ties to a concrete reality outside of that structure, an underpinning to a 'real' world, which this structure doesn't allow for (or knowledge of). Thus, I assert that both theorists unconsciously assert a modernist structure (and belie their own modernist structure of consciousness) in advocating this position. Waugh's position will be taken up later in this chapter, and on the whole this will be a discussion that will be returned to in the conclusion.

seeks to challenge that notion. It is an argument I will return to in the conclusion, but essentially there are schools of thought among the New Sincerity movement, and in New Materialism, that assert an objective reality outside the bounds of poststructural theory and postmodern understandings of reality, which suggest (to me) a different structure of consciousness than one found in postmodern artists and theorists. However, Lyotard's skepticism does not devolve into absolute relativism. He leaves open the possibility of changing one's discourse. This becomes possible because the discourse is legitimized through its own narration. Essentially, Lyotard argues:

> That is what the postmodern world is all about. Most people have lost the nostalgia for the lost narrative. It in no way follows that they are reduced to barbarity. What saves them from it is their knowledge that legitimation can only spring from their own linguistic practice and communicational interaction. Science 'smiling into its beard' at every other belief has taught them the harsh austerity of realism. (41)

Rather than an overarching, oppressive, metanarrative we have a series of local, 'little' narratives, each of which posit a certain truth, but are taken in combination with the whole. As each little narrative asserts itself, it becomes 'true' locally, as long as it is contained, spatially and temporally, and can be disposed of easily should it prove unwieldy.

> A recognition of the heteromorphous nature of language games is a first step in that direction. … The second step is the principle that any consensus on the rules defining the game and the 'moves' playable within it must be local, in other words, agreed to by its present players and subject to eventual cancellation. The orientation then favors a multiplicity of finite meta-arguments, by which I mean argumentation that concerns metaprescriptives and is limited in space and time. (Lyotard 66)

Lyotard furthers the essence of the Nietzschean aphorism that 'God is dead' and claims a lack of nostalgia for either the lost center or the lost narratives by which we had previously structured our understandings. This allows a reevaluation of the narratives by which we structure our lives, as the legitimacy for those narratives stems not from an overarching system, but from ourselves, adhering to the consensus and limited in scope only to those 'finite meta-arguments' Lyotard suggests. If we provide the legitimacy for those categories, boxes, and discourses, then they remain alterable as long as those 'metaprescriptives,' as

Lyotard describes them, remain transparent, finite and locally conceived. The risk from this understanding is not the open-ended nature of the encoding, or relativity, but rather the reification of any locally agreed upon rules and the application of those rules to other, or all, individuals beyond the context of their legitimacy, what Lyotard earlier called 'modern' and Habermas had labelled 'classical.'

> Philosophy makes progress not by becoming more rigorous,
> but by becoming more imaginative.
> (Rorty, *Truth and Progress Vol.3)*

Strong Postmodernism and Political Efficacy

Richard Rorty, in *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity,* argues that the reevaluation of the narratives is precisely the positive outcome of the postmodern condition. He begins with a criticism of the bricolage nature of constructing new modes of thought, following upon the ideas of Levi-Strauss. The bricoleur's "universe of instruments is closed and the rules of his game are always to make do with 'whatever is at hand', that is to say with a set of tools and materials which is always finite" (Levi-Strauss, *Savage* 17).[23] Rorty hopes to push the boundaries beyond the items on hand contending that it isn't possible to create anything new, and ultimately provide change, if one works within the constraints and logic of the system as is.

> On the view of philosophy which I am offering, philosophers should not be asked for arguments against, for example, the correspondence theory of truth or the idea of the 'intrinsic nature of reality'. The trouble with arguments against the use of familiar and time-honored vocabulary is that they are expected to be phrased in that very vocabulary. They are expected to show that central elements in that vocabulary are 'inconsistent in their own terms' or that they 'deconstruct themselves'. But that can *never* be shown. (Rorty, *Contingency* 8)

[23] Levi-Strauss positions the *bricoleur* and the engineer on opposite side of position, with the engineer working from means to an end, and the *bricoleur* working with no such purpose, reorganizing existing pieces in a random way. Derrida suggests that the engineer is a myth, as there is no evidence that one can create something "out of nothing" or "out of whole cloth" (Derrida 285), thus arguing that all discourses borrow from their historical counterparts.

Rorty argues that the postmodern structure of consciousness, and the recognition of the destabilized knowledge legitimation that Lyotard demonstrated, allows for the possibility of altering the ways in which metanarratives are perceived, even by those who operate with a structure of consciousness in which they maintain value. Rorty's proposal is that a shift in the vocabularies, essentially the words we use within the various language games in operation, and the moves made within them, can fundamentally adjust (for Rorty, in a positive way, though this is by no means guaranteed) our ways of thinking, reassembling the existing terms (like a *bricoleur*) but purposefully (like the engineer). "The method is to redescribe lots and lots of things in new ways, until you have created a pattern of linguistic behavior which will tempt the rising generation to adopt it, thereby causing them to look for appropriate new forms of nonlinguistic behavior, for example, the adoption of new scientific equipment or new social institutions" (Rorty, *Contingency* 9). This argument has the benefit of explaining large scale structural changes to society (if humankind has this power, then such changes are legitimate and explainable) as well as providing a model for future changes, which gives postmodernism a tangible, progressive possibility.

Patricia Waugh, in her article 'Postmodernism and Feminism?' in *Contemporary Feminist Theories*, argues that the approaches of both Lyotard and Rorty are not practical, and thus their efficacy is limited. Waugh posits that there are both strong and weak versions of postmodernism, as well as deconstructive and reconstructive modes within these theoretical frameworks. Lyotard represents strong deconstructive postmodernism which 'exhibits a tendency towards nominalism – refusing the idea that there is 'a reality', out in the real world, to which 'concepts' actually refer, assuming that 'concepts' construct and even produce the reality they pretend to describe' (Waugh, 'Postmodernism' 182). While this description does accurately reflect Lyotard's position, Waugh seems to already want to discredit the position due to is lack of a 'real-world' practical implication. She acknowledges

the role of this type of postmodernism in exposing, in furtherance of (second wave) feminist objectives, 'the gendered exclusiveness of the so-called 'universal' narratives of progressive modernity' (Waugh, 'Postmodernism' 182) but doesn't want to take postmodernism as far as leaving feminism with 'no more legitimacy than any other political language game' (Waugh 182-3). This position seems, at best, inconsistent, with the consequence of exposing such universal narratives as not universal is to destabilizing the privileging of any one of those narratives (feminism in Waugh's case). For Waugh practical considerations outweigh philosophical consistency, but I argue that it is not a tenable position. Once exposed, those universals can no longer be asserted with any authority (which authority would be valid, at this point?). Waugh goes on to summarize Rorty's argument, recognizing his position that 'there is no truth awaiting our discovery, only 'truths' to be invented through the creative uses of language' (Waugh, 'Postmodernism' 183). This claim, she argues, won't stand up to the real life disparities in social and economic conditions facing women in contemporary society. She states that it is 'immediately obvious' that such an argument discounts real world problems in favor of 'strong linguistic determinism' (Waugh 183), and she further questions how either iteration of strong postmodernism 'could form the basis for any kind of politics, ethics or epistemology which assumes the necessity for personal and collective agency and responsibility' (Waugh, 'Postmodernism' 188).

Waugh, however, doesn't discount postmodern theory's contribution to the feminist cause wholesale. There are positions in which feminism and postmodernism align, in Waugh's view, as she argues that

> feminists have shown how Enlightenment discourses universalize white, Western, middle-class male experience and have thus exposed the buried strategies of domination implicit in the ideal of objective knowledge. Feminists as well as postmodernists have long recognized the need for a new ethics responsive to technological changes and shifts in the understanding between the relations of power and knowledge (Waugh, 'Postmodernism' 179).

Waugh doesn't see adequate potential in Rorty's response but other theorists in related fields don't share her skepticism. Feminism, and (later) queer theory, isn't the only cultural discourse which, under the modernist project, has sought to excavate the master narratives and demonstrate the domination implicit within them, ethnic studies movements have been addressing a similar concern.

The literary theorist bell hooks (Gloria Watkins) has argued that, similar to feminism, the black power movement has its roots in a modernist project, and that "certainly many of the ways black folks addressed issues of identity conformed to a modernist universalizing agenda" (hooks 25). This movement faces a predicament similar to the one as that Waugh identifies in feminism. While postmodern discourse provides the tools for recognizing the power structures inherent in the "privileged meta-discourses" (Waugh, 'Postmodernism' 185), feminism as well as categories such as class, race, ethnicity, "can no longer be regarded as an essential or even stable category" and thus "it is no longer legitimate to appeal to the category 'women' [or presumably 'black' or 'subaltern'] to ground a meta-narrative of political practice – even in the name of emancipation" (Waugh, 'Postmodernism' 185). The postmodern response to both the feminist movement and to, as bell hooks describes, the black power movement, was the same: a rejection of the newly won claims of legitimacy for "decentered, marginalized black subjects who had at least momentarily successfully demanded a hearing, who had made it possible for black liberation to be on the national political agenda" (hooks 25). Waugh challenges the efficacy of the postmodern project as a whole, on this account, whereas bell hooks argues forcefully that there is a place for the 'politics of difference' within postmodern discourse, and that such a position can be meaningful.

> Radical postmodernist practice, most powerfully conceptualized as a 'politics of difference,' should incorporate the voices of displaced, marginalized, exploited, and oppressed black people. … If radical postmodernist thinking is to have a transformative impact, then a critical break with the notion of 'authority' as 'mastery

> over' must not simply be a rhetorical device. It must be reflected in habits of being, including styles of writing as well as chosen subject matter. (hooks 25)

Her contention mirrors that of Rorty, so while she, like Waugh, is a strong advocate of a position that was both marginalized, offered a degree of hope in the later stages of the modernist project, but then seemingly abandoned (according to the critics) by postmodern discourse, hooks rather sees a potentiality – a real, political potential – to the transformative power of language (Rorty's vocabularies). Rorty further argues that his position is truly that of new, and not reused, vocabularies (and that its very newness is the potent aspect), through advocating a philosophical method which "does not argue for this suggestion [new vocabularies] on the basis of antecedent criteria common to the old and new language games. For just insofar as the new language really is new, there will be no such criteria" (Rorty 9), and as such destabilizes the bricoleur effect by demonstrating that the new forms are not reliant upon reconceptions of previous logic.

Consequently, despite her reservations in the political arena, Waugh does conclude that in the aesthetic sphere a stronger variety of postmodern is preferable. "For a feminist politics committed to the futures of actual women in the world, the rather more earth-bound and situated reason of weak postmodernism may complement the stronger postmodernist impulses at work in experimental art and literature' (Waugh, 'Postmodernism' 191-2). Yet, while Waugh sees strong postmodernism succeeding primarily in an aesthetic sphere, in which it is the language games most uninhibitedly presented, divorced from potential real world consequences, Rorty sees aesthetics, and literature in particular, having real world consequences, claiming that "novelists can do something which is socially useful – help us attend to the springs of cruelty in ourselves, as well as to the fact of its occurrence in areas where we had not noticed it" (Rorty, *Contingency* 95). So, while this project focuses on literary postmodernism, I contend that the consequences of a postmodern structure of consciousness are not limited to the purely literary or aesthetic. The literary is simply the

manifestation of this viewpoint with which the project will seek to elucidate the postmodern structure of consciousness and its consequences.

> The history of the world?
> Just voices echoing in the dark;
> images that burn for a few centuries and then fade;
> stories, old stories that sometimes seem to overlap;
> strange limits, impertinent connections […]
> We make up a story to cover up
> the facts we don't know or can't accept;
> we keep a few true facts and spin a new story around them.
> Our panic and our pain are only eased by soothing fabulation;
> we call it history.
> (Julian Barnes, *History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters*)

Linda Hutcheon and Historiographic Metafiction

Moving into the literary sphere, Linda Hutcheon presents more concrete examples of how postmodernism can be seen in practice, in literature. Her exemplary version of postmodern fiction – historiographic metafiction – represents the postmodern structure of consciousness, yet also misrepresents it in various ways. This fiction is defined as "those well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 5) and which she puts forth as the best example of postmodernist fiction.

This type of fiction does, in her presentation, reflect the postmodern structure of consciousness, both in the consideration of the aesthetic as well as historical aspects that are the focus of Hutcheon's analysis. In terms of history, she suggests that such fiction destabilizes notions of the reality or factuality of historical knowledge, and presents such discourse as just that – a textualized phenomenon of narrative (following Hayden White among others). She argues that:

> History is not made obsolete: it is, however, being rethought – as a human construct. And in arguing that *history* does not exist except as text, it does not stupidly and 'gleefully' deny that the *past* existed, but only that its accessibility to us now is entirely conditioned by textuality. We cannot know the past except through its texts:

> its documents, its evidence, even its eye-witness accounts are *texts*. (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 16, original emphasis)

This reinforces the notion that there isn't an objective, outside, appellant to the veracity of such historical knowledge. The epistemological limitations, explicitly acknowledged in a postmodern structure, prohibit assertions as to the nature of history, limiting the field of historiography to the narrative forms similar, if not identical, to those of literature. Yet, as Rorty argues, this does not limit the potency of the combination of fictional narratives and historiography in a political sphere. Hutcheon argues that

> Works like Ismael Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo*, Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men*, and Gayl Jones's *Corregidora* have gone far to expose – very self-reflexively – the myth- or illusion-making tendencies of historiography. They have also linked race and/or gender difference to questions of discourse and of authority and power that are at the heart of the postmodernist enterprise in general and, in particular, of both black theory and feminism. (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 16)

This provides a link between the political efficacy of discourse based criticism, which Waugh was skeptical of, and the postmodernist fiction which Hutcheon promotes in historiographic metafiction. To the extent that Hutcheon argues that both the (meta)fictional elements and the historiographic elements within the fiction are equally shown to be constructions, it provides a perfect literary counterpart to the strong postmodern theory of Lyotard and Rorty.

However, Hutcheon doesn't simply argue that historiographic metafiction destabilizes the notion of objective truth, and reinforces a multiplicity of truths within its fictional bounds. Rather, she argues that historiographic metafiction, and postmodernist fiction in general, represent a paradox (or rather a series of paradoxes), which are shared by postmodern theorists as well. Hutcheon begins *The Poetics of Postmodernism* with the following claim: "for me, postmodernism is a contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts it challenges – be it in architecture, literature, painting, sculpture, film, video, dance, TV, music, philosophy, aesthetic theory, psychoanalysis, linguistics, or historiography' (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 3), further arguing that "postmodernism

cannot simply be used as a synonym for the contemporary" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 4). By arguing that postmodernism is defined by certain characteristics, in this case the contradictory nature of the phenomenon, it seems to follow that it isn't a chronological category (as has been argued elsewhere). Furthermore, she treats historiographic metafiction as simply one version of postmodernist fiction and stresses that the postmodern is not limited to the literary sphere. I contend that merely looking at characteristics such as those defining historiographic metafiction are too limiting, and represent symptoms (Aristotelian accidents) rather than the defining notion of postmodernism. While I agree that many of the examples that Hutcheon chooses, specifically many of those she identifies with historiographic metafiction, represent examples of postmodern fiction, I also feel that her presentation misrepresents the nature of postmodern structure.

In response to the idea that "postmodernism is a contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts it challenges," (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 3) I would argue that this belies a stance in which Hutcheon maintains the essential nature of some of the categories that she argues postmodernist fiction, and historiographic metafiction in particular, destabilizes. She does this in two ways. First, one of her arguments for historiographic metafiction is that it presents historical facts incorrectly, in order to destabilize the historiographic discourse. While arguing that this fiction

> refutes the natural or common-sense methods of distinguishing between historical fact and fiction … both by questioning the ground of [the truth] claim in historiography and by asserting that both history and fiction are discourses, human constructs, signifying systems, and both derive their major claim to truth from that identity (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 93)

she goes on to argue that the means by which history is challenged is through a mixing of true and false claims of history. "In novels like *Foe, Burning Water,* or *Famous Last Words,* certain known historical details are deliberately falsified in order to foreground the possible mnemonic failures of recorded history and the constant potential for both deliberate and

inadvertent error" (Hutcheon 114). This leads to epistemological problems, for how can a critic, or a reader, identify, with any certainty, what is or isn't 'historical fact'? This is even truer in today's digital age, where the authority of sources is constantly undermined by the vast amount of information that is in circulation, requiring other criteria to determine whatever sense of truth-value one wants to describe. While it has perhaps always been the case that we have assigned truth-value, however unwittingly, to religious figures, eyewitness accounts or an academic elite this becomes even more problematic in texts which, Hutcheon argues, seek deliberately to undermine the very authority that such discourse portends. Essentially, Hutcheon's version of historiographic metafiction relies upon recognizable and authoritative facts which can then be undermined by deliberately falsifying them within a text, destabilizing the reliability of those authoritative sources. However, if one already approached those texts with a doubt as to the veracity of all underlying facts (or were simply unaware of the potentiality of 'real world truth claims' made within any text), then this aspect of historiographic metafiction, in Hutcheon's critical analysis, loses all force. Thus her analysis relies upon a (late) modernist understanding of the truth to be undermined.

Secondly, she further argues that there is knowledge beyond that of the discourse of the texts to which she is referring, a status unsupported by the postmodern structure of the discourses she represents in historiographic metafiction. She argues that "postmodern discourses both install and then contest our traditional guarantees of knowledge, by revealing their gaps or circularities. They suggest no privileged access to reality. The real exists (and existed), but our understanding of it is always conditioned by discourses, by our different ways of talking about it" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 157). I would argue, however, what happens is not that postmodern discourses 'install' the traditional guarantees of knowledge, but only seemingly do so. What these texts do is play upon our pre-existing understanding of how literature works, in a metafictional/metacritical way, to undermine those very preconceptions.

Postmodernist fiction does not, as she argues, "install and then subvert" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 3), but subverts by the very pretense of installation something which it already assumes has no basis for installation. The difference is in whether the author or critic acknowledges, as Hutcheon here seems to, that "the real exists (and existed)" (*Poetics* 157) or whether we only assume that it does, and have acted in the past accordingly. Postmodern theory disavows us of those previous connotations, those classical and modernist structures, and literary postmodernism sets about modelling the postmodern structure of consciousness within the texts themselves.

Hutcheon also argues that postmodernist fiction reflects a blending not only of historical and literary discourses, but of genres and modes of the literary as well. However, both of these assertions are problematic, for much the same reason we have just discussed. She claims, in relation to historical subject matter that, "what such fiction also does, however, is problematize both the nature of the referent and its relation to the real, historical world by its paradoxical combination of metafictional self-reflexivity with historical subject matter" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 19). What such an assertion brings is the codification of historical subject matter as accurate and representative of a 'real, historical world' without its epistemological basis, but further brings into question the nature of referents in postmodernism altogether, something we will come back to when discussing intertextuality later in the chapter. She goes on to discuss the various aspects of literature into which postmodernist fiction is classified. "Historiographic metafiction clearly acknowledges that it is a complex institutional and discursive network of élite, official, mass, popular cultures that postmodernism operates in" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 21). While it does seem that postmodernism works within those categories, it does so by destabilizing the categories, not reinforcing them. That is, in fact, the largest difference between the modernist and postmodernist paradigm, in that a modernist structure of consciousness is seeking those very categories and treating them as actual entities

'out there', rather than constructed categories to be altered and removed at will. What postmodernism does is not to acknowledge the network of various cultures, but to point out existing understandings to demonstrate the constructedness of such discourse, not to 'operate in' but to undermine and deconstruct. Hutcheon further says, "I would argue that, as typically postmodernist contradictory texts, novels like these parodically use and abuse the conventions of both popular and élite literature, and do so in such a way that they can actually *use* the invasive culture industry to challenge its own commodification processes from within" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 20, original emphasis). As discussed above with the installation to historical 'fact', postmodernist fiction does not 'use and abuse the conventions' but only seems to do so. It activates our desires for closure in detective fiction, or our appeal to ontological stability in science fiction, only to render meaningless the very categories we tend to rely upon. So, while it does challenge the genres, it does so not through parody, which requires a true original to make the parodic viable, but rather renders trivial, and obsolete, those very criteria that have been set up, by demonstrating the lack of underpinning of its foundation.

> Rorty, Baudrillard, Foucault, Lyotard, and others seem to imply that any knowledge cannot escape complicity with some meta-narrative, with the fictions that render possible any claims to 'truth,' however provisional. What they add, however, is that *no* narrative can be a natural 'master' narrative: there are no natural hierarchies; there are only those we construct. It is this kind of self-implicating questioning that should allow postmodernist theorizing to challenge narratives that do presume to 'master' status, without necessarily assuming that status for itself. (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 13)

What postmodern theorists do is similar to the Socratic vantage point, a point of ignorance and knowledge at the same time. Socratic knowledge is limited only to the recognition that other assertions of knowledge are baseless, and postmodern theorists seek to point out the same thing, that the categories, genres, and modes in which we operate are, as far as we can tell, constructed by us, and can thus be altered. There is no larger, out there, appellant to the truth, no hierarchy, no 'master' narrative. Pointing this out does not create another 'master'

narrative, but rather frees us from both needing to use one, and from seeking out something for which there is no evidence. This is represented mimetically throughout postmodernist fiction, and often involves metafictional elements, as later chapters will demonstrate.

The literature that Hutcheon identifies and discusses as postmodern (examples of historiographic metafiction), and even much of her analysis, reinforces this reading of the nature of postmodernist fiction, which is not strictly limited to texts which blur history and fiction, or 'fact' and fiction, but extend to all levels of discourse and seem to mimetically present the structure of consciousness of the author, reader and critic simultaneously. In her analysis of the nature of history and fiction, she argues that such literature

> refutes the natural or common-sense methods of distinguishing between historical fact and fiction. It refuses the view that only history has a truth claim, both by questioning the ground of that claim in historiography and by asserting that both history and fiction are discourses, human constructs, signifying systems, and both derive their major claim to truth from that identity. (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 93)

In so identifying the fiction, she reinforces that there is no fundamental discourse that has primacy or necessary access to 'truth', but rather the contingent and consensus driven nature of meaning-making in both the historical and fictional fields. What she does not do, is suggest that this can be extended to other fields, and thus the example of historiographic metafiction is unnecessarily limiting.

She also identifies the methodology that the authors use which reinforces such a demonstration of postmodern structure within the diegetic frame of the novels themselves, relating the postmodernist work not only to the realm of the critic/reader but also to the structure of the novel as constructed by the author themselves. She argues (again, in a paradoxical way), that:

> In many historical novels, the real figures of the past are deployed to validate or authenticate the fictional world by their presence, as if to hide the joins between fiction and history in a formal and ontological sleight of hand. The metafictional self-reflexivity of postmodern novels prevents any such subterfuge, and poses that ontological join as a problem: how do we know the past? What do (what can) we know of it now? (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 115)

The status she identifies here as ontological is what Brian McHale calls the epistemological dominant, correlating it with modernist fiction. For McHale, the ontological complement, the focus on which world we live in, and how we function within it, represents postmodernist poetics (to be discussed further later in the chapter). Hutcheon argues that it isn't which questions that are asked as historiographic metafiction asks both types of questions. "Historiographic metafiction asks both epistemological and ontological questions. How do we know the past (or the present)? What is the ontological status of the past? Of its documents? Of our narratives?" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 50). I assert, however, that it is the structure of the answers to such questions, and not simply that they are posed, which makes the difference.

To provide a more concrete example, Hutcheon discusses the means by which historical novels, and historiographic metafiction, use historical detail. She presents the idea, from Lukács, that historical novels use such details to provide the weight of verifiability and thus lend the texts an air of authority, which fiction does not usually contain. She claims that historiographic metafiction contests this use in two ways. As we discussed above, she asserts that such fiction deliberately provides false information to undercut the sense of authority ascribed both to the novel, and to the common sense assertion of authority that history is afforded. That this is paradoxical does not completely detract from its use, as one can also claim that the air of authority of historical 'facts' are equally based on the notion of it being 'seemingly' or 'well-known to be true' and that the undermining of its authority also undermines the particular historical facts as well (in a Socratic style, disavowing the assertion of knowledge by exposing it as groundless). Secondly, she asserts that what these novels, like Ondaatje's *Running in the Family*, demonstrate is that "historiographic metafiction incorporates, but rarely assimilates these data. More often, the process of *attempting* to assimilate is what is foregrounded … As readers, we see both the collecting and the attempts

to make narrative order" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 114, original emphasis). Hutcheon's analysis of this phenomenon is to assert that such fiction presents a paradox, that both the reality and its inaccessibility are presented at once. "Historiographic metafiction acknowledges the paradox of the *reality* of the past but its *textualized accessibility* to us today" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 114, original emphasis). However, in so arguing, she is the one presenting such a paradox, for if the accessibility of such knowledge is only found through discourse, and textualized discourse, then there is no position, structurally, from which to assert the '*reality* of the past.' The novels in question would, of course, present only the attempt to stitch together the reality of the situation, as the nature of that past (or even its very ontological status) must remain unknown (given the postmodern structure of consciousness). There is no vantage point given, diegetically or extradiegetically, from which to assert anything other than the local truths that Eco and Lyotard have argued for. So, while Hutcheon often presents historiographic metafiction as enacting postmodernism, and serving as a model for the internal structure of consciousness, she herself continues to assert access to something outside that structure, belying (as mentioned earlier with Jameson and Waugh) ties to a, perhaps unconscious, modernist structure driving her analysis.

What the concept of historiographic metafiction (and some other works like *Postmodernist Fiction* by Brian McHale) does well is change the discussion fundamentally to how postmodernism works, as opposed to when it is manifested, which allows postmodern theory and literature to stand on its own merits. That postmodernism is historically contextualized is not in doubt, but by so defining the concept, their focus is on what literature is (and is doing) as opposed to when (historically, or even, as McHale occasionally argues, within the œvre of an author which would imply a teleological component Hutcheon's analysis doesn't allow). This shift to characteristics is important, but Hutcheon is not the first

to focus on the characteristics. Perhaps the most prominent theorist who proposes a list of characteristics of postmodernism is Ihab Hassan.

> This is the Tragic View of Categories.
> Terms like Romanticism, Modernism, and Postmodernism
> are more or less useful and necessary fictions:
> roughly approximate maps,
> more likely to lead us to something like a destination
> if we don't confuse them with that they're meant to be maps of.
> (John Barth, *Further Fridays* 114)

Characteristically Postmodern

As mentioned towards the beginning of the introduction, Ihab Hassan attempted to move scholarship on postmodernism towards an all-encompassing definition, based on the characteristics that one found in the discourse surrounding it and within texts considered postmodern. He argues, in 'Toward a Concept of Postmodernism', that in some sense we already had (in 1982) a working concept of postmodernism, although it was not yet fully articulated: "we continually discover 'antecedents' of postmodernism … What this really indicates is that we have created in our mind a model of postmodernism, a particular typology of culture and imagination, and have proceeded to 'rediscover' the affinities of various authors and different moments with that model" (Hassan 89). Hassan's project is to "bring us closer to [postmodernism's] historical and theoretical definition" (Hassan 92). He does so through providing a rubric, pairs of words in opposition, intended as "certain schematic differences from modernism" (Hassan 91) which would provide insight into a more sustained definition. The list is as follows:

Arrow (Up/Down)	Arrow (Left/Right)
Modernism	Postmodernism
Romanticism/Symbolism	Pataphysics/Dadaism
Form (conjunctive/closed)	Antiform (disjunctive/open)
Purpose	Play
Design	Chance
Hierarchy	Anarchy
Mastery/Logos	Exhaustion/Silence
Art Object/Finished Work	Process/Performance/Happening
Distance	Participation

Creation/Totalization	Decreation/Deconstruction
Synthesis	Antithesis
Presence	Absence
Centering	Dispersal
Genre/Boundary	Text/Intertext
Semantics	Rhetoric
Paradigm	Syntagm
Hypotaxis	Parataxis
Metaphor	Metonymy
Selection	Combination
Root/Depth	Rhizome/Surface
Interpretation/Reading	Against Interpretation/Misreading
Signified	Signifier
Lisible (Readerly)	*Scriptible* (Writerly)
Narrative/*Grande Histoire*	Anti-narrative/*Petite Histoire*
Master Code	Idiolect
Symptom	Desire
Type	Mutant
Genital/Phallic	Polymorphous/Androgynous
Paranoia	Schizophrenia
Origin/Cause	Difference-Difference/Trace
God the Father	The Holy Ghost
Metaphysics	Irony
Determinacy	Indeterminacy
Transcendence	Immanence (Hassan 91-2)

The modernist list is, to a certain degree, coherent, and harkens back to definitions of modernism as a form of literature which attempts to find new rules and ways of mimetically representing an existing, yet shifting, world. Modernist writers can be described as those authors who have developed and worked with new forms, new styles, which disrupt contemporary artistic practiced and discourse. Prominent in descriptions of modernism lies the avant-garde, the various movements of which (especially in the early parts of the twentieth century) attempted to 'make it new' not only with new forms and styles, but also exploring untapped subject matter, matter deemed either inappropriate, taboo, or simply beneath notions of artistic expression. Modernist experiments are often seen as looking for new ways to recover the lost order in the wake of skepticism related to previous grande narratives like religion and other cultural myths of the past, but function fundamentally with the same structure, one which uses the lack of the narrative as the vantage point to justify its

recovery. Hassan's 'modernist' rubric can be explained as a set of related criteria to such a central position.

The **up and down arrow** implies **hierarchy**, as the axis of consideration is one of height and depth (visual cues for the reader/scholar). **Root/Depth** is similarly aligned. A hierarchical structure implies a particular viewpoint which is either given or accessible (assumable), within the discourse. In religious discourse **God the Father** is applicable, and in other discourses the nature of **centering**, a focus on the **genital/phallic** (say in Freudian psychoanalysis, as the constrictive social norms on polymorphous desire – even his term perversion reinforces a hierarchical structure, even if he passes no judgments on its implementation in ethical/moral terms). **Transcendence** is made possible only with an up/down hierarchical structure, as it implies rising above. There would, necessarily, need to be two worlds (realms, levels), with one situated 'above' the other. Such a vantage point also allows for the epistemological underpinning of the nature of a **master code, totalization** or a **Narrative/*Grande Histoire*** (though I don't believe they are synonymous, and contend that small n narrative exists for petite histoire as well). The same vantage point functions also for **Mastery/Logos** (again not identically, but both mastery and logos are viable through this structure). Logos itself can have many definitions, but in academia it is often used in the Greek sense of an argument, and as the root for logic (which is implicitly unified). As such, logos is tied to a number of the other concepts on the list, such as **metaphor** with its notion of a distinct implied relationship between the concepts, the nature of **signified** as tied to a 'real world' object and a relationship to the truth (again, possible with such a structure). Also related are the natures of the **Art Object/Finished Work** in which the author's intention is realized, through a sense of **purpose** or **design**. Such a **Form** remains **closed** to a certain amount of **interpretation/reading**(s) as one would expect in **Symbolism**, which reinforced the concepts of **Genre/Boundary** (boundary serving as a constraint defining the genre itself)

and **type**. This point of view allows for a certain amount of **determinacy** through concepts such as correct interpretations, grounding in the real world, reality, and truth, as deemed possible in such a structure, even if they aren't necessarily present.

While the modernist rubric is coherent, the postmodern rubric seems to contain a set of characteristics which, while in opposition to specific items on the modernist list, do not cohere into a single movement, mode, or school of thought. Brian McHale argues that this is typical of the approach of defining postmodernism through lists of characteristics, specifically when those are presented in opposition to modernism.

> In all these cases, the oppositions tend to be piecemeal and unintegrated; that is, we can see how a particular postmodernist feature stands in opposition to its modernist counterpart, but we cannot see how postmodernist poetics as a whole stands in opposition to modernist poetics as a whole, since neither of the opposed sets of features has been interrogated for its underlying systematicity. (McHale, *Postmodernist* 7)

In interrogating Hassan's postmodern list, it seems that some of the terms work as McHale suggests, as functional opposites to the modernist counterpart, without coalescing into a consistent structure with which we can define postmodernism, while others point to an underlying pattern that could form such an explanation.[24] Basically, the terms on the right side of Hassan's rubric do not all point to the same phenomenon and, as I will show below, some of them actually reinforce the modernist pattern from the left side of the list. In addition, there are a number of terms which could be interpreted as belonging to either side, which indicates that those terms themselves are not good indicators of either modernism or postmodernism, but rather that the underlying concepts of modernism and postmodernism is what drives their inclusion on one or the other of the lists.

Firstly, the notion of **paradigm**atic and **syntagm**atic semiotics, as one of the dualisms that Hassan presents, falls into the camp of being a pair of opposites which do not accurately

[24] I contend that the left side of the list forms a coherent picture of modernism, as understood by Hassan and against which he was attempting to define postmodernism (in 1982). While understandings of modernism have shifted up to 1982, and continue to do so, especially in terms of new post-millennial scholarship, I argue that Hassan's modernist list stands up to interrogation (though my focus is on postmodernism here).

reflect the modernism/postmodernism split. Understood in relation to other terms like **selection/combination**, and **signified/signifier**, this concept relates two halves of various linguistic systems of meanings. While the paradigm and syntagm function on different axes – related to the substitution, or selection, of individual linguistic elements, or the combination of said linguistic elements – both involve the construction of meaning. That construction can happen either with the understanding that there are fixed definitions related to each linguistic element, or with the understanding that these elements are endlessly mutable and agreed upon arbitrarily. Those perspectives on the underlying sense of meaning-making is not dependent upon which axis is considered, but how one understands the relationship between text and meaning, on either axis. So, while these perspectives are opposites, they are not on opposite sides of the modernism/postmodernism debate. The same could be said for **art object/finished work** and **performance/happening** as the contingency of the work, and the openness to interpretation (and the multiplicity of interpretations), is apart from the seeming completeness of the work of art or the seeming spontaneity of a performance or happening (which are not necessarily more contingent than a 'finished' work).[25]

Other elements on the postmodernism rubric seem to similarly represent opposition instead of cohesion with a new postmodern definition. **Interpretation/reading**, which was related to concepts like **symbolism** and **form**, again seem to relate more to the modernist structure (or structure of consciousness) than its opposite. **Against interpretation/misreading** implies an absence and seems to be two concepts elided in their opposition. Against interpretation represents a negative, and skepticism, as opposed to openness and multiplicity (**open** and **polymorphous** are also on the list). Postmodernism could as easily be characterized as adopting a myriad of interpretations, rather than being

[25] Crocean aesthetics, for example, works under the assumption that all works of art (finished objects, performances, happenings, drafts, etc) function as a starting point in an aesthetic development within the mind of the artist, similar to nature itself, and that the product of the artistic endeavor is actually an imperfect imitation of the true art object, which remains always solely within the mind of the artist.

opposed to interpretation in general. Misreading, however, would imply a modernist structure, as it would require knowledge of a 'correct' reading to render something a 'misreading.' Wayne Booth invokes that sense in *A Rhetoric of Irony*, when discussing a student who 'missed' the irony in *Pride and Prejudice*.

> "I have here accused my student, who is unfortunately not here to give his own version of the incident, of *misreading* – not of having an interesting alternative hypothesis or of merely disagreeing with me or of discovering an eighth type of ambiguity; I have said that he made a flat mistake, and I feel a great deal of confidence that everyone who has read *Pride and Prejudice* attentively will agree with me" (Booth 2).

While modernism allows for, and seeks, interpretation and readings, leading eventually to unearthed truth (even if hidden, or difficult to uncover), postmodernism is opposed to that not in the sense that 'misreadings' are appropriate, but in the notion that the evaluation of a reading cannot be accurately ascribed to anyone in particular (who has authority to determine a proper 'reading', and from what structural position?). Booth here insists he has such authority (in the face of his student), but then derives that authority from consensus, asserting as much that there isn't an underlying truth, as that we, discerning, attentive readers of *Pride and Prejudice* decide what is appropriate. Presumably, if no one 'got' the irony Booth refers to, then we would all read the passage in question (and the novel itself) quite differently.[26] The notion of misreading is often used as opposed to a generally acceptable reading, thus a reading against the grain is characterized as a misreading. However, I contend this use of vocabulary reinforces a notion of a correct and incorrect reading which postmodern structure disdains. Using a postmodern structure of consciousness, the notion of reading need necessarily be contingent, so the label 'misreading' would be, well, misleading whereas a conventional/unconventional reading, or traditional/untraditional reading label might highlight such a contingency, though simply 'reading' (one thinks of *differance*) would be more appropriate. **Antithesis** would similarly reinforce the concept of the dialectic, so while

[26] I will take up irony, and its status vis-à-vis postmodernism, later in the chapter.

it is in some sense an opposition to **synthesis**, in other ways it belongs to the same system, with synthesis representing a furthering of the process and antithesis a temporary stalling until things can be 'made new'. Postmodernism is incredulous towards this progressive dialectic process. The oppositions of **type** and **mutant** and those of **genre/boundary** and **text/intertext** work similarly. Mutant is simply deviance from type, so a mutant reinforces the nature of a type, and not absence of type or the inability to differentiate types (which would be a more postmodern opposition). Genre functions similarly to type, but on a literary/media plane instead of an ontological one. Text is opposite in terms of being specific rather than general, but specificity is not limited to postmodernism. Perhaps Hassan intends to relate openness with this specificity, as text is connected to intertext, and Kristeva's definition of intertextuality allows such freedom. We will return to her definition and its consequences for our understanding of postmodern structure later in this chapter.

Another set of concepts relates spatially to the idea of **transcendence** and **hierarchy** from the first list. **Arrow (left-right**) and **surface** are both diametrically opposed to **arrow (up-down**) and **depth**. However, surface is paired, on the postmodernism list, with **rhizome**. This is a misrepresentation of the spatial metaphor of the rhizome, if understood including lines of flight within the Deleuzean framework. In addition to the rhizome being infinitely three-dimensional, the notion of a surface/depth dynamic plays upon various preconceptions within conventional discourse. Depth is viewed as meaningful and profound, while surface is viewed as the lack of depth. Again, they are opposites, but it then characterizes postmodernism as meaningless and superficial, which is not consistent with postmodern theory. As I argue, rhizome is actually the best spatial metaphor for rendering the postmodern structure of consciousness, as it encompasses several of the other concepts within itself as well as pointing to the discrepancies between the items on the postmodern rubric and the notion of postmodernism. A consequence of the rhizome, and its lack of the vantage point

characteristic of the modernist structure, is **indeterminacy**. This is one of Hassan's two major characteristics (together with **immanence)**, which he extrapolates from the list, in the article "Culture, Indeterminacy and Immanence," introducing his neologism 'indetermanence.' The notion of indeterminacy is also characterized as negative, and perhaps, following Rorty, new terms should be utilized. This notion implies an inability to determine, an inscrutability of terminology rather than a structural difference. Hassan defines the term (using analogies) stating: "indeterminacy fills the space between the will to unmaking (dispersal, deconstruction, discontinuity, etc.) and its opposite, the integrative will. Cultural indeterminacy, however, reveals itself with greater cunning and valency; choice, pluralism, fragmentation, contingency, imagination are only a few of its ambiguous aspects" (Hassan 65). I use the term uncertainty, instead of Hassan's term, as a means of reflecting the nature of the postmodern project, which allows for limited, contingent assertions as long as they are alterable. This is consistent with the notions of **participation** and the **petite histoire** (while the notion of **anti-narrative**, as alluded to earlier, reinforces a fixed notion of what a narrative should be, rather than allowing for narrative to have an open, contingent definition, much as was argued in the critique of Hutcheon earlier). Both of these terms allow for contingent knowledge, and a democratic nature of meaning-making (for local concepts), presenting the fragmentation (as things are not universalizable) and the notion of pluralism (as no one viewpoint has standing to assert its validity over myriad others). Similarly, Derridean **deconstruction** and the notions of **difference-differance** are also consistent with the contingent epistemology of the rhizomatic structure. Barthes description of the ***scriptable*** includes a spatial metaphor which could also be described as rhizomatic, and is consistent with a postmodern structure of consciousness (though his notion is limited to the literary, and the postmodern structure is not limited to this particular field, I argue, but is a metaphor which is valid for notions of postmodernism in many areas).

The notion of **immanence**, related to the notion of the **The Holy Ghost**, is also put forth as a special case by Hassan. He takes the notion from Charles Altieri, who considers it as a foundational concept of postmodern poetics. His claim is that "it is immanence that now constitutes the ground of (postmodern) poetics" (Hassan 76). Both of these notions, immanence and the Holy Ghost, imply a universal relationship between all points, undeniable connections. I would contend, however, that immanence only is conceivable, not actual, when understanding the nature of literary postmodernism. While all connections are equally valid (there is no reason, even conceptually, to discern between them), that does not imply that all connections have been, or necessarily will be, made. The notion is thus the theoretical possibility of immanence, not the ubiquity of the Holy Ghost, but a potentially limitless **intertextuality**.

In sum, Hassan's 'postmodern' list presents three types of terms. It presents terms which represent diametric opposition to their paired terms from the modernist list, but which still reinforce a modernist framework. It presents terms which could, arguably, belong to either list depending on the perspective of the scholar. As such, those terms seem not to get at the heart of what postmodernism (or modernism) are, but reveal underlying assumptions about that mode based upon the argumentation of the scholar, and thus are not good terms upon which to base a definition. Finally, there are some terms, revolving around the term **rhizome** and associated terms, which seem to coalesce around the spatial metaphor I lay out as the postmodern structure of consciousness, which forms the basis for my reductive definition of postmodernism. Before proceeding to an expanded explanation of my definition, however, I will discuss a few of the terms which are taken often as either defining characteristics or fundamental to the postmodern condition. These terms – metafiction, parody, intertextuality, play, and irony – I will argue fall into the second set of terms here, rather than functioning as defining characteristics. It is not these concepts themselves but how they are utilized in a

given literary context that determines whether a text is postmodern (or follows a postmodern structure of consciousness). How this works for each term will be discussed in detail below.

> If Realism called it like it saw it, Metafiction simply called it as it saw itself seeing itself see it.
> (David Foster Wallace, *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again: Essays and Arguments*)

Metafiction

The juxtaposition of the term 'postmodernism' with rival terms like 'surfiction' (Federman), 'anti-realist fiction' (Guerard 1976), 'new fiction' (Stevick 1977) and most prominently 'metafiction' (Scholes 1979, Gass 1980, Waugh 1984, Hutcheon 1984) is a common argument about postmodernism, and is one of the reasons that metafiction and postmodernism are often seen as synonymous, with metafiction seen as either a type of postmodernist fiction or, more often, as the exemplary form of postmodernism.[27] Neither of those is accurate, although there is certainly overlap in those works of literature which can be seen as postmodern and examples of metafiction. Mark Currie asserts as much in his introduction to *Metafiction*. "Metafiction is not the only kind of postmodern fiction, and nor is it an exclusively postmodern kind of fiction. It is neither the paradigm nor a subset of postmodernism" (Currie 15).

Metafiction is a critical term that gained prevalence in the 1970s, coined originally in William Gass's article 'Philosophy and the Form of Fiction', which has come to stand for "fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" (Waugh *Metafiction* 2).[28] The notion of literature that discusses its own artifice, and thus presents the

[27] Paul Maltby makes this argument in *Dissident Postmodernists*, from which learned of and found references to both 'anti-realist fiction' and 'new fiction.' Linda Hutcheon uses the term 'historiographic metafiction', which we have discussed elsewhere.

[28] The literary history of the time presents a lot of scholars attempting to define the prevalence of self-reflexive fiction in the 1960s. Waugh notes that "similar modes have been variously termed 'the introverted novel', 'the anti-novel,' 'irrealism,' 'surfiction,' 'the self-begetting novel,' 'fabulation'" (Waugh *Metafiction* 13-4). Raymond Federman, discussed earlier in the chapter, was the proponent of surfiction, which he defines as "that kind of fiction that tries to explore the possibilities of fiction; the kind of fiction that challenges the tradition that

breakdown of diegetic and extradiegetic worlds is not new, or unique to contemporary literature. It is prevalent in 'postmodern' texts but also appears in well-known examples such as Lawrence Sterne's *The Life and Times of Tristam Shandy* (1759) and Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1605/15). The historical breadth of the term, when confronted with the postmodern use of metafiction, causes scholars like Mark Currie trouble when trying to define metafiction. Rather than presenting metafiction as simply self-reflexive fiction, he argues that "terms like 'metafiction' and 'postmodernism' are not sustained by any common essence among their referents" (Currie 15). In so asserting, he then calls for a different kind of definition, "a non-essentialist definition, one which does not name a single common essence between metafictions but which designates a kind of problem in the philosophy of language, an irreducible difference and a non-identity: not a precise typological configuration of the relation of metafiction to postmodernism, but a postmodern definition of metafiction" (Currie 15).

The formulation 'a postmodern definition of metafiction' is exactly what is troubling about the elision of differences between metafiction and postmodernism. If one can present a postmodern definition of a concept, then that concept cannot also be used as a defining characteristic of postmodernism. Metafiction, whether defined essentially or non-essentially, should be defined independently of the notion of postmodernism, as the historical referents for metafiction and postmodernism are not concurrent. There are many examples of metafiction which are not consistent with postmodernism. However, Linda Hutcheon is the example Currie points to of a scholar who asserts (historiographic) metafiction as the exemplary form of postmodernism. She claims, of historiographic metafiction, that "this kind of fiction has often been noticed by critics, but its paradigmatic quality has been passed by: it is commonly labelled in terms of something else" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 5).

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governs it; the kind of fiction that constantly renews our faith in man's imagination and not in man's distorted vision of reality – that reveals man's irrationality rather than man's rationality" (Federman 7).

Patricia Waugh's identification of metafiction in her seminal work on the topic, *Metafiction*, also conflates the concepts of postmodernism and metafiction in elements of her argument. She argues, as I will later, that there are essentially three periods of literature. The first period, which I label classical, presents "forms of fiction derived from a firm belief in a commonly experienced, objectively existing world of history" (Waugh, *Metafiction* 6). This period is also consistent with realism. The second, claimed by Waugh specifically as modernist, was "written in the earlier part of this century" and "responded to the initial loss of belief in such a world" (*Metafiction* 6). This period contains a series of movements looking for a replacement of such a belief, or means to understand the world given this loss of belief. The successive avant-garde movements, now all considered part of a larger modernism, conform to this definition, and I use the term modernist to describe this structure as well. Finally, she evokes "contemporary metafictional writing" as "both a response and a contribution to an even more thoroughgoing sense that reality or history are provisional: no longer a world of eternal verities but a series of constructions, artifices, impermanent structures" (Waugh, *Metafiction* 6-7). This last description is consistent with postmodern definitions of fiction, and descriptions of postmodernity in general. In addition to these three eras of fiction, Waugh contends that metafiction is found throughout the history of literature, and "that metafiction is a tendency or function inherent in *all* novels. … By studying metafiction, one is, in effect, studying that which gives the novel its identity" (Waugh, *Metafiction* 5). However, she doesn't want to present all (metafictional) novels as functioning in the same way, and later reserves the term metafictional for certain uses of frame-breaking and self-reflexivity. In discussing George Eliot's *Adam Bede*, she notes that Eliot breaks the frame, casting doubt on the traditional notions of realistic literature and challenging the neat divisions of diegetic and extradiegetic information. Such frame-breaks, she argues, if presented in a limited fashion, don't serve the purpose of undermining the realism, but rather

reinforce it. She argues that although certain nineteenth-century novelists like Eliot often 'break the frame' and

> although the intrusive commentary of nineteenth-century fiction may at times be metalingual (referring to the fictional codes themselves), it functions mainly to aid the readerly concretization of the world of the book by forming a bridge between the historical and the fictional worlds. It suggest that the one is merely a continuation of the other, and it is thus not metafictional (Waugh, *Metafiction* 32).

So, while earlier she uses the term for all self-reflexive fiction, here she separates the metalingual and the metafictional. While the notion of a 'meta' fiction seems to imply a discussion of fiction above the level of the text itself, Waugh wants to use the term to discuss not fiction which discusses fiction, or fiction which discusses its own artifice, but fiction which moves further to present the breakdown of the boundaries between fiction and reality. Rather than the resolution inherent in a novel of realism, in which the frame is broken in order to reinforce the hierarchy of fiction and reality, the exception that proves the rule, Waugh here argues that "metafiction *displays* and *rejoices in* the impossibility of such a resolution and thus clearly reveals the basic identity of the novel as genre" (Waugh, *Metafiction* 6).[29] In so doing, Waugh defines metafiction doubly, both as all texts which expose fiction as artifice, in all its ubiquitous forms, and as limited to those texts which revel in the lack of resolution to the breakdown of boundaries between fiction and reality. This tension is what causes Mark Currie to seek new definitions of metafiction when confronted with such postmodernism inspired readings of the term, and I would argue that what Waugh is presenting in her latter definition of metafiction is essentially a postmodern metafiction, separate from the nineteenth-century variety of metafiction, frame-breaking, which she

[29] She argues that "the principle of a fundamental and sustained opposition: the construction of a fictional illusion (as in traditional realism) and the laying bare of that illusion. In other words, the lowest common denominator of metafiction is simultaneously to create a fiction and to make a statement about the creation of that fiction." (Waugh, *Metafiction* 6). She claims that this is present in all fiction, to some degree, as she states "this oppositional process is to some extent present in all fiction" (Waugh, *Metafiction* 6), though she argues strongly for the current period (whether that is the late twentieth century, or postmodernism) is unique due to the death of the "materialist, positivist, and empiricist world-view" (Waugh, *Metafiction* 7). Thus metafiction is both ubiquitous and fundamental to fiction in general, but particularly prevalent and relevant in the contemporary era. The difficulty with that reading is that metafiction, understood that broadly, cannot then be used to explain or define the contemporary era, and its new use of metafiction.

relabels metalingual. Both Waugh's double definition and Currie's call for a non-essentialist definition emphasize the already established understanding of postmodernism which runs through attempts to define metafiction, casting doubt on any attempts to use this term, metafiction, as a defining term of postmodernism. Metafiction, as Waugh and many other scholars have asserted, can be found throughout history, and as such is not an essential (though oft found) component of postmodernism.

> What we need is not great works but playful ones …
> A story is a game someone has played so you can play it too
> (Ronald Sukenik 'Death of the Novel' 56-7)

'All the world's a stage' – Parody, Play and Intertextuality

Linda Hutcheon, in *The Politics of Postmodernism*, argues that parody, in its terms of violating the illusion of the fiction and thus calling into question it fictionality, is an exemplary postmodern mode. "Parody is a perfect postmodern form, in some senses, for it paradoxically both incorporates and challenges that which it parodies. It also forces a reconsideration of the idea of origin or originality that is compatible with other postmodern interrogations of liberal humanist assumptions" (Hutcheon, *Politics* 11). However, it seems that parody requires determinations and divisions which are inconsistent with many forms of postmodern theory.

Waugh claims that "parody and inversion are two strategies which operate in this way as frame-breaks" and she goes on to argue that the setting up of a frame and subsequently shattering such an illusion is part of the "essential deconstructive method of metafiction" (Waugh, *Metafiction* 31). While inversion highlights the artifice in formal structure of the literary texts, parody works through a less explicit relationship with the original text, and requires two distinct levels of understanding, one serious and the other in terms of ridicule. It also requires a mutual understanding of the meaning behind the parody (with both the author and reader agreeing upon the tone) for it to work. Abrams defines parody as the form which

"imitates the serious manner and characteristic features of a particular literary work, or the distinctive style of a particular author … and deflates the original by applying the imitation to a lowly or comically inappropriate subject" (Abrams 38). Thus, it works on essentialized concepts of both serious and low forms of art, utilizing those fixed norms to provide the comic effect of the parody. This reinforces generic categories, and a sense of serious literature, which is not interrogated in this development. In fact, Waugh goes on to claim that "because parody has been considered mainly as a form of criticism, it has been regarded as a sign of generic exhaustion" (Waugh, *Metafiction* 69), as exposing the norms of a genre to ridicule removes their power, and leads to a shifting towards other generic categories. She also argues that such a critique is a conscious literary strategy, one often taken up by postmodernism (but not exclusively) which "deliberately sets itself up to break norms that have become conventionalized" (Waugh, *Metafiction* 65).

Hutcheon argues, like Waugh, that parody is a time-honored form of literature. She finds it "a dominant mode of much modernist art, especially the writing of T.S. Eliot, Thomas Mann, and James Joyce" (Hutcheon, *Politics* 95). However, modernism and postmodernism have different points of view, and as such the use of parody in modernist literature and postmodernist literature is reflected differently. The difference "is not that modernism was serious and significant and postmodernism is ironic and parodic, as some have claimed; it is more that postmodernism's irony is one that rejects the resolving urge of modernism towards closure or at least distance" (Hutcheon, *Politics* 95). With such a claim, Hutcheon asserts that modernist parody and postmodernist parody function differently, or at least have different outcomes through their use of parody. Both Hutcheon and Waugh assert a value in the use of the term parody, in which the original is both reinforced and subverted through the act of appropriation, as a postmodern critique, in the "foregrounding of those very contradictions" (Hutcheon, *Politics* 94). However, in such an assertion, they differentiate a form of parody in

postmodernism which differs from other parodic texts, and as such it becomes the adjective, *postmodern*, which is the operative term in how the parody functions, the position the (parodic) artist stakes out, and the interpretation both scholars make of such artists value. Dominick LaCapra argues that "a certain use of irony and parody may play a role both in the critique of ideology and in the anticipation of a polity wherein commitment does not exclude but accompanies an ability to achieve critical distance on one's deepest commitments and desires" (LaCapra 128, cited in Hutcheon, *Politics* 101) to which Hutcheon asserts "Postmodernism offers precisely that 'certain use of irony and parody'" (Hutcheon, *Politics* 101). Yet, if postmodernism only uses parody (and irony, to which we will return) in a certain way, then it seems that parody cannot be a defining notion of postmodernism itself.

While in much of her argumentation, Hutcheon asserts a use of parody which concurs with Abrams' definition, she also asserts, in establishing parody's validity to the discussion, that "parody – often called ironic quotation, pastiche, appropriation, or intertextuality – is usually considered central to postmodernism, but by its detractors and its defenders" (Hutcheon, *Politics* 93), which conflates the idea of parody with less hierarchical terms like appropriation and intertextuality, as well as the notion of quotation, which removes the ridicule element, and the sense of pastiche. Fredric Jameson argues, essentially, that postmodern parody isn't the correct term, as parody has distinct motivations, which postmodernism does not share.

> In this situation parody finds itself without a vocation; it has lived, and that strange new thing pastiche slowly comes to take its place. Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style, the wearing of a linguistic mask, speech in a dead language. But it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without any of parody's ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter and of any conviction that alongside the abnormal tongue you have momentarily borrowed, some healthy linguistic normality still exists. Pastiche is thus blank parody, a statue with blind eyeballs: it is to parody what that other interesting and historically original modern thing, the practice of a kind of blank irony, is to what Wayne Booth calls the 'stable ironies' of the eighteenth century. (Jameson 17)

Arguably, while parody retains the dual hierarchical notion of the original and its follower – regardless whether one considers the parody as extracting value from a dead genre or as an inferior mocking copy of a reinforced potent predecessor – pastiche has no such pretense. While Hutcheon critiques Jameson's position as one of disavowal of contemporary possibilities of uniqueness, I would argue that pastiche presents a postmodern variety of citation which need not reinforce or sit in supplication of an original, but simply provides an interweaving of the already conceived. This aligns with Kristeva's notion of intertextuality, which recognizes the openness of any work. "The theory of intertextuality insists that a text … cannot exist as a hermetic system or self-sufficient whole. … Firstly, the writer is a reader of texts … before s/he is a creator of texts, and therefore the work of art is inevitably shot through with references, quotations and influences of every kind" (Still 1). Keeping in mind notions like Barthes' 'Death of the Author' and the constant invocation of new and intricate connections that readers/consumers continue to make, intertextuality, and by proxy pastiche, seem to reflect the postmodern structure of consciousness more than the notion of parody. Unlike parody, pastiche does not rely upon authorial intention, instead opening up a space for the reader as a creator of texts. In essence, it exposes the possibility for both the author and reader to engage in the language games openly, and explicitly.

The engagement in language games has been termed the 'play' of writing. Critics of postmodernism often point to its playfulness, and assert, as a consequence, a lack of seriousness for the mode. This is implicit in terms of Hassan's dichotomies, where **play** (associated with immaturity, childishness, pretense and make-believe) is contrasted with **purpose**, and purpose being seen as a fundamental aspect of maturity and sincerity. Play, of course, like many of the concepts identified as postmodern characteristics, is not limited to postmodern literature, but is a fundamental aspect of all writing, or even aesthetics in

general.[30] Waugh argues that "all art is 'play' in its creation of other symbolic worlds" (Waugh, *Metafiction* 34) and more specifically about literature she asserts "not only that literary fiction is a form of play (if a very sophisticated form) but that play is an important and necessary aspect of human society" (Waugh, *Metafiction* 34).

These games can have consequence, or simply be explorations of the intricacies of language, with no discernable ulterior motivation. The interpretation of these games is as implicit in their understanding as the juxtaposition of the words themselves, and such interpretation is dependent not only on the reader, but also on the context in which works are read. When considering metafiction, Waugh states that "Play is facilitated by rules and roles, and metafiction operates by exploring fictional rules to discover how we each 'play' our own realities" (Waugh, *Metafiction* 35). In so doing, she postulates play as operating within, and across, the boundaries set up both socially and in the realm of literature. As we have seen with metafiction, the use of play can be seen to reinforce such boundaries, or demonstrate their contingency and ultimately expose them as arbitrary and dependent upon consensus to operate.

Donna Haraway, in her manifesto on the cyborg, presents play as a very serious concept, one which has a political dimension. Similar to Rorty, she argues against the notion of fixed external language. She claims that

> with no available original dream of a common language or original symbiosis promising protection from hostile 'masculine' separation, but written into the play of a text that has no finally privileged reading or salvation history, to recognize 'oneself' as fully implicated in the world, frees us of the need to root politics in identification, vanguard parties, purity, and mothering (Haraway 176)

Here Haraway presents play in a world without a center, organizing principle and as such she postulates a freedom to utilize terms more freely, taking advantage of this condition, arguably the postmodern condition, to promote a progressive feminist politics.

[30] Johan Huizinga in 1939 even argues for play as a foundational aspect of culture.

Derrida's notion of play is equally applicable here, as he defines play similarly to Waugh, but focuses on the play of substitutions as a language game. Play is then possible in two scenarios. It could function in a centered structure, where "the concept of a play based on a fundamental ground, a play constituted on the basis of a fundamental immobility and reassuring certitude, which itself is beyond the reach of play" (Derrida 279). In such a structure, the play would be both limited and opened up by the fixity of the structure, but the freedom to play would ultimately be limited by the structure. Alternatively, in a structure that rejects totalization, play would be allowed to proceed uninhibited. Such a "field of infinite substitutions … [has] something missing from it: a center which arrests and grounds the play of substitutions" (Derrida 289). Those two alternatives function on opposite sides of what Derrida calls the 'rupture,' which corresponds to the break between modernism and postmodernism, with the centered structure functioning in the ways which I term a modernist structure of consciousness, and the nontotalization corresponding to the postmodern, which Haraway also describes. Play, however, functions the same way in either structure, it is the structural limitations on its free expression which changes. 'Free play' or the ability to play freely is a sign or symptom of postmodernism, but not the cause of the 'rupture', simply an identifiable consequence. That is what leads to Haraway's concerns, and her notions that 'play is serious'- it is not that play is serious per se, but rather it is that the consequence of the lack of limitations on play allows for progressive politics, in her eye. As such, this use of play is not simply our common sense notion of play as an alternative to purpose or work, and using those dichotomies fails to capture Haraway's sense. Due to the Derridean rupture, play is found in both modernist and postmodernist structures, and as such cannot define postmodernism. It is not play that defines the structure; it is the structure that defines the freeness of the play.

Julius: The final irony, I think, is to be found rather in that it seems to be becoming impossible for you to talk about irony without being ironic.

Lorenzo: I'm afraid that it's exactly the other way around.
Where's the irony, when in bitter earnest one doesn't know where one's at?
And the more I think about it, the more incomprehensible it becomes.
(Friedrich Schlegel, *Lucinde and the Fragments*)

Isn't it Ironic? – Postmodern Irony

As many have done, in her *New Critical Idiom* volume, *Irony*, Claire Colebrook asserts that "our entire epoch, as postmodern, is ironic" (Colebrook 18).[31] Irony has become one of the most oft cited defining characteristics of postmodernism. It has, in fact, been taken up as a central facet of reactions to postmodernism, to the extent that subsequent movements have been labelled 'postironic' by Tore Rye Andersen who states that "opgøret med ironien stadig udgør et af de helt central projekter for den nye forfattergeneration" [the showdown with irony still forms one of the fundamental projects of the new generation of authors] (Andersen, *Den nye amerikansk roman* 63, my translation).[32]

How would one define an age as ironic, or post-ironic? In order to do so, we would need to know what we mean by irony. Samuel Johnson's definition is "a mode of speech of which the meaning is contrary to the words" (quoted in Enright 4-5), and Kierkegaard notes that it is "like a riddle and its solution possessed simultaneously" (quoted in Enright 3). What both of these definitions provide is the sense that an ironic statement requires both contradiction and truth, an implicit understanding that the words on the page 'actually mean' something other than what they say. However, another aspect of this mode is that it needs to

[31] Although the argument that postmodernism is/was an age of irony is common, Colebrook's assertions here to have less merit than they seem. The work of Eco cited by Colebrook is an extract (in *Modernism/Postmodernism*) from the *Postscript to* The Name of the Rose. In that discussion, Eco states that in order to revisit the past, one must do so ironically in this postmodern age – which is not the same as stating that the age is ironic. Alan Wilde, in his seminal book on irony, claims that irony is typical not of postmodernism, but of the twentieth century, and in fact his book breaks down three distinct types of irony (modernist, late modernist, postmodernist) which will be discussed later. Even the text by Linda Hutcheon, a renowned scholar of the postmodern, does not make this claim about irony in *Irony's Edge*, a book which specifically avoids the term postmodernism so she can discuss the practical applications of irony itself. The reference to Hassan is to the article we have discussed from *The Postmodern Turn*, which claims irony as one of the characteristics of the postmodern (but not the only one). I haven't examined Sim or Mileur.

[32] Andersen focuses fundamentally on David Foster Wallace and his contemporaries (and close associates) when defining this new generation, including Jonathan Franzen, Rick Moody, A.M. Holmes, Jeffrey Eugenides, Emily Barton, Dave Eggers, Nicole Krauss and Zadie Smith.

keep open the possibility of (mis)interpretation. D.C. Meucke asserts that "we cannot see a situation as ironic unless we believe there are those who do not" (Meucke 100). Irony requires a special pact between the ironist and the recipient, in which they both understand the world in the same way, in a way other than what seems 'obvious' (be that the literal interpretation of the words on the page, or the assumed commonsensical interpretation of a situation). As such, the assertion of irony is often relative, dependent upon a common context between (at least) two people.

However, in the postmodern age, other uses of irony have come into fashion. Colebrook declares that "our very historical context is ironic because today nothing really means what it says. We live in a world of quotation, pastiche, simulation and cynicism: a general and all-encompassing irony" (Colebrook 1). In this assertion, she seems to have defined irony differently, as the contention is no longer that we (mutually) 'know' that a given statement has a different referent than it would have if read 'plainly', but rather that *no* statements can be read as commonly understood, or as plainly expressed. What lies under this claim is the notion that within postmodernism, we cannot know for sure what anything 'really means', as that would not be in keeping with a postmodern structure of consciousness. However, Colebrook's interpretation of irony does assume an underlying, if simply unknown, truth. This is contrary to postmodern theory, which suggests that there is no way of knowing if there even is an underlying truth, rather than being ignorant of said 'truth.' In a world of (unreferentialable) quotation, pastiche and (Baudrillardian) simulation, asserting absolute truth values to statements makes little sense. In essence, Colebrook's interpretation parses the definition of irony into an assertion of doubt and an assertion of meaning, and concentrates only on the doubt as to the 'original' intention (which cannot be asserted in a postmodern context) and seemingly ignores the inability to assert an alternative meaning. In arguing that 'nothing means what it says', Colebrook has to both argue that it we do not know what it

means (doubt) but also assert that we *know* it does not mean what it says (such knowledge is not available given a postmodern structure of consciousness), essentially a claim of irony is not something that can be asserted, as we cannot be sure of what meaning is, should, or could be attached to any given statement, in a postmodern context.

Alternatively, postmodern irony is presented as a stance, a position from which one can interpret the world. Similar, in this vein, to Socratic irony, the postmodern ironist looks at the world with detachment, not participating 'honestly' in its discourses, in order to be able to identify, understand, and deconstruct those positions. This is the position that David Foster Wallace describes, when referring to 'early postmodern' artists of the sixties and seventies. "The great thing about irony is that it splits things apart, gets us up above them so we can see the flaws and the hypocrisies and duplicities" (McCaffery 147). The problem with this position is the identification of this with postmodernism, in that it allows a stance outside, a panopticon position, from with the ironist can judge the statements and positions of others. That position is afforded in a modernist framework, but is absent in a postmodernist one. Colebrook identifies this position:

> If irony demands some idea or point of view above language, contexts or received voices, postmodernity acknowledges that all we have are competing contexts and that any implied 'other' position would itself be a context. Postmodernity would be a society of simulation and immanence with no privileged point from which competing voices could be judged. One would have to accept one's own position as one among others, and as thoroughly unoriginal (Colebrook 164).

This, she argues, would require "a radical rejection or redefinition of irony" (Colebrook 164). Even so, she goes on to argue that even such a position, a stance from within the system, is still a stance, not a non-stance, both of which would be required given a postmodern framework. She claims, "neither position is possible, and yet both seem inevitable. Postmodern irony in its radical form works with this contradiction" (Colebrook 165). In this, postmodern irony is presented as a type of negative capability (recalling Keats), in which the contradictions of the said and non-said remain in one's mind at once. While this

is true of all irony – both meanings need to be present in the mind, even as one distinguishes the correct interpretation – with postmodern irony there is no means by which to distinguish the correct interpretation, and no reason to suggest that there is one.

Linda Hutcheon, in *Irony's Edge*, argues that, in the final analysis, it is the interpreter who assigns ironic value to statements or situations, and not the 'ironist', although often based on assumptions about the ironist's intent. "The interpreter may – or may not – be the intended addressee of the ironist's utterance, but s/he (by definition) is the one who attributes irony and then interprets it: in other words, the one who decides whether the utterance is ironic (or not), and then what *particular* ironic meaning it might have" (Hutcheon, *Irony's* 10-11, original emphasis). This leaves one with the idea that ironic content is relative, dependent upon the mindset, context, background, mood, etc. of the interpreter. Whether enough people share a context to create a Fishian interpretive community and be able to assert, even for themselves, the stable irony that Wayne Booth asserts, can only be ascertained by those participating. "Irony, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder, and is not a quality inherent in any remark, event or situation" (Meucke 14). Furthering this, I would argue that one's interpretation of how irony works (or even if irony exists in a postmodern context, which is dubitable if it requires an assertion of 'truth') is largely dependent on one's structure of consciousness.

While it is true that many have argued that we live in an ironic age, the definition of that age has changed greatly. In 1957, Northrop Frye asserted we were living through an 'ironic phase' in *Anatomy of Criticism* using examples from T.S. Eliot and James Joyce, and going as far back as Romanticism. Alan Wilde differentiates between modernist irony, which is 'absolute and equivocal' and postmodernist irony, which is 'suspensive' (Wilde 44), in claiming that the twentieth century was largely ironic. Meucke asserts, in 1969, that "irony now pervades literature" and claims that "only popular literature is predominantly non-

ironical" (Meucke 10), though few scholars would assert that all literature in the 1960s was postmodern. What seems clear is that irony is a mode that has long been used, and postmodern varieties of irony require an interpretation of the term. Postmodern irony is specific, and isn't reducible to irony. What defines postmodern irony is not the irony itself, but the postmodern, which through its application to irony has redefined its use. One cannot define postmodernism using a postmodern variety of irony, as such a form of definition would be circular. It is, again, the adjective postmodern which is the most operative here. Furthermore, I would argue that if one cannot discern between the validity of statements, and if there is not clear link between given signifiers and signifieds, then one cannot assert irony but only metonymy, a replacement of one definition for another with no pretense as to 'validity' or 'truth.' Jameson, as discussed earlier, related pastiche to a form of blank parody, and made an analogy between that concept and blank irony, which Andersen defines as "en retningsløs ironi der ikke forpligter sig på andet end det svedne grin, og som har mistet al oppositionel kraft" [an aimless irony that doesn't commit itself to anything other than a sly smile and has lost all its force of opposition] (Andersen, 'Ned med oprøret' 14, my translation). However, his definition ascribes to irony only its direction, and not its assumptions of meaning, which is precisely what must be lost in blank irony. Without the potential for (mis)reading, then one cannot truly present a statement or interpret a situation *as ironic*. Such a stance would require the interpretation that things are not 'really' as they seem, and one does not even have a vantage point from which to assert the falsity of the present, let alone underlying truths.

Literature consists of heterogeneous phenomena.
In this respect there is no complete substitution of one literary movement by another.
This substitution, however, exists in another sense,
the change between dominating movements, and dominating genres.
Tynjanov, 'On Literary Evolution')

The Dominant of *Postmodernist Fiction*

As I have shown, the terms irony, parody, play and metafiction, though they are often used as means of defining or presented as essential characteristics of postmodernism, all depend on a particular postmodern variety of each concept to make that claim valid. As such, those terms in and of themselves – absent the postmodern modifier – cannot serve as defining features of postmodernism. The essential nature of postmodernism is already assumed in their revised definitions. Thus, if we are trying to ascertain an essential nature of postmodernism, or be able to describe postmodernism beyond a collection of loosely associated oppositional concepts, then we need to produce a reductive definition, one which has the theoretical and rhetorical power to explain those features of postmodernism that we already assume, without including features or texts we collectively do not want to include.

Brian McHale attempts to develop just such a conceptual tool in *Postmodernist Fiction,* as a means of identifying the salient features of Douke Fokkema's modernist and postmodernist sociocode.[33] Fokkema produces a modernist code in his text *Literary History, Modernism and Postmodernism,* which has four main characteristics – a smaller and more coherent list than that presented by Hassan. Those characteristics are 1) the incomplete nature of the text, 2) epistemological doubt, 3) metalingual scepsis, and 4) respect for the idiosyncrasies of the reader (Fokkema 27). McHale then tests those characteristics against a quintessential modernist text and argues for their validity. Yet, the characteristics themselves are not sufficient as a defining notion of modernism. McHale invokes Roman Jakobson's notion of the dominant, which represents the "focusing component of a work of art" which

[33] McHale uses Fokkema's term 'period code' which is to represent a chronological sequence and a means of narrowing down literary history through a series of five codes (linguistic, literary, generic, period or group, author's idiolect), each of which successively narrows down the range of interpretive possibilities. Fokkema, later in his text, asserts that we should rather use the term group code or sociocode (as "the code designed by a group of writers often belonging to a particular generation, literary movement or current, and acknowledged by their contemporary and later readers" (Fokkema 11) rather than period code as the latter "assumes a unilinear development of all literature, which is wrong" (Fokkema 11). I use sociocode as I believe the differentiation of modernism and postmodernism is not chronologically based (not even locally, let alone globally) and also not related to coherent 'group' movements, but represents a different means of understanding and representing society as a whole, and thus both modes are represented best by the term sociocode.

"rules, determines, and transforms the remaining components" and thus "guarantees the integrity of the structure" (Jakobson 751). McHale is seeking the single explanatory tool which is the key to the literary mode, the one feature by which all other features are explained, the element that "dominates the entire structure and thus acts as its mandatory and inalienable constituent dominating all the remaining elements and exerting direct influence upon them" (Jakobson 751).

I find McHale's use of the dominant admirable, and reducing the numbers of characteristics to only those upon which the others can be invoked in a coherent fashion allows for a useful approach to the literary mode. I find myself in agreement with McHale in the need for such a reductive definition.[34] Where we disagree, fundamentally, is in how to identify the dominant. McHale argues that the concept which 'connects the dots' of Fokkema's sociocode for modernism is the epistemological, and using his exemplary modernist text, Faulkner's *Absalom! Absalom!*, and specifically chapter 8 which doesn't fit the pattern he presents, he posits the dominant of postmodernist poetics to be the ontological – representing "the shift of dominant from problems of *knowing* to problems of *modes of being*" (McHale, *Postmodernist* 10). As stated briefly before, my analysis is that this is not the case, and rather both modernist and postmodernist texts can be found that discuss, primarily, epistemological and ontological questions. Much of the following two chapters of this project are dedicated to exactly that proposition, presenting the means in which texts with an epistemological and/or ontological dominant can be classical, modernist, and postmodernist. By explicitly presenting texts with an epistemological dominant (in detective fiction) which function with a postmodern structure of consciousness, and those with an

[34] McHale backs away from the possibility of a reductive definition in *Constructing Postmodernism*, reacting to criticism of his first text. In so doing, he follows Christopher Norris' 'narrative turn', and presents a series of articles and readings which cannot be completely cohered (purposefully McHale asserts in the introduction) into a single way of understanding postmodernism, but as a series of constructivist attempts at definitions. He does say, however, that he has "by no means abandoned the story of *Postmodernist Fiction* here, and in fact it is retold below not once by several times, in various ways" (McHale, *Constructing* 9).

ontological dominant (in science fiction) which function with a modernist structure of consciousness, I refute McHale's differentiation. As such, similarly to the arguments about the characteristics above, I argue that it is not the epistemological or ontological foregrounding which is determinant in differentiating modernist and postmodernist poetics, but rather *the structure of consciousness itself*. The differentiation between modernist and postmodernist poetics lies not in the type of questions posed, but rather in the means by which these questions are answered. The answers (or lack thereof) are determined by the spatial metaphor that represents the given structure of consciousness. As Spanos argues, it is "this structure of consciousness … that determines the questions and thus the expectations and answers -- in language and in action" (Spanos 151). This represents a difference from both Jakobson and McHale (in his use of Jakobson) in that I argue that it is not one particular dominant feature, but the entire structure of consciousness which is determinant of the types of poetics at play. The manifestation of the structure of consciousness is seen in a variety of ways, from narrative strategies, to formal conceptions, from diegetic levels to the uses of intertextuality (linguistic, generic, and textual).

The Postmodern Structure of Consciousness

I argue that there are fundamentally three structures of consciousness, which represent different, historically understood, mindsets by which we operate and comprehend the world. These are reflected and represented in literature, which I treat as at least metaphorically mimetic, arguing essentially that when considering both the content and the structure one can come to some tentative understanding of the vantage point of the text itself.[35] This, however,

[35] This notion is found in the oft-cited distinction between postmodernism and postmodernity, with many (myself included) holding that postmodernism is the aesthetic presentation of the social phenomenon called postmodernity. As such, it seems reasonable to suppose that literary postmodernism reflects, in a mimetic way, the ways in which its authors and readers understand postmodernity and the postmodern condition (just as modernist writers and readers reflected modernity in their writings).

is tempered by the reader's reaction, as I treat literature as an open process, pushing towards the ideal goal of the writerly text.

These three structures of consciousness, which I term the classical, modernist and postmodernist, can be spatially mapped onto the skein, the maze and the rhizomatic labyrinth, with each of those spatial metaphors containing consequences and patterns which, I argue, guide fundamental understandings within the text. The classical structure of consciousness takes concepts as given, and answers as absolute. It is this pattern that is represented in the infallibility of God, the dominance of the Church, and the predetermination of the Fates. It is here that Oedipus is doomed, following a singular path to a destined outcome. The modernist structure of consciousness is exhibited only after such unitary worldviews can be questioned, since, when questioned, it is possible, given this structure of consciousness, to admit error of judgement and search for better understandings. This structure remains arborescent, however, though no longer linear. Thus, there remains truth and error, right and wrong, and thus quest and discovery come to the fore. It is with this mindset that Yeats suggests the coming of a new era, one set to replace the loss of centre and doubt in the Modernist project. The postmodernist structure of consciousness has no such hope, nor a nostalgic look towards points ancient or Other. Functioning within the spatial metaphor of the rhizomatic labyrinth, the postmodern structure calls into question the calcification of boundaries and constructions, by demonstrating their lack of foundation, and examining the concept of foundation itself. By opening up this possibility, removing the authority of both the classical Church and its replacement(s) within the modernist formation, postmodernism opens up a space of control. If it is through consensus, through the acceptance of new ideas (which change at rates different and other than those which are found in representative democracy), then change

becomes not only possible, but explainable.[36] If boundaries of gender and identity, nation and state, field and discipline are arbitrary, consensus driven notions, then it can become possible (given an acceptance of the postmodern framework) to begin a process of destabilizing existing categories (whether explicit, or belonging to Jameson's political unconscious) and reconstituting boundaries which represent contemporary (ever shifting) locally understood constructions. Such is the argument put forth by theorists such as Donna Haraway and Judith Butler in terms of gender, Hayden White in history, Richard Rorty in philosophy and others throughout many fields. While the postmodern structure of consciousness remains open, it allows for a political agency through the construction of an arbitrary, temporary modernist frame with which to operate momentarily, while recognizing this as no more than a Baudrillardian simulacra, and not an absolute truth or reality.[37]

It is the move from the modernist to the postmodernist which is arguably the most difficult, the acceptance of the openness and lack of natural boundaries. Essentially, this is what Roland Barthes argues in *S/Z*, when he presents the notion of the readerly and the writerly text. If one approaches a writerly text, one in which the reader need necessarily play a vital role in meaning-making, then the reader must both accept responsibility and disavow the notion of a closed number of interpretations of a literary text (and most specifically a single 'correct' reading). Barthes states "the systems of meaning can take over this absolutely plural text, but their number is never closed, based as it is on the infinity of language" (6). In so arguing, he states that this is due not to inherent qualities of the content of the writerly text itself, but its structure:

> for as nothing exists outside the text, there is never a *whole* of the text (which would by reversion form an internal order, a reconciliation of complementary parts, under

[36] The change of social ideas has been demonstrated (see Xie, et al.) to occur at a different tipping point (a committed ten percent minority) than a democratic consensus (majority).
[37] This notion of political agency, as well as consideration for literary movements of the contemporary age, which argue that they have moved 'beyond' or come 'after' postmodernism (understood largely chronologically) will be taken up in the in the concluding chapter.

> the paternal eye of the representative Model): the text must simultaneously be distinguished from its exterior and from its totality. All of which comes down to saying that for the plural text, there cannot be a narrative structure, a grammar, or a logic; thus, if one or another of these are sometimes permitted to come forward, it is *in proportion* (giving this expression its full quantitative value) as we are dealing with incompletely plural texts, texts whose plural is more or less parsimonious. (Barthes 6)

Essentially, the writerly text maps onto the same structure of consciousness that I argue is postmodern. The consequences, for literature, is both a lack of a fixed narrative structure, and distinct narrative closure (the text must remain an 'open text' (Eco)), as a consequence of this structure. Thus, Barthes' writerly text, within literature, is an example of the operation of a postmodern structure of consciousness. I would further argue that this mindset must necessarily be applicable to the author and reader, as the text itself can rule out such a reading (if the text is 'readerly') or a reader could present a more modernist interpretation (giving a closed interpretation of a text that could otherwise be read openly). This position is not easy, as literary interpretation has historically, especially in the wake of New Criticism in the United States, sought to uncover meaning from the text, and texts and readers have long presented a series of alternative, but limited, readings that were acceptable. The notion that readings are contingent, and thus limitless, is notoriously difficult. Barthes further argues:

> the interpretation demanded by a specific text, in its plurality, is in no way liberal: it is not a question of conceding some meanings, of magnanimously acknowledging that each one has its share of truth; it is a question, against all indifference, of asserting the very existence of plurality, which is not that of the true, the probable, or even the possible. This necessary assertion is difficult, however. (Barthes 6)

This turning away from the seeking of truth, as Rorty previously argued, however, does not leave us in a relativistic or solipsistic position, but in a position where the very plurality of interpretations allows openness and the possibility of change. This structure, which underlies Barthes' writerly text, presents a means of understanding how cultural transformation takes place, as well as a blueprint for further alteration as new notions, vocabularies, and understandings take over. These concepts are not fixed, or passed down from above, given a postmodern structure, but are erected ad hoc and thus continuously alterable.

Mapping the Argument – Where does the dissertation go from here?

Practically, in terms of literature, what this approach calls for is an assessment of the literary devices used in any given text, and an evaluation as to what ends those devices are engaged. My analysis takes place in three stages, specifically looking at detective fiction (chapter 2), science fiction (chapter 3) and two postmodern novels, which, despite differences in approach, both present the postmodern structure of consciousness (chapter 4). The two genres chosen are those which best represent epistemology and ontology, specifically to highlight that each genre has classical, modernist and postmodernist elements. The two examples in Chapter 4 represent the two primary approaches to a postmodern novel. This will require a discussion of the specific literary characteristics relevant for the genre under consideration, but the fundamental evaluation will be the correspondence of the structure of the primary material with that of the models outlined above in discussions of Deleuze and Eco.

In terms of detective fiction, focus will be on the concepts of genre, narratology and closure, as well as considerations of the audience. Distinctions will be made between texts that present a structure which is closed and open, those which present resolution to the investigation of the detective and those that fail to do so, as well as texts for which no resolution is possible. In so doing, discussions of the narration, the reliability and status of the narrator, the availability of information to the other characters and to the reader will be explored. Specifically in this chapter, the concerns of epistemology will be considered at the fore, and how those questions are resolved, questions posed by the generic conventions themselves and the application and understanding of those conventions by both the reader and author, will lead to analysis as to the structure of the given text. Texts which work on a fundamentally deductive model reflect a classical structure of consciousness (Edgar Allan Poe, Agatha Christie, Andrea Camilleri), those that rely on induction reflect a modernist

structure of consciousness (Raymond Chandler, Sjöwall/Wahlöö, *CSI*), and those for which both deduction and induction fail – and for which there are no more avenues of investigation because such answers are ruled out in the text – reflect the postmodern structure of consciousness, characterized by the limited perspectives within a rhizomatic labyrinth (Pynchon, Auster). We will also discuss those texts that seem to present a failure of either deduction or induction (or both), but only for diegetically imbedded characters. In those texts, the reader is afforded a position from which answers can be, and usually are, provided, and thus those texts ultimately reflect a modernist structure, and I call these intermediate texts, which present postmodernism yet perform modernism, late modernist texts (Umberto Eco, Borges).

The chapter on science fiction has a similar approach, with a consideration of primary texts which represent a classical, modernist, and postmodernist structure. Science fiction often focuses on ontological concerns, questions of being, and my analysis will focus on those factors when considering science fiction texts. The chapter will discuss two main categories of texts, concerning the ontology of worlds; those which deal with a distinction between real and fictional universes, and those in which the attempted differentiation pertains to real and virtual worlds, and analyze the means by which these worlds are identifiable, permeable or understandable. Furthermore, a consideration of subjectivity, which Donald Hall argues is a mix of epistemology and ontology (Hall 4) will be presented. The focus here will also be on being, but concerning ontological differences on an individual rather than 'world' level. Through this analysis a number of texts including Doris Lessing's *Canopos in Argos* series, Isaac Asimov's *Foundation* series, short stories by William Gibson and Svend Åge Madsen, Ursula Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness*, Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (and its source text by Philip K. Dick), Neal Stephenson's *Snow Crash*, The Wachowski's *Matrix* trilogy, and the relatively recent reimagining of the television series *Battlestar Galactica*

(2004) will be considered and shown to correspond to the various structural paradigms. In this chapter, emphasis will not only be placed on the postmodern nature of some of the texts, but also on the fundamentally modernist structure of others, specifically refuting the notion that texts with an ontological dominant are postmodern. I will further show that the analysis of a postmodern structure of consciousness provides a stronger understanding of the mode, one consistent with those distinctions made in the considerations of specific literary devices and characteristics outlined above.

The fourth chapter will look at two exemplary novels from 1973, Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* – which is canonically considered postmodern – and Svend Åge Madsen's *Tugt og utugt i mellemtiden* [*Virtue and Vice in the Middle Time*]. Those texts will be considered for their various metaphysical and philosophical positions, as well as the means of narration, their intertextuality and blending of genres to identify the structure of consciousness in which they operate, and how, despite using different literary strategies and coming from different traditions (American vs European) they assimilate a similar mindset at a similar historical point. The focus of the chapter will be on the Danish text, which will be compared to the already canonical text by Pynchon to highlight the differences in their approach, while concentrating on the various metaphysical and philosophical considerations that can be considered. This chapter will present a set of readings of postmodern texts highlight its structure of consciousness and its manifestation through various literary devices. This, I contend, will ease the inconsistencies of categorizing texts such as *Don Quixote* and works of Shakespeare, as well as the vast array of texts presented in the aftermath of World War II down until the present day. This approach will allow critics to distinguish between classical, modernist and postmodernist texts in the present day (all of which I argue are still written) and how those mindsets are interpreted and presented. This is not an end to analysis of given literary texts, but only reveals the fundamental structural basis of each text, and this

argument is put forth to resolve the dilemma of whether postmodernism is a continuation of or break from modernism.[38]

Finally, in the conclusion, I will outline the ramifications of my approach. I will discuss how a postmodern structure of consciousness affects literature moving 'forward' chronologically, and evaluate, from the perspective of a postmodern structure, the possibility of moving 'beyond' or 'post-'postmodernism. Contemporary movements, like the post-ironic, postpostmodernism, New Sincerity, and Neo-Victorianism, will be canvassed. Philosophical movements such as New Materialism will also be considered. I will further propose three logically possible positions that can be, "not innocently" (Eco, *Postscript* 67), posited as reactions to postmodernist literature.

To sum up, postmodernism represents a different 'structure of consciousness', the structure of which can best be understood using the metaphor of the rhizomatic labyrinth. I contend that viewing postmodern literature with this in mind incorporates other attempts at definitions or explanations of this mode, concepts of the postmodern mode proposed by Hassan and Lyotard, as well as theories presented by Baudrillard, Barthes, Waugh and Hutcheon.

Postmodernism represents the uncertainty experienced when faced with both epistemological and ontological questions and thus conforms to a structure of consciousness in which these questions are not simply left unanswered but such answers are ruled out. There is, simply, absolute uncertainty to those philosophical questions in postmodernism, as we have no vantage point in the rhizome from which to answer such questions with any objectivity. This moves beyond Lyotard's definition in *The Postmodern Condition* in that it addresses concerns beyond the epistemological. In addition, by using the rhizome as a

[38] As an anecdotal example, at a presentation of my approach with reference to detective fiction one professor of Italian posed questions about the ability to consider various political implications of detective novels in an Italian context, novels which represented in my model the same structural category (modernist, in this case). As I explained, the structure of consciousness provides underlying philosophical and metaphysical codes, but does not preclude other considerations (political, aesthetic, ethical) within each structural paradigm.

structure of consciousness, I elucidate the characteristics associated with postmodernism and postmodern theory (e.g. metafiction, intertextuality), providing an underlying justification of why those aspects are so prevalent, while addressing the way in which they are utilized and presented differently than in modernist fiction. In subsequent chapters, I will discuss epistemology (through detective fiction), ontology (through science fiction) and the postmodern novel (specifically in Thomas Pynchon and Svend Åge Madsen). The dissertation will conclude with an eye towards present developments in literature, seen through the lens of postmodern structure, and a look to where literature might be heading.

Whodunit? And how do we know? (or do we?)

The structure of the epistemological investigation in detective fiction

> The theories which I have expressed there, and which appear to you to be so chimerical, are really rather practical – so practical that I depend upon them for my bread and cheese.
> *Sherlock Holmes (A Study in Scarlet)*

In *The Study in Scarlet,* Holmes complains about the lack of crime, as it allows him less opportunity to ply his trade. And while crime itself continues to fall, not only in Europe but despite the public nature of some crime and protests in our social media world, in the U.S. as well, the fiction of crime is ever more popular. Holmes himself has been revived as an action hero in a series of films starring Robert Downey Jr., as an elite British 'consulting detective' in BBCs new acclaimed series *Sherlock,* and as a rough and tumble, post-rehab police consultant in New York in the series *Elementary*. This only serves to capitalize on the popularity of a genre, which seeks to present crime, and most importantly the resolution of crime, which allows us comfort in knowing that the security apparatus is there to protect us. These series, all revolving on the iconic Sherlock Holmes character created in 1886, focus on observation and deduction, key features in crime solving, police detection, but also mystery solving and even reading. Those problems, questions of epistemology, those of who knows what, and how they come about that information, have been fascinating us for centuries, and are the perfect genre, and venue to explore those questions of knowledge.

In this chapter, I explore this structure of consciousness in relation to those epistemological questions, and have thus chosen to concentrate upon detective fiction, which has as its quintessential notion the idea of an epistemological investigation. This type of text involves a search for knowledge, which can be understood in a broader context as a reflection of the search for truth itself. Thus, using detective fiction as a representative epistemological genre, I seek to challenge the idea that such texts are tautologically modernist. I argue that there are texts which have an epistemological dominant that correspond to each of the structures of consciousness identified earlier – the classical, modernist and postmodernist – and that this structure, manifested in the responses to questions of epistemology (and others), is determinate.

In *Postmodernist Fiction,* Brian McHale separates modernist and postmodernist fiction using Roman Jakobson's conceptual tool of the dominant, which refers to the concerns which are prioritized, or "forefronted," in a given text. In his argument, modernist fiction is characterized by an epistemological dominant (meaning questions of knowledge are of primary concern) while postmodernist fiction is identified by an ontological dominant (in which questions of being and identity are of primary focus) (McHale, *Postmodernist* 9-10). As discussed in the introduction, and contrary to McHale, I argue that this is not the case: rather both modernist and postmodernist texts can be found that discuss, primarily, epistemological and ontological questions. To recap, the differentiation between modernist and postmodernist poetics lies not in the type of questions posed (or proposed first, as with McHale's use of the dominant), but rather in the means by which these questions are answered. These means correspond to the structure of consciousness, the underlying structural metaphor grounding the understanding of reality with which a given text operates and is interpreted.

The chapter will proceed with a history of the genre, as generally described, and proceed with a reclassification according to my understanding of the underlying structure. This is done with an eye to integrating postmodern detective fiction more seamlessly into the generic structure, as well as explaining its relationship to the genre as a whole.

What is detective fiction?

Histories of crime fiction often divide the genre into several categories, usually presented in a chronological sequence. These histories often start with the categories of classical (Christie, Doyle) and hard-boiled detective fiction (Hammett, Chandler), followed by the spy novel (Ian Fleming) and police procedural (Ed McBain, Per Wahlöö and Maj Sjöwall), and then sections on gender (feminist and LGBT detective fiction) and race (often African-American detective fiction) and

finally a short section discussing postmodern detective fiction.[39] This current division focuses on historical trends, and adds the later categories where they have gained critical interest (or for political reasons), and thus it doesn't fully explain the inherent connections within the genre. The genre as a whole can be better understood on the basis of the structure of the epistemological investigation, the means by which the detective goes about solving the crime, which is particularly important in understanding how postmodern detective fiction is connected to the rest of the genre (which is my main concern). Although histories often present the way in which the genre has developed over time, and thus each, individually, has a different organizing methodology, this approach allows the inclusion of the later categories (sections discussing gender, race, and postmodern detective fiction) more seamlessly into the presentation of the genre. In this analysis, I focus specifically on detective fiction, a limited scope of crime fiction, but contend that other aspects of crime fiction could be included in this rubric. To this end, I use the same categories for the division of the genre, which are reflected in the discussion of the three structures of consciousness. Those categories - classical, modernist and postmodernist - will differently locate some subgenres (cosy, police procedural, forensic).[40] This division more accurately reflects the structural similarities found in the various sub-genres of detective fiction, and which will allow for an opportunity to explore the structure of the postmodern detective novel.

[39] Benvenuti, Stefano and Gianni Rizzoni. *The Whodunit: an informal history of detective fiction*. Trans by Anthony Eyre. New York: MacMillan, 1979. Horsley, Lee. *Twentieth-Century Crime Fiction*. Oxford: Oxford U Press, 2005. Knight, Stephen. *Crime Fiction, 1800-2000.* New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004. Thompson, Jon. *Fiction, Crime, and Empire: Clues to Modernity and Postmodernism*. Urbana: U of Illinois Press, 1993. Priestman, Martin. *The Cambridge Companion to Crime* Fiction. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003. Stephen Knight includes a third section on diversity, after the chronological breakdown, which includes chapters on race, gender (feminist, lesbian, and male gay detection) and postmodern detection. Horsley, for example, includes sections specifically dealing with sexism and racism and redefining the genre when dealing with those socialpolitical issues. Priestman's collection also includes chapters dealing specifically with gender and race.

[40] This reordering is not intended to cover up important distinctions in the divisions of the genre into various subgenres, whether based on themes (i.e. feminism), analytic focus (i.e. forensic), or types of crime or how graphically they are displayed (as in the cosy). Each of these subgenres and many others deserve specific attention, especially in histories of the genre as a whole, but this division would allow them to be grouped by how the crime is solved, while preserving their other foci.

Several scholars have already presented a division of the genre of detective fiction into three such parts, the classical detective story, the hard-boiled detective novel, and the anti-detective novel, primarily in studies explaining or exploring the concept of anti-detective stories/novels. For example, Anne Hopzafel in her treatment of Paul Auster's *New York Trilogy*, "presents the most important criteria and elements of the classical and the hard-boiled detective novel in order to obtain a comparative foundation for the discussion of Auster's novels, … which will then be related to the postmodern form, the anti-detective novel" (Hopzafel 9). Stefano Tani, in his book *The Doomed Detective: The Contribution of the Detective Novel to Postmodern American and Italian Fiction*, similarly presents the characteristics of the classical and hard-boiled formulations of the genre, and later in his discussions of the postmodern variety divides the 'anti-detective novel' into three distinct categories, the innovative, deconstructive, and metafictional varieties. Although I propose to look at the structure of each aspect of the genre, this basic division is a good beginning from which to understand the overall pattern, as I argue that these studies, in their brief consideration of several representative sub-genres, have basically categorized the genre along structural lines.

The terminology Tani uses is also telling as to where he places the main features of the genre. William V. Spanos, in "The Detective and the Boundary", utilizes the term "anti-detective story," for stories which "evoke the impulse to 'detect' … in order to violently frustrate it by refusing to solve the crime" (Spanos 154). This term is then further used by Stefano Tani, with the same basic emphasis, in ascribing this term to post World War II literary detective novels, claiming that "'the anti-detective novel' [which is] certainly more related to the Poesque tradition than to the hard-boiled one, deeply subverted the former and showed a great difference from the latter." (Tani 35). He also defines conventional detective narrative in general terms:

> A conventional detective story is a fiction in which an amateur or professional detective tries to discover by rational means the solution of a mysterious occurrence – generally a crime,

> usually a murder. This definition implies the presence of at least three invariable elements: the detective, the process of detection, and the solution. (Tani 41)

While there are three essential elements which make up the genre, Tani's project works under the assumption that the solution is the crucial element, which "gives sense to the genre and justifies its existence" (Tani 41), and thus postulates that the anti-detective story is one which subverts that specific element. Tani's division of the types of anti-detective novel is dependent upon how the various novels he discusses undermine the solution, either through anticipation, partial fulfillment, nullification, or simply through parody. Like many scholars, I utilize, and thus want to emphasize, Tani's stretched definition of detective which includes anyone detecting or trying to undergo an investigation, amateur and professional.[41]

Furthermore, I want to suggest that the 'solution' is also not strictly necessary. In classical and modernist detective fiction a solution is a necessary condition of the structure of the investigation. This, however, isn't the case for postmodern detective fiction. Structurally, even early on in the story, one realizes that such a solution is not possible. This realization that there is not a traditional solution (i.e. the murder is not solved) is the 'solution' to the postmodern detective story, and as such is sufficient to satisfy this criterion of a 'solution.' This feature brings closure to the pursuit outlined at the beginning of the narrative. Both possibilities, a 'true' solution and the realization that one is not ever going to reach such a conclusion, allow for the construction of a narrative relating the events. It is this linear reconstruction of the investigation that Žižek privileges as the real end of the detective story.

> There is a certain self-reflexive strain in the detective novel: it is a story of the detective's effort to tell the story, i.e. to reconstitute what 'really happened' around and before the murder, and the novel is finished not when we get the answer to 'Whodunit?' but when the detective is finally able to tell 'the real story' in the form of a linear narrative. (Žižek 49)

[41] Rob Rushing notes in his discussion of the myriad sub and microgenres of detective fiction that 'most narratives feature a character who wants to find something out,' and warns against the 'risk of articulating a hopelessly watered-down definition of 'detective fiction' that would be applicable to almost any text' as a consequence (Rushing 27).

However, the type of investigative strategies both undertaken by the detective and implied by the narrative structure of the text determine which kind of conclusion (whether solution or lack thereof) is possible and warranted in the text.

Thus, fundamentally, the investigation is the main focus of the genre, and therefore I base the explanation of the genre on this epistemological element. With the perspective that the investigation, rather than the solution, is the primary element of detective fiction, the term postmodern detective fiction, rather than 'anti-detective fiction,' is the term that mostly clearly reflects the development of investigative methods and thus more seamlessly integrates this subgenre into a larger discussion of both detective fiction and the larger category of crime fiction. This also connects postmodern detective fiction to the similar structures found in other postmodern writings, allowing an analysis of the structure of postmodernism itself.

I further argue that there are fundamentally three structures of detective fiction, the classical, modernist, and postmodern types of detective fiction. Each of the subgenres and microgenres[42] within these broad umbrella categories has its own niche and definition, which makes them unique and both imposes variable generic conventions and attracts different audiences. These distinctions are both important and interesting, but ultimately the investigative method employed is common within this division. The classical structure, as made most famous by Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes and Agatha Christie's detectives Hercule Poirot and Miss Marple, utilizes a deductive method of crime-solving. Modernist detective fiction, which includes the previously discussed category of the hard-boiled detective story, as well as the police procedural, the forensic, and the spy novel (among others), utilizes an inductive approach by which the crime is solved through hypothesis and trial and error. Finally, postmodern detective fiction consists of those stories which adhere to detective fiction generic tropes and conventions and in which the investigation leads to a

[42] Robert Rushing, in his 2007 work *Resisting Arrest: Detective Fiction and Popular Culture*, uses this term to refer to the ever smaller divisions of crime fiction, into categories so small that it seems 'whatever one's taste, there is a detective novel to match' (26).

situation in which the questions not only are unanswered, but, as a product of the structure of the investigation itself, cannot be answered. This is not simply due to a lack of clues, or a failed effort on the part of the detective, but a situation in which there is no possible solution to the crime, which the method of detection elucidates structurally. Thus, in this type of detective fiction the 'solution' is simply that there is (and can be) no traditional solution. This project proposes this division of detective fiction specifically to clarify the structure of postmodern detective fiction, and by extension of postmodernism, as well as to demonstrate that postmodern texts can have an orientation that is principally about knowledge (the epistemological) rather than about being (the ontological) as Brian McHale contends in *Postmodernist Fiction*.

The Classical Model: Logic and Deduction

Edgar Allen Poe's trilogy of "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt," and "The Purloined Letter," are considered the foundation of the detective genre, and serve a prime examples of the classical detective school. The three stories were first presented in a series of journals in the 1840s, but were rapidly reprinted and given a wide audience. The protagonist of the three stories, C. Auguste Dupin, is often reported to be based upon the memoirs (ghost written, and thought to be largely fictitious) of Eugene François Vidocq, who also inspired a number of other literary detectives. The stories are all narrated by a third person, a companion of Dupin, who is admittedly not of the same intellectual caliber as the detective. In fact, it is this narrator with whom the reader identifies rather than the detective himself.

"The Murders in the Rue Morgue" commences with an opening sequence, apart from the main problem of the detective story, in which Dupin demonstrates his intellectual and analytic ability, and also demonstrates both to the reader and the narrator, the method he uses to come to his conclusions. This section of the story provides the groundwork for all of classical detective fiction,

the character of the detective, the investigative methodology, the relationship between the detective, investigation and the narrator, and the role and positioning of the reader vis-à-vis the text.

In this prelude, Dupin demonstrates his ability to retrace the narrator's thoughts, as it were, back to a fruiterer whom the narrator has not consciously noticed. His method, which he claims works without fail, is to place himself, intellectually, in the mind of the person whose thoughts he is trying to deduce, and thus, through this process, ascertain the truth of a given scenario. "'I will explain,' he said, 'and that you may comprehend all clearly, we will, first retrace the course of your meditations, from the moment in which I spoke to you until that of the *rencontre* with the fruiterer in question" (Poe 145). This example, in brief, sets up the entire process by which Dupin will prosecute each subsequent investigation. By retracing his friend's thoughts, for which we are given the assurance of the accuracy by the narrator himself, Dupin succinctly demonstrates the inevitability of his conclusion.

Here Dupin also demonstrates the character of the classical detective. Slavoj Žižek claims that "on the one hand, the figure of the detective is interpreted as 'bourgeois' scientific rationalism personified; on the other, he is conceived as successor to the romantic clairvoyant, the man possessing an irrational, quasisupernatural power to penetrate the mystery of another person's mind" (Žižek 49). Poe, himself, presents Dupin as exactly this figure, who causes the narrator to "[dwell] meditatively upon the old philosophy of the Bi-Part soul" (Poe 148). To the narrator, the ability that Dupin demonstrates here is nearly that of a clairvoyant, the ability to read his thoughts, as the narrator notes: "I do not hesitate to say that I am amazed, and can scarcely credit my senses" (Poe 149). Dupin, however, is able to explain the phenomenon rationally, demonstrating that the entire process is simply a matter of observation and deduction, even if it could only be accomplished by a man with considerably advanced abilities in both. His explanation is presented to the narrator, to both demonstrate his ability and explain the phenomenon. Yet, simultaneously, the

reader receives the same information, placing a distance between Dupin and the reader and reinforcing the identification of the reader and narrator.

The actual case of the Rue Morgue is solved in a similar manner, with Dupin collecting all of the evidence necessary for its solutions through accounts in the paper. Dupin's astute observation of the universal misrecognition of the "gruff voice," as belonging to an unknown foreigner, provides us, and the narrator to whom he recounts the solution, with the crucial piece of information by which the crime can be solved. Dupin claims that this evidence is enough to "engender a suspicion which should give direction to all further progress in the investigation of the mystery" (Poe 156). This suspicion, however, is to be understood clearly as not a possible solution, or one option among many. "I said 'legitimate deductions;' but my meaning is not thus fully expressed. I designed to imply that the deductions are the *sole* proper ones, and that the suspicion arises *inevitably* from them as the single result" (Poe 156). For Dupin, there is only a single possibility, and he uses the term suspicion out of a sense of modesty or decorum, rather than as an indication of the possibility of error.[43]

Thus, Dupin demonstrates the deduction of the unique solution to the problem presented in the case, one which only he can identify. The subsequent revelation of the circumstances of the murder, and the means by which Dupin verified his already determined and certain conclusion of

[43] This despite the later references to the theories of probability. "Coincidences, in general, are great stumbling-blocks in the way of that class of thinkers who have been educated to know nothing of the theory of probabilities – that theory to which the most glorious objects of human research are indebted for the most glorious of illustration" (Poe 392). These theories, discussed in Ian Hacking's work *The Emergence of Probability* and tied to crime fiction by Maurizio Ascari, highlight the paradoxical nature of evidence and probability in the world of crime. Poe here, although referring to contemporary field of probability, falls more in line with Cesare Beccaria's contention that "moral certitude, strictly speaking, can be no more than a probability – but one of such a kind as to be called a certainty, seeing that every man of common sense must acquiesce in it by force of habit which arises from the need to act and which precedes all speculation" (Beccaria, *Of Crimes and Punishments* 24). ["Ma svanirà il paradosso per chi considera, che rigorosamente la certezza moral non è che una probabilità, ma probabilità tale che è chiamata certezza, perché ogni uomo di buon senso vi acconsente necessariamente per una consuetudine nata dalla necessità di agire, ed anteriore ad ogni speculazione" (Beccaria, *Dei delitti e delle pene* 57). Beccaria's discussion of moral certainty is tantamount to our contemporary legal test of reasonable doubt, and which Poe alludes with the separation between the reality of his solution and the insistence that there be no preternatural solution to the crime. "It is not too much to say that neither of us believe in preternatural events" (Poe 388). By disallowing supernatural solutions, Poe is adding limitations to the investigation, which lead closer to a 'reasonable' solution rather than an absolute truth.

how the murder had been taken place, proceed in a linear fashion, one which allows neither for incorrect decisions nor for the possibility of choice. This is demonstrated in the phrases that Dupin uses, and specifically in the words the Poe himself chooses to highlight in this portion of the narrative. "I proceeded to think thus –*a posteriori*. The murderers *did* escape from one of these windows. This being so, they could not have re-fastened the sashes from the inside, as they were found fastened; … Yet the sashes *were* fastened. They *must*, then, have the power of fastening themselves" (Poe 157, original emphasis). The subsequent analysis follows in a similar vein, demonstrating the inevitable nature of the investigation and the singular character of the solution. It is this same method that Dupin uses in each of the three stories.[44]

The classical detective story, as in Poe's Dupin stories, uses a deductive method, whereby the detective searches for and analyzes clues as a primary method before the overall solution is presented, often at the end of the story. This model is very rule-driven, and "the solution and its explanation by the detective are the most crucial elements" (Hopzafel 12). The detective, as with Dupin, comes upon the single solution of the problem, discounting all other possibilities because they fail to account for all available evidence, leading to the final revelation or goal of the detective game. In fact, based on S.S. Van Dine's famous twenty rules, Anne Hopzafel argues that "the appeal of the detective novel lies in [the audience's] chance to solve the puzzle as well, and to compare their ability to that of the detective" (12). While Van Dine emphasizes this puzzle-like ability, the comparison between the detective and the reader is never complete. The reader feels satisfied if he has bested the narrator (or later the sidekick, when they become disassociated, especially in film and television) with whom he identifies. However, the explanation comes from the detective, the ultimate holder of truth in the text. While it is technically possible to solve the

[44] I limit the discussion of Poe's Dupin series to "Rue Morgue" both for space considerations as well as simplicity. "Marie Roget" is partially based on a true story, and thus has non-generic twists, complicating its use as an example of the genre, and "Purloined Letter" implicates Dupin which violates yet to be articulated rules, but more importantly compromises the purity of the investigative process and the author/reader dynamic.

crime before the detective, if the author has followed the "rules," it is not a necessary factor for the enjoyment of the classical detective novel.

Žižek argues that this "logic and deduction story" is missing something, however, if it is solved in a purely deductive and rational way. "We are immensely disappointed if the denouement is brought about by a pure scientific procedure (if, for example, the assassin is identified simply by means of a chemical analysis of the stains on the corpse)" (Žižek 49). He argues that the detective, in such classical detective stories and novels, is really the personification of two disparate motivations, the scientific and the romantic. Poe (and creators of other classical detectives) demonstrates that the expert knowledge, which forms the basis of what Žižek argues is the irrational intuition, is really just the extraordinary power of observation and deduction presented by the detectives themselves, individuals with whom the audience is not meant to identify. The audience, as here in Poe, is meant to identify with the "sidekick," (the narrator in this case), to whom, along with the audience, the solution to the case is presented in the narrative form that Žižek argues is the basis of the detective story in *Looking Awry*. Christie argues similarly (through Miss Marple) in the *Tuesday Club Murders*.

> It's really a matter of practice and experience. An Egyptologist, so I've heard, if you show him one of those curious little beetles, can tell you by the look and feel of the thing what date B.C. it is, or if it's a Birmingham imitation. And he can't always give a definite rule for doing so. He just *knows*. His life has been spent handling such things. (Christie, *Tuesday* 141)

Her argument, however, provides a rational basis for something which, on its surface, seems supernatural but which is actually based upon a great amount of experience, even if not yet (or ever) explained to the audience. Žižek goes on to argue that the concern about the pure scientific procedure is about how we perceive the deductive process:

> We feel that "there is something missing here," that "this is not deduction proper." But it is even more disappointing if, at the end, after naming the assassin, the detective claims that "he was guided from the very beginning by some unmistakable instinct – here we are clearly

> deceived, the detective must arrive at the solution on the basis of *reasoning*, not by mere "intuition." (Žižek 49)

This deductive method is perhaps more clearly demonstrated by referring to one of Christie's detectives, the incomparable Hercule Poirot. Poirot's method is to gather the clues necessary to solve any given crime, then to gather the potential suspects (all involved parties typically), and reveal how he has come to a conclusion based on his analysis of the clues. The novel *Death on the Nile* is a typical example, in which the murder takes place on a river cruise in Egypt and thus with limited suspects, the locked room scenario (as in "Rue Morgue"). Poirot proceeds quite methodically and specifically without any preconceived notions about the crime. "Colonel Race and I must interview all the passengers. Until we have got their stories it would be unwise to form theories" (Christie, *Perilous* 327). Only after he has analyzed all of the clues, and deduced the truth of the notion, does he gather everyone together to explain how the crime occurred. In this case, it is the evidence that demonstrates that the crime was premeditated (the drugging of Poirot, the necessity of removing the gun), and that there were in fact two perpetrators (Jacqueline de Bellefort, the brains, and Simon Doyle, who was injured to produce a seeming alibi). This evidence leads Poirot to his conclusions. His evidence is only sufficient to prove to the audience who perpetrates that crime and is not dependent on judicial justice or police procedure. In fact, most often one of the suspects ends up confessing to the crime in question, as is the case here where Simon confesses when confronted with the evidence. This idea is borne out in the conversation between Jacqueline and Poirot at the end of the novel.

> 'All the same,' said Jacqueline reflectively, 'I can't really see that you had much proof. You were quite right, of course, but if we'd bluffed you out –'
> 'In no other way, Mademoiselle, could the thing have happened.'
> 'That's proof enough for a logical mind, but I don't believe it would have convinced a jury. Oh, well – it can't be helped. You sprang it all on Simon, and he went down like a ninepin.' (Christie, *Perilous* 428)

Poirot, of course, is not concerned with the jury, but rather is only interested in getting to the truth. He also uses the final resolution scene mainly to demonstrate his superior intellect, and brag about it. "I like an audience, I must confess. I am vain, you see. I am puffed up with conceit. I like to say, 'See how clever is Hercule Poirot!'" (Christie, *Perilous* 420). Poirot is the embodiment of Žižek's definition, a detective who is simultaneously "'bourgeois' scientific rationalism personified" and "a man possessing an irrational, quasisupernatural power to penetrate the mystery of another person's mind" (Žižek 49). While Poirot's personality and characteristics account for a great deal of his appeal, his method testifies to the kind of truth that is of interest in the classical detective story and novel. Poirot is certainly interested in the truth, and the way that the crime has occurred, if indeed described accurately, must account for all of the evidence presented, even the most minute and seemingly insignificant pieces.

For Poirot, as for all of the classical detectives, it is the evidence that leads to the solution, and pieces of the puzzle which do not fit demonstrate the falsity of any possible solution and the necessity of continued contemplation until all of the evidence fits completely. The description of the classical method is not dependent on the accuracy of the solution (although Poirot's pride might be at stake).[45] An incorrect solution simply implies that the proposed solution does not account for all of the facts and evidence completely (or all of the evidence has yet to be acquired; although this possibility is "against the rules" as it implies evidence out of the purview of the audience).[46] Thus a novel such as *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, in which the narrator is the perpetrator, does not negate, but rather maintains and reinforces, the classical structure. This is true even while it creates

[45] There are, of course, other motivations inherent within crime fiction. Neither the criminals nor the detectives act dispassionately, and often emotion is a considerable factor both in the impetus for readings as well as the rationale of the narrative. This aspect of crime fiction's history is detailed in Maurizio Ascari's work *A Counter-History of Crime Fiction* among other places. This study, however, remains focused on the epistemological structure of the detective story, and thus does not delve into these other interesting aspects, including those important and necessary for elucidating generic and sub-generic boundaries.

[46] Specifically violating Williard Huntington Wright's (alias SS Van Dine) "Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories," whose first rule states "all clues must be plainly stated and described" (Van Dine 129).

doubt as to the accuracy of the solution and controversy as to whether the unreliability of the narrator (who commits the crime and simultaneously tells the story) does not undermine the "pact" between the author and reader. Even a story like *Trent's Last Case* by E.C. Bentley, in which the detective is ultimately completely wrong as to the identity of the shooter, leaves the procedure intact. For even in this instance, it is simply through a lack of facts that Trent is unable to accurately deduce the crime. Furthermore, the method is still valid even when the crime has yet to occur as in *Towards Zero* by Agatha Christie, which builds towards a potential crime at the end of the story, or never does occur as in the story "The Affair in the Bungalow," part of *The Tuesday Club Murders*, in which Jane Helier describes a crime she has planned to commit, and Miss Marple accurately deduces both the perpetrator in Jane's story and the fact that is has yet to happen.

The main factor in this method of detection is evidence rather than supposition, motive, or other factors common in police procedurals. This is particularly evident in contemporary examples of the classical detective form, such as the television serial *Psych* (2006-2014). This show boasts a "psychic" detective, Shawn Spencer, who, like Dupin, has an uncanny ability to identify key pieces of evidence and deduce the solution to the crime. This again highlights the desire to have a descendent to the romantic clairvoyant, but one whose process is explained rationally. *Psych* uses specific filmic techniques to highlight the evidence, allowing the audience to follow along with Shawn's observations even as his sidekick and the police force are unaware of them until later.[47] Each time the detective sees a piece of critical evidence (a marinating steak in the refrigerator, an inhaler in the hand of a spelling bee contestant, a missing page in a astronomical logbook), this fact is literally highlighted on the screen (with a surrounding color, music, and a zoom into the image) to make clear to the audience that this evidence is important. The plot proceeds by Shawn explaining his thought processes to his partner, Burton 'Gus' Guster, and then they proceed to involve the

[47] Here again, we can see that we are meant to identify with the sidekick rather than the "detective." In this case the audience is carried along through the process, but always after the fact, in the same perspective as Gus, and yet before the police are "clued" in to the evidence.

seemingly inept police force in solving the crime while maintaining the façade that Shawn is indeed psychic (all the evidence is revealed to the detectives in the form of 'spontaneous' visions by Shawn). While this show maintains the use of the classical detective model, it does not produce the same effect as the classical detective novel because the audience is not in the same position to play along since the puzzle is often solved quickly and the audience is kept informed throughout the story. The pleasure derived from the story is mostly in how the information is then relayed to the police, and the eventual capture and confession of the criminal, as well as the maintenance of the "psychic" façade.

This model, however, only works when all of the evidence is possible to attain, and the possibility of unascertainable information is when doubt is sown into the process. In the novel *Il ladro di merendine [The Snack Thief]* by Andrea Camilleri, this situation is encountered by Inspector Montalbano. Montalbano himself, despite being a police detective, demonstrates that he is a classical detective through his motivations.

> 'You know, I happen to have followed an investigation of yours, the one about the 'terra-cotta dog.' In that instance, you abandoned an investigation into some weapon's trafficking to throw yourself heart and soul into tracking a crime from fifty years ago, even though solving it wasn't going to yield any practical results. Do you know why you did it?'
> 'Out of curiosity?' Montalbano guessed.
> 'No, my friend. It was a very shrewd, intelligent way for you to keep practicing your unpleasant profession, but by escaping from everyday reality. Apparently this everyday reality sometimes becomes too much for you to bear, and so you escape.' (Camilleri 274-5)

Montalbano is not the typical police detective but rather pursues his profession for its parlor game like qualities, which parallels the readers of Camilleri's novels and the genre in general, providing a method of escape from the trials and tribulations of everyday life.

In attempting to solve a murder on a boat at sea, he is presented with far more evidence, and seemingly complicating factors of Middle Eastern gangs infiltrating the southern coast of Sicily for drug trafficking and smuggling from Tunisia. He demonstrates, however, that the separation of disparate information, even if it seems relevant to the crime, is part of the game of the detective.

“Montalbano smiled in satisfaction. The first puzzle had been solved, perfectly, with its specific outline. Fahrid, Ahmed, and even Aishe had been left out of it. With them in it, had they been properly used, the puzzle’s design would have been entirely different” (Camilleri 224). The idea of multiple, perhaps intersecting puzzles complicates the procedure, but Montalbano continues to follow a deductive approach to the solution of the crime. The last line, however, “had they properly been used” leaves open a bit of doubt that this procedure might not be as simple as either Montalbano, or the author, leaves it.

However, even here in a story that reinforces the deductive methodology and the parlor game aspects of the classical detective story, a story with a larger scope is alluded to. The character of François, the young boy that Montalbano protects (the snack thief, in fact), when putting together a puzzle, decides to cut up the images and fit them together in new ways. Montalbano comments: “But that’s just it. François also thinks puzzles are boring, because they have fixed rules. Every little piece, he says, is cut so that it will fit with another. Whereas it would be more fun if there were a puzzle with many different solutions” (Camilleri 174). It is the very puzzle-like quality that originally attracts Montalbano, and inspires the genre as described by Van Dine. However, it can be the very limitations of fixed rules and methods which can lead to contrived methods and plots of Raymond Chandler’s 1944 critique in the essay ‘A Simple Art of Murder.’ This may be the same motivation that inspires authors to more “realistic” approaches, whether the modernist approaches of the hard-boiled and police procedural or the multiple solutions of the postmodern.

The Modernist Model: Legwork and Induction

The second category of detective fiction, as usually presented, is the hard-boiled detective novel, which presents an American version of the genre. This version is committed to experience and manifests itself, typically, in more first-hand accounts in which the reader is drawn into the gritty

details of the investigation and follows the libidinal desires of the investigator. Raymond Chandler, a prime example of a hard-boiled writer, in his essay "The Simple Art of Murder," claims that this version is more realistic, noting when discussing Dashiell Hammett that:

> Hammett gave murder back to the kind of people who commit it for reasons, not just to provide a corpse, and with the means at hand, not hand-wrought dueling pistols, curare and tropical fish. He put those people down on paper as they were, and he made them talk and think in language they customarily used for these purposes (Hopzafel 18).

The hard-boiled detective novel, as well as related subgenres like the police procedural and the forensic, presents the investigation in a different light than the classical, logic and deduction story. I call this category modernist detective fiction because it reflects the modernist structure of consciousness. In this mode, there are various possibilities but ultimately a single solution to a problem, and the possibility of appeal to an outside position by which to verify the claim to truth of that solution. Reflected in the epistemological investigation, it uses an inductive approach, full of supposition and hunches, which are then proven, or disproven and modified, by the evidence brought forth by the investigation. It is a trial and error process which is still designed with a single goal in mind, the solution to the crime (again, often a murder). In this way, the reader follows the detective along in a more intimate way, rather than looking over the shoulder in an effort to solve the puzzle, as with Dupin's narrator or Dr. Watson to his Sherlock Holmes. "Thus, the readers are close to the action from the beginning and become quite often as befuddled as the detective" (Hopzafel 21). These stories allow for multiple potential paths and the following of wrong leads, not only by the police, but by the detective as well. In the hard-boiled detective novel, "a new type of detective operates, who relates to his rational predecessor in the classical detective story only in that they both share the task of solving the case" (Hopzafel 19).

One such example of the hard-boiled detective school is Raymond Chandler's *The Big Sleep*. In this novel the detective, Philip Marlowe, is hired by General Sternwood supposedly to handle, or discover the truth behind, a blackmail scheme. The case quickly escalates to a series of

murders, and in the end Marlowe attempts to discover the truth behind the disappearance of Sternwood's once hoped for son-in-law, Regan. Marlowe's methodology remains constant throughout the novel. Marlowe makes guesses, educated by both his previous experiences as well as his added knowledge from each lead he follows, and then follows them out to glean what information he can in the hopes of both understanding his assignment, which has been purposefully muddied, and the solution to the Sternwood's various dilemmas. This methodological consistency is present despite the construction of the novel from two previously written short stories; however the disparity between the initial goal and the later investigation into Regan's disappearance can thus be partially explained.

The means of analysis is a key difference between the classical and hard-boiled detective novels. While Dupin presents the rational, analytic approach, "corresponding to the nineteenth-century rise of the scientific and optimistic attitude of the positivistic philosophy towards reality and human control of reality through the development of technology" (Tani 11), Marlowe represents a different epistemological method, which he states in sharp contrast to the classical model. "I'm not Sherlock Holmes or Philo Vance. I don't expect to go over ground the police have covered and pick up a broken pen point and build a case from it. If you think there is anybody in the detective business making a living doing that sort of thing, you don't know much about cops" (Chandler 225). Unlike Dupin, who solved the case of the Rue Morgue by noticing the things that the police and others did not notice, an objective outsider's solution to the problem, Marlowe solves the case by becoming intimately familiar with the world of crime, by physically investigating and making choices, guessing at solutions that are not always correct.

The clearest example of the difference in the two epistemological methods regards the path that is taken to the eventual solution. Both stories, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and *The Big Sleep* have a final solution, revealed by the detective along with the means and motivation behind

the murder. The difference is the path that is taken to reach the conclusion. For Dupin, the path is clear, unmistakable, and the only path that one could "reasonably" choose. The Rue Morgue murders are presented in the newspaper, and Dupin sets to the task of solving the case. On the other hand, *The Big Sleep* presents a world that has choices, has options that lead to dead ends, that lead to other clues, and that lead to points where one has to return to the beginning and take another path, another look at the problem, or potentially a look at a different problem altogether. They both share, however, a common goal, one which presupposes a final resolution to the investigation. While following two different patterns, they both lead to a final solution to the investigation, as a consequence of their structure.

This methodology is used not only in the hard-boiled detective fiction, by authors such as Chandler and Dashiell Hammett, but also in the police procedural subgenre. One can see this in the Martin Beck police procedurals by Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö. In one such story, *Polismördaren*, translated as *Cop Killer*, the title character is captured only by virtue of a hunch by the sidekick detective, Lennart Kollberg. Towards the end of the novel, Kollberg, "suddenly thought of something" (Sjöwall 262), which turns out to lead to the identity of the final suspect of the novel. He then turns to correct police procedure to verify his supposition with evidence, working in an inductive way opposite the method used by Dupin and the classical detectives, who gather evidence before coming to the conclusions. When discussing the evidence to be verified with the crime lab, Kollberg states "in the first place, I'm quite sure it is the right car," giving no evidentiary information as to why this car (despite the false plates) located in Stockholm should be connected to the crime committed in Skåne (southern Sweden), yet hoping for the crime lab to provide such an evidentiary link.

This same methodology is also used in forensic detective stories, such as the contemporary television series *CSI* (and its spin-off series, *CSI Miami*, *CSI New York*, and *CSI:Cyber* as well as

shows such as *NCIS, NCIS:Los Angeles, NCIS: New Orleans* and *Numb3rs*). Despite their concentration on evidence, which is especially noticeable in the *CSI* series by their pioneering filmic technique of tight zoom to forensic details (especially poignant when shown in human body parts and wounds), these shows use evidence as a means of supporting hypotheses, or of correcting hypotheses which are then used to provide a way to search for more supporting evidence until the case is eventually solved. The methodology is probably most appropriately summed up by dialogue from one of Ed McBain's characters, Detective Bush, in *Cop Hater*, from the 87th Precinct series. In discussing his job, and his seeming lack of confidence in being intellectual enough to complete it (a complete contrast from the Dupin, Holmes, Poirot legacy), Bush claims:

> Look, this detective tag is a laugh, and you know it as well as I do. All you need to be a detective is a strong pair of legs, and a stubborn streak. The legs take you around to all the various dumps you have to go to, and the stubborn streak keeps you from quitting. You follow each separate trail mechanically, and if you're lucky, one of the trails pays off. If you're not lucky, it doesn't. Period. (McBain 18)

This inductive method, where each trail is followed until it bears fruit or grows cold (in which case a different path is then taken) is reflected in all modernist detective fiction, from the hard-boiled novels, to the police procedural and the forensic, and even to other types of detection, such as in television shows *House, M.D.* and *Medical Investigation*, which apply this modernist detective methodology to medical diagnoses and outbreak prevention respectively.

The Postmodern Detective Novel: Can we know whodunit?

Jeanne Ewert, in "A Thousand Other Mysteries: Metaphysical Detection, Ontological Quests," refers specifically to Eco's labyrinthine theory, which she uses in order to show that metaphysical detective fiction follows McHale's argument: it is ultimately about ontological issues, subsisting in worlds in which typical rules do not apply. She presents the conclusion of a novel she identifies as a metaphysical detective novel, Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*, in which the narrative presents

so many contradictory stories that the detective is unable to resolve the conflict. Thus, "nothing is resolved at the end of the novel; no history can be shown to supersede its competitors, and the witnesses' testimony builds a rhizomatic net of hypotheses and theories through which the detective wanders without coming to a conclusion" (Ewert 188). This description presents the structure that I identify as the epistemological structure of the postmodern detective novel, in which the possibility of a single conclusion is refuted. Ewert, however, claims that this implies that the main preoccupation of such literature, which she calls metaphysical detection, is truly ontological, reflecting a difference in the construction of the world in the narrative.

> "The message for the reader of metaphysical detective fiction is clear: she must learn to read without relying on the detective's interpretations; she must also learn to read in a world that offers conjectures and structuring systems, but no single overriding structure. She must recognize that the labyrinth represents a radically different universe than the one she expected." (Ewert 188)

However, this does not present an inherently different universe simply because the epistemological investigation ends in failure, but rather implies a different epistemological structure in which there is no absolute knowledge. There are undoubtedly, as she presents later in her article, specific ontological questions posited in postmodern detective fiction, but the epistemological structure of the investigation can be understood without appealing to the construction of a fundamentally different universe and claiming that the epistemological questions are truly a subset of a specifically ontological inquiry.[48] As I argue in a subsequent chapter, there is a parallel structure of ontological inquiry which also reflects a classical, modernist, or postmodernist structure of consciousness, separate from the means of understanding of epistemological questions. Furthermore, in following Jakobson's use of the term dominant, any ontological questions that arise appear secondary to the

[48] One could certainly discuss the ontological implications of Quinn's disappearance in *City of Glass*, Oedipa's appeals to "construct a world" and Leonard Shelby's own questions of identity. My contention is simply that those are separate lines of analysis which need not supersede questions of epistemology in the stories.

epistemological concerns, thus maintaining that the epistemological is the dominant set of inquiries in this fiction as well.[49]

Postmodern detective fiction consists of those stories which adhere to detective fiction generic tropes and conventions and in which the investigation leads to a situation in which the questions not only are unanswered, but, as a product of the structure of the investigation itself, cannot be answered. The very structure of the investigation implies this by its construction similar to the way that deduction is connected to the classical model of detection and induction is connected to the modernist model presented above. In considering the following texts, I will demonstrate that the structure of the epistemological investigation that the detectives[50] undergo follows a rhizomatic pattern which eliminates the possibility of finding a solution.

City of Glass

One such novel is *City of Glass*, the first novel in the *New York Trilogy* by Paul Auster. The three novels, often contained in a single volume, which were published in three separate editions in 1985 and 1986, can be read to constitute a loosely connected series of detective stories. The first novel presents itself most clearly as a detective novel at the beginning. In this novel Quinn, a detective fiction writer who writes under the pen name of William Wilson (taken from a story by Poe), accepts a detective assignment by assuming the role of Paul Auster, an apparent detective his new employer was trying to reach. This interesting overlapping of roles indicates that we, even from the beginning, do not have a true detective, but rather a writer impersonating a detective who draws on his own novelistic devices, and those gleaned from his own study of the genre, to project himself

[49] I would argue that the use of detective fiction tropes leads the reader to forefront epistemological concerns in these texts, and the ontological concerns that Ewert and McHale describe are subsequent to the failure of what is at least set up as the primary concern of the novel in question.

[50] Detective here is understood broadly as the individual who has taken on that role. In my reading, this is also true of other types of detection, as neither C. Auguste Dupin nor Miss Marple, for example, is formally a detective. This is also true for Quinn in Auster's *City of Glass*, Smilla in Peter Høeg's *Smilla's Sense of Snow*, and Oedipa in Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*.

into the role that he has assumed. This serves not to detract from the story, but rather to emphasize to the reader that they are, in fact, reading a detective story. Quinn is thus established as a detective, unconventional and unused to the role, but in that manner no different than the presentation of Dupin in "The Murders of the Rue Morgue." The first person narration that Quinn uses is reflective of modernist detection, and thus the reader associates directly with Quinn throughout the novel (or at least until the very end, in which we are left to connect with the character of Paul Auster).

Quinn also takes some comfort in the liberty of not being himself, having assumed the identity of the detective Paul Auster. "The effect of being Paul Auster, he had begun to learn, was not altogether unpleasant. Although he still had the same body, the same mind, the same thoughts, he felt as though he had somehow been taken out of himself, as if he no longer had to walk around with the burden of his own consciousness" (Auster 62). He even goes so far as to act as he thought the protagonist of his own novels, Max Work, would act in the situations in which he finds himself. In that way, as readers we expect Quinn to behave like a "true detective," like someone who conforms closely to the generic conventions that we have come to expect in either the classical or modernist forms discussed above. This already represents a departure from Chandler, however, in that the expectations, and models, are literary and not, as Chandler aimed, in a realist vein.

The story starts conventionally, with an assignment, again reinforcing the detective fiction motif. The assignment that Quinn takes is to follow a man named Stillman, who was in jail and was supposed to be a danger to his son, Peter, and Peter's wife Virginia. Quinn, armed with a photo of Stillman, goes to find him at the train station, where he is due to arrive, and plans to follow him from there. Yet, even as this early stage in the story, there is a fundamental break from the traditional detective fiction convention, as there emerges from the train car two gentlemen who appear to be Stillman (based upon the old photograph), one wearing a suit, and the other less well-dressed. Quinn here is forced to choose whom to follow, with no further information, and no way to

know which choice is accurate, now or potentially in the future. “There is nothing that he could do now that would not be a mistake. Whatever choice he made – and he had to make a choice – would be arbitrary, a submission to chance. Uncertainty would haunt him to the end” (Auster 68). There remains no outside person to whom he could turn for verification of his choice, as no other character presented in the novel has any knowledge of Stillman’s current appearance. Thus, from this point to the end of the story, there are multiple paths Quinn could follow, with no seeming way to determine which is the ‘true’ path, or the correct person to follow. Structurally, Quinn finds himself in a very different pattern than Dupin or Chandler, a rhizomatic pattern in which the idea of a solution has been systematically ruled out.

Quinn opts to follow one of the Stillmans, and proceeds to collect ‘clues,’ making careful notations as where ‘Stillman’ walks, where he went, what he did, and every interesting detail he could observe. It resembles a standard stakeout from a police procedural, but with only one man. However, “little by little, Quinn began to feel cut off from his original intentions, and he wondered now if he had not embarked on a meaningless project” (Auster 73). This doubt, sowed into the story from the beginning, makes the reader, along with Quinn, suspect the efficacy of the entire project. As the reader associates with Quinn, this doubt is also carried over to the reader as well, forcing a consideration of this uncertainty. Quinn, as recompense, tries to constitute order out of the seemingly random movements of Stillman, attempting to discover if Peter and Virginia were in some level of danger. He argues, with himself that Stillman must know that he was being watched, and thus was able to ascribe meaning to his actions.

> This view of the situation comforted Quinn, and he decided to believe in it, even though he had no grounds for belief. Either Stillman knew what he was doing or he didn’t. And if he didn’t, then Quinn was going nowhere, was wasting his time. How much better it was to believe that all his steps were actually to some purpose. If this interpretation required knowledge on Stillman’s part, then Quinn would accept this knowledge as an article of faith (Auster 74).

The urge to make some sense out of the random movements of Stillman, to create a structure to the seemingly random actions, is an overwhelming driving force for Quinn. It simply seems impossible to him that the actions could have no ulterior motive, despite his uncertainty of both Stillman's identity and his knowledge of being followed (which could ascribe meaning to his actions). "He was ransacking the chaos of Stillman's movements for some glimmer of cogency" (Auster 83). However, despite his intense desire to make sense out of the actions, this seemed to contradict the actions themselves. "This implied only one thing: that he continued to disbelieve the arbitrariness of Stillman's actions. He wanted there to be a sense to them, no matter how obscure. This, in itself, was unacceptable. For it meant that Quinn was allowing himself to deny the facts, and this, as he well knew, was the worst thing a detective could do" (Auster 83). Quinn comes to the realization, even if he chooses not to accept it, that his task is structurally impossible.[51]

Later, Quinn attempts to view Stillman's actions from a bird's eye view, a seemingly outside perspective, or tower view, by which it may be possible to understand a greater purpose to Stillman's movements, and the path of his daily excursions away from home. Quinn, using his detailed notes, traces the path of Stillman's steps around New York City. The various paths taken, when drawn out in Quinn's red notebook, form a series of letters that Quinn concludes spells out The Tower of Babel. Yet even this take on Stillman's movements, which then seemingly had some sort of meaning, could be brought into doubt as the traces that Stillman followed did not truly exist anywhere in the world:

> For Stillman had not left his message anywhere. True, he had created the letters by the movement of his steps, but they had not been written down. It was like drawing a picture in the air with your finger. The image vanishes as you are making it. There is no result, no trace to mark what you have done. And yet, the pictures did exist – not in the streets where they have been drawn, but in Quinn's red notebook (Auster 86)

[51] I will discuss later whether the failure of epistemology leads inevitably to ontological questions, and whether, as McHale and Ewert argue, this means that these stories are truly ontological rather than epistemological in nature.

The existence of the letters had possible implications for Quinn's case. It could symbolize a continued fascination, for Stillman, with the Tower of Babel, a factor in his originally harming his son. However, the very presence of the letters in Quinn's notebook could be nothing more than Quinn's own imagination, and the letters could have no meaning whatsoever. It is possible that "the letters were not letters at all. He had seen them only because he had wanted to see them. And even if the diagrams did form letters, it was only a fluke" (Auster 86). There is, essentially no way to know for sure what Stillman is thinking or if he knows about Quinn, or any potential watcher, at all. Quinn's attempt to get "outside" of the situation is futile. The bird's eye perspective he craves to verify his assumptions is unattainable in the novel, and a consequence of the structural pattern.

It is also necessary to note that the tracing does not contain the entire picture. As Deleuze argues, "What the tracing reproduces of the map or rhizome are only the impasses, blockages, incipient taproots, or points of structuration" (Deleuze 13). He argues that the "tracing should always be put back on the map" (13), which is the rhizome. Thus Quinn's pattern is something to which he is ascribing knowledge only if taken out of context. The context in which he continues to operate is that of a complete lack of knowledge as to the motivations, drives, and even the identity of Stillman. This makes Quinn's project more in line with that of a natural scientist than a detective. As Žižek notes: "it is true that the 'objective' scientist also 'penetrates through false appearance into the hidden reality,' but this false appearance with which he has to deal *lacks the dimension of deception*" (Žižek 56). This level of deception is inherent in the detective's project, that which gives meaning to seemingly meaningless objects and connections. Yet, here, Quinn has no basis by which to assign any meaning to Stillman's actions, as he no basis to speculate that Stillman is aware of Quinn's presence.

Finally, at the end of the story, in a situation vastly different from the previous novels, we have no solution to the crime, and in fact no evidence of a crime at all. There remains no evidence

that Stillman was at all dangerous, simply mentally disturbed (he commits suicide), which Quinn learns from a conversation with Paul Auster, who, it turns out, was not a detective but simply a writer like himself. His employers, Peter and Virginia, simply disappear, as does Quinn after a seeming mental breakdown of his own. There are no answers presented in the story, no real conclusion, and even the red notebook, the basis of all of the 'facts' of the story, only provides a partial answer to the story itself, even if "this story is based entirely on facts, [as] the author feels it is his duty not to overstep the bounds of the verifiable, [and] to resist at all costs the perils of invention" (Auster 135). Thus, Auster presents us with a detective novel which seemingly alters fundamental conventions of the genre. There is, essentially, no crime and no solution. However, as audience we are compelled to follow the action, and to try, along with our play-acting writer, to solve the various problems with which he is presented, despite the doubts sown into us throughout. There is little doubt that this is a detective story, as it uses many of the generic conventions. What Auster presents is a narrative, even a narrative in a linear form, which reconstructs a story with a vastly different "solution" to the classical and modernist versions of the genre. Essentially, the story being reconstructed is the story of the uncertainty of the solution and the uncertainty of knowledge itself. At the end, we are left with the impossibility of knowing any of the information, and what is being reinforced in the reader, who follows along with Quinn in the same way one follows Marlowe, is a world in which there is no epistemological certainty, a world without absolute truth. The very act of detection, the structure of the epistemological investigation, leads us to that conclusion, which is the basis of the postmodern condition, and this thus reflects the postmodern structure of consciousness.

The Crying of Lot 49

The Crying of Lot 49, a 1965 novel by Thomas Pynchon, also uses the detective story generic conventions in the same way. Edward Mendelson argues that "criticism has devoted much energy to finding detective-story patterns in fiction, and *The Crying of Lot 49*, with its heroine named after the first detective of them all, lends itself admirably to this method" (Mendelson 123). The story presents the figure of Oedipa Maas (whose name reflects the 'first detective,' referring to Sophocles' Oedipus) as she is named executrix of the will of her recently deceased ex-lover Pierce Inverarity, a real estate tycoon (Pynchon 1). Oedipa has the task of learning about his estate, reconstituting his business, however, "as things developed, she was to have all manner of revelations. Hardly about Pierce Inverarity, or herself; but about what remained yet had somehow, before this, stayed away" (Pynchon 10).

Oedipa, in her effort ostensibly to discover the estate of Inverarity, stumbles upon an ever-enlarging conspiracy involving underground mail systems, government takeovers, the Mafia, dead soldiers in World War II, and a four-hundred-year-old murder plot. She attempts to learn about these diverse aspects in a number of ways, using both deduction and induction. Upon reflection, she describes her initial attempts as "so like the private eye in any long-ago radio drama, believing all you needed was grit, resourcefulness, exemption from hidebound cops' rules, to solve any great mystery" (Pynchon 100). In the same Southern California as Marlowe, in some unidentifiable suburb known as San Narciso, Oedipa begins her task much as Raymond Chandler would have, following a various set of clues through the streets and difficult underground. The clues themselves proliferate to a seemingly unmanageable number, which makes the trial and error, legwork method of modernist detection untenable. Later, after the suggestion that everything she has 'learned' is a hoax, it is proposed that she try a more deductive method, attempting to discern fact from supposition. "Really, you ought to think about it. Write down what you can't deny. Your hard

intelligence. But then write down what you've only speculated, assumed. See what you've got' (Pynchon 138). Neither of those methods seems to work for her. Interestingly, she first uses the inductive method and then switches to the deductive method in the opposite manner to that of Quinn in Auster's novel. Yet, for both "detectives" neither method is effective.

Tony Tanner argues that "the model for the story would seem to be the Californian detective story – an established tradition including the works of writers such as Raymond Chandler, Ross MacDonald and Eric Stanley Gardner [sic]. But in fact it works in a reverse direction" (Tanner 56).[52] Instead of coming to a resolution, a solution to the mystery (or mysteries) that Oedipa is presented with (the existence of Tristero seeming to be the main concern), she is presented with an abundance of evidence and no way to distinguish between the various possibilities. "There was nobody who could help her. Nobody in the world. They were all on something, mad, possible enemies, dead" (Pynchon 141). Each of the potential paths are systematically blocked off, either by madness (Mucho, Dr. Hilarious), death (Pierce, Driblette), disappearance (Metzger, Zapf's Book Shop, The Anonymous Innamorato), or seeded with doubt (by Bortz, Fallopian). Johnston claims

> Her quest will culminate in four symmetrical possibilities: either she has indeed stumbled onto a secret organization having objective, historical existence by which a number of America's alienated and disenfranchised are communicating; or she is hallucinating it by projecting a pattern onto various signs only randomly associated; or she is the victim of a hoax set up by Inverarity, possibly as a means of perpetuating himself beyond death; or she is hallucinating such a hoax, in a semiosis of the second possibility (Johnston 51).

While she only needs to determine which one contains the truth, the problem emerges that there is no means by which to determine this, no evidence (or potential evidence) that could provide her with such illumination. "What the detective in this story discovers is a way of thinking which renders detection irrelevant" (Mendelson 124). While Mendelson argues that detection becomes irrelevant here, I argue it is not the process of detection, but the typical conclusions which are no longer possible. Oedipa's detective processes have led to the conclusion of epistemological

[52] The reference to Eric Stanley Gardner seems to be to the author of the Perry Mason series, Erle Stanley Gardner, who hails, like Chandler, from Southern California.

uncertainty, a conclusion she realizes halfway through the story: "Oedipa wondered whether, at the end of this (if it were supposed to end), she too might not be left with only compiled memories of clues, announcements, intimations, but never the central truth itself" (Pynchon 76). This parallels the doubts expressed by Quinn in Auster's text.

The pattern that Oedipa describes has also been intriguing for critics. Pynchon himself is an elusive character, and much has been made of the attempt to find out who he is.[53] This quest has been paralleled to the quests made by the protagonists in and the readers of Pynchon's works. John Dugdale argues that "The novels presuppose the possibility of a detective-reader, active, interpretative, alert, reading them as Stencil and Oedipa read their texts" (Dugdale 14) and goes on to identify the elements of methods that Oedipa uses that parallel the reader/critic/scholar's experience "where Oedipa's options in relation to Pierce's text, the will, correspond to the reader's options in relation to Pynchon's text, the novel" (Dugdale 15). Thus, just as with the classical and modernist detective fiction discussed earlier, the reader is meant to be drawn into the pursuit just as Oedipa is. In this way, the narration more closely resembles the hard-boiled pattern of detective fiction, in that the reader assumes the same position as Oedipa throughout the text, despite the text not being written from a first person perspective. Furthermore, the audience is not given any more information than Oedipa and is not afforded any more objective or outside perspective by which to judge either her quest or evidence and come to a more certain, better, or more convincing conclusion.

> Because the narrator refuses the reader any view superior to Oedipa's, many readers will assume that Oedipa internalizes to a certain extent their own roles as readers. Thus her quest to uncover the reality and meaning of the Tristero dramatizes the reader's attempt to

[53] Articles such as that of Matthew Winston in *Mindful Pleasures,* seek to do this. One could argue that Pynchon does his best to force critics to read his texts the way Barthes proposes in "The Death of the Author." "Once the Author is removed, the claim to decipher a text becomes quite futile. To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified …. In the multiplicity of writing, everthing is to be *disentangled*, nothing *deciphered*; the structure can be followed, 'run' (like the thread of a stocking) at every point and at every level, but there is nothing beneath" (Barthes XXX).

> decipher and make sense of the various signs that proliferate through the novel. (Johnston 52).

The reader is then left with the same doubt and uncertainty as Oedipa.

As McHale points out, this epistemological dilemma parallels the ending of *The Turn of the Screw* by Henry James. In that story, the reader is also left without the possibility of determining whether the tale is true. He states, however, that there is a crucial difference, precisely in the positioning of the reader vis-à-vis the narrator. "The difference between *The Turn of the Screw* and *Lot 49* – and it is a crucial difference – is, of course, that James' governess is herself unaware of the alternatives, believing in the 'ghostly' explanation from the outset; the teetering between alternatives goes on 'above her head,' a problem for students of literature but not for her" (McHale 24). Yet, while McHale claims that this text is (late) modernist, and that Oedipa "is an exemplary late-modernist heroine" (McHale 24) due to the concentration on epistemological issues in *Lot 49,* he hits on the very distinction between the modernist structure and postmodernist structure that I identify in these texts. While James' tale ends with the answer undiscovered, whether the governess is hallucinating or truly seeing ghosts, the tale presupposes that there is an answer, with the academic debate concentrating on determining which of the two possibilities is presented in the text. In Pynchon's text, with Oedipa also uncertain as to the possibility of an answer, the reader is placed in a different position. Using detective fiction tropes, the reader identifies more closely with the protagonist and thus assumes her positioning in relation to the Tristero mystery. Rather than having the position of outside "objective" observer as the reader is positioned in James' tale with the role of determining the reliability of the governess' narrative, in *Lot 49* the reader follows Oedipa closely and thus becomes embroiled in the insolvability of the dilemma itself. It is this positioning, as well as Oedipa's own lack of conviction, which makes the difference. McHale points out that Oedipa was "once a student of literature herself," so "she understands the ambiguity of her situation as clearly as her readers do" (McHale 24) which makes this story have a different degree

of epistemological uncertainty than *The Turn of the Screw* (or other above mentioned tales in which there is both an unreliable narrator and an unsolved case). In *Lot 49*, the structure of the story itself insists upon this uncertainty, which makes it a postmodern text.

In reaction to this ambiguity, Oedipa, however, chooses to follow a different path than Quinn, who is confronted with similar uncertainty in his detective role. Where Quinn disintegrates, ultimately disappearing from the pages of Auster's novel, Oedipa takes a wait and see attitude, even while admitting the possibility that there is not anything to wait for. She is, seemingly, unwilling to follow Quinn's lead, even if that is what she admits would happen if she finally accepted such a level of uncertainty.

> For there either was some Tristero beyond the appearance of the legacy America, or there was just America and if there was just America then it seemed the only way she could continue, and manage to be at all relevant to it, was as an alien, unfurrowed, assumed full circle into some paranoia. (Pynchon 151)

Instead, Oedipa, without any reason to have faith in the process or the revelation of any knowledge that could establish the truth between the two possible Americas, simply chooses to wait for that next piece of evidence. "Oedipa sat alone, toward the back of the room, looking at the napes of necks, trying to guess which one was her target, her enemy, her proof" (Pynchon 152).

Memento

That constant search for evidence, without apparent hope, is also poignant for Leonard Shelby in Christopher Nolan's 2000 film, *Memento*, a film which is loosely based on the short story, "Memento Mori," by Jonathan Nolan which was published in *Esquire* in 2001. This film, which is based around Leonard's search for his late wife's rapist and murderer, allows us a unique perspective on detective fiction. The film is presented in a series of sequences in reverse chronological order, which "move *backward* through time so the first plot event we see is the final story event, the second plot event is the next-to-last story event, and so on" (Bordwell 85). In

addition, Leonard, the main character, has short-term amnesia. Thus, while he maintains knowledge of his own identity and any knowledge and abilities acquired from before his injury, he is unable to make new memories. As a former insurance investigator, he is methodical and organized and proceeds to track his wife's killer, a John G., through detailed police work (he has even acquired a partial version of the police file), and records his deductions, assumptions, and conclusions on a series of notes, Polaroids, maps, and tattoos, which allow him to regain the knowledge after each subsequent period of forgetfulness. In this way, although an amateur (like Quinn and Oedipa) Leonard demonstrably uses police procedures and logic in attempting to solve the murder.

In addition to the puzzle presented to Leonard (that of solving the murder), there is a further puzzle presented to the audience. Caroline Bainbridge suggests that our, as audience, puzzle is more complicated and endures beyond the timeframe of the film. "There are a number of fleeting shots and clues embedded in each of these narrative strands to sustain our sense of puzzlement through to and beyond the end of the film" (Bainbridge 47). Our puzzle is not wrapped up neatly at the end of the film, like an episode of BBC's *Sherlock*, but stays with the audience longer, as they consider the implications of what they have seen. Furthermore, the audience is not simply identified with the position of Leonard but also placed in a position to judge Leonard's actions and assumptions. In this way he is not exactly parallel to the hard-boiled detective or those amateur detectives in Auster or Pynchon, even if the audience does identify more with Leonard than with any other character in the film. This is true even if, "the character here seems generic, fulfilling a role familiar to us from *film noir* as the disaffected flawed (male) hero struggling to assert justice in some shape or form in a muddled and confusing world that seems to thwart all his efforts" (Bainbridge 48). Thus, despite the parallels between Leonard and the traditional *film noir* or hard-boiled detective, the role of the audience is slightly altered, allowing a different perspective to be considered.

This is true of the way the film is presented as well. The series of sequences, in their reversed order, allows us to see the assumptions and information that Leonard later accepts as the facts upon which he makes his conclusions and decisions. We also encounter a series of individuals who, to varying degrees, have taken advantage of Leonard's condition by providing him with false information. Each of those individuals have, in different ways, altered the information on which Leonard has based his facts, bringing all of his recorded notes, polaroids, and 'facts' into question. Thus, the audience is provided with more doubt about Leonard's conclusions than he is initially presented as having. There is a difference here to Oedipa and Quinn as their doubt and the reader's doubt coincided. Leonard's doubt throughout the film such that at the end he obtains the same perspective as the other postmodern detectives we have considered.

In addition to the recorded facts, Leonard's memory is also brought into doubt. Although unable to create new memories, Leonard maintains recollections from before being knocked unconscious intervening in the rape and murder of his wife. Yet, that memory is also constantly brought into question throughout the story. In conversation with Teddy who first suggests that Leonard's notes could be unreliable (Teddy knows that some of the information is false, in any case), Leonard himself responds that common police procedure relies more heavily on notes than on memories: "Memory is unreliable" (*Memento* 22:09). This makes the entire story, as told by Leonard, unreliable, even as he convinces himself of its veracity. "Leonard is revealed at the end of the film as the most unreliable of unreliable narrators. Our dawning realisation of his skewed psychological world permits the logic of truth that is perceived in the narrative to become riddled with holes and gaps" (Bainbridge 49).

As we get to the end of the film (or the beginning of the fabula), we come to realize that Leonard's entire investigation has been manipulated (although we don't know by whom). Teddy can provide no more outside evidence (other than his own narrative) than a bloodied Polaroid of

Leonard shirtless and happy. The context of the photo is entirely missing, it has no note (which have proved unreliable before), and, even provided that it was at the site of a murder by Leonard, offers no evidence of who the victim was. Each character has a narrative they can offer, but there is no reliable evidence to back up anyone's story, which is revealed through the reverse nature of the presentation as well as the investigative methods Leonard uses and is highlighted throughout the film.

Leonard, faced with the inevitability that he cannot know the truth, decides at that point to reconstitute his investigation, giving himself a target. It was suggested earlier in the film that Leonard himself might be manipulating himself to keep himself searching by having removed the pages of the police file, which would create an unsolvable puzzle. "As spectators, we are plunged at the end into a realisation that our identifications have been premised on this lack and that it is the structure of the narrative that has made this possible" (Bainbridge 50). While Bainbridge wants to argue that this is an example of the film 'duping' the audience, purposefully playing with their sensibilities to thwart the typical 'cinematic pleasure,' I argue that this is the structure of the film demonstrating the absence of the possibility of "a sense of mastery over the narrative truth" (50) that she believes can be obtained through subsequent viewings and analysis of the film. Absent narrative closure presented in the film, multiple readings are presented as valid, and there is little information – none presented as reliable – that even points to a particular solution. Furthermore, at the end of the film, we see that Leonard has accepted this lack of a determinant narrative. He purposefully changes things by acquiring a new car, which he then makes 'his' by taking a Polaroid and writing it as such, which in turn allows him to assume it as a fact at his next "awakening." This sets in motion an investigation designed to lead to Teddy, whose death at Leonard's hand we witness at the beginning of the film, asserting a type of truth, and mastery over his own narrative. This, however, is done at the expense of any sense of absolute truth. In fact, it is done as a sort of

acceptance of the lack of that possibility, a reassertion of truth in a world in which truth does not have any grounding.

The end of the film provides an equally muddy picture to that we have at the start. The search for John G. is either, if we believe Teddy, already solved, was solved with the killing of either Jimmy or Teddy, or remains unsolved. There is no evidence to suggest any one of those scenarios is more likely than another. Rather the only certainty provided is of the death of Teddy, who is shot through the head, and the identity of his killer. Everything else in the story is either memory or narrative, or based upon facts and deductions based on memory or narrative. Leonard's investigation, regardless of his process being deductive or inductive (and he alternates in his assumptions and conclusions), cannot possibly reach a true conclusion. He may come to an answer (which will work for him at the time), but there is no way to know if it is 'the' answer, a 'correct' answer. This possibility is removed by the unreliability of the evidence, narration, and characters, as well as by the faulty memory of Leonard himself (do we even know if his wife was raped and murdered, as we only have his memory and tattoos to support this?). The structure of the story itself rules out the type of solution Leonard is seeking.

The Late Modernist Detective Fiction: Modernist with a Twist

I have presented a series of postmodern detective stories, but there are a number of other texts which are often identified as part of the "postmodern canon." Stefano Tani, for example, identifies eight texts as postmodern texts (in three categories). Stephen Knight, in *Crime Fiction since 1800* identifies Borges, Eco and Pynchon as early postmodernists (230). My division would call for a different line, in which one of texts, Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* I have discussed above as postmodern, but at least two (Calvino's *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* and Eco's *Il nome della rosa*) I would not classify as such, based on the underlying structure of consciousness present

in the novels. Through a discussion of their investigative structure, I will identify such novels as conforming more closely to modernist detective stories. These texts, however, are specifically interesting because they function in a fundamentally modernist structure while they posit the postmodern epistemological investigation, either theoretically or through allusion. Thus, rather than classifying them as postmodern, as has often been done in the past, by authors such as Knight, McHale and Tani, I argue that they are late modern texts, which provide further insight into postmodernism.[54] Such texts include Borges' "Death and the Compass," Robbe-Grillet's *Dans le labyrinthe*, Calvino's *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore …*, Eco's *Il nome della rosa,* and Peter Høeg's *Frøken Smillas fornemmelse for sne*. Due to limits of time and space, this concept will be explored here first with Jorge Luis Borges' "Death and the Compass" and then followed by an exploration of Umberto Eco's *Il nome della rosa.*

Borges' short story is not presented as a detective story as such, but still uses the detective story conventions, as it is a story about a detective story. The text presents a third person account, from a removed perspective, of the story of the death of Erik Lönnrot, a detective. Lönnrot is set up as a detective in the tradition of Dupin, an analytical reasoner with a reputation for solving difficult crimes. "Lönnrot se creía un puro razonador, un Auguste Dupin" (Borges, *Ficciones* 155) ["Lönnrot believed himself a pure reasoner, an Auguste Dupin" (Borges, *Labyrinths* 76)]. The perspective of the story presents us the facts of the case after they have occurred which puts us almost in the position of Dupin himself as we try to discern what happens while following the progression of Erik Lönnrot. This changes the reader/narrator dynamic, making the reader take on the role of detective

[54] Tani's distinction lies in considering Eco's novel as an 'innovative anti-detective novel' primarily because "its author is self-consciously aware of his place in the postmodern trend" (Tani 74). However, Tani admits that Eco's answer presents a solution to the detective plot, and classifies it as 'anti-detective' because it is literary, in that "once read, [it] is not yet consumed, forgotten as is the conventional detective novel" (Tani 74). Knight argues that the texts of Borges and Eco "showed how crime fiction can, by being less determinate in its puzzles and less simply resolved in its processes and outcomes, become a medium to question certainties about the self, the mind and the ambient world" (Knight 205). Using some definitions of postmodernism, Knight's classification makes sense, but it does not conform to my distinctions in terms of structure of consciousness, as any resolution in process or outcome would demonstrate the modernist pattern that I contend best represents both Eco and Borges' texts, and thus these are fundamentally (late) modernist examples.

more directly than in classical or modernist detection, when that task is an identification with characters in the story. Here the reader is given that role more directly.

Three murders take place on the third (or fourth) day of subsequent months. After the arrival of a crucial piece of evidence, a map demonstrating the locations of the three murders, Lönnrot seems assured of having solved the crime, having deducted the true nature of the pattern. He gives his assurances to his colleague with the following exchange:

> "Gracias por ese triángolo equilátero que usted anoche me mandó. Me ha permitido resolver el problema. Mañana viernes los criminales estarán en la cárcel; podemos estar muy tranquilos.
> "Entonces ¿no planean un cuarto crimen?
> "Precisamente porque planean un cuarto crimen, podemos estar muy tranquilos." (Borges, *Ficciones* 164)
>
> ["Thank you for the equilateral triangle you sent me last night. It has enabled me to solve the problem. This Friday the criminals will be in jail, we may rest assured."
> "Then they are not planning a fourth murder?"
> "Precisely because they *are* planning a fourth murder we can rest assured" (Borges, *Labyrinths* 82)].

This exchange provides a crucial insight into the story. In sending on the map, Treviranus, Lönnrot's colleague, was confident that the sequence of murders would end at three, as they were plotted as an equilateral triangle on the map and indicating that each murder occurred on the third day of the preceding three months. Lönnrot, rather, based on further evidence he believed he had understood related to the Kabbalah, had deduced that there would be a fourth murder, and that the pattern was truly a rhomboid, and that the preceding three murders in fact were found on the fourth day (morning) of each month. Both detectives, with their varied collection of evidence, used a deductive method, the classical method of detection, to 'solve' the crime.

Misreadings of the evidence, by less able detectives, are not unfamiliar, such as in the case of the Rue Morgue. Here, however, the evidence is less clear than either detective believes. Further revelations of the story, specifically the ending in the conversation between the villain, Red Scharlach, and Lönnrot, immediately before the detective's demise, lead us to understand that there

were, in fact, multiple interpretations of the evidence.[55] Thus, the detective's progression could take multiple paths, even if there was ultimately only one true conclusion, which follows the pattern of modernist detection. This is demonstrable in the discussion of whether there are truly three or four crimes being committed. Treviranus is confident, based on faulty evidence provided by the murderer himself, that there are three crimes.[56] This is despite his original reservations about the validity of the third murder, when he speculates, "¿Y si la historia de esta noche fuera simulacro?" (Borges, *Ficciones*, 163) ["And what if all this business tonight were just a mock rehearsal?" (Borges, *Labyrinths*, 81)]. Lönnrot, convinced of that crime's validity and that there will be four crimes, thus proceeds to the proposed location of the fourth crime, leading to his demise on that very spot, as he is the proposed victim. In actuality we learn that the "third" crime, the disappearance and apparent murder of Gryphius-Ginzberg-Ginsberg, does not take place at all. "El tercer 'crimen' se produjo el 3 de febrero. Fue, como Treviranus adivinó, un mero simulacro. Gryphius-Ginzberg-Ginsberg soy yo" (Borges, *Ficciones*, 169) ["The third murder was produced on the third of February. It was, as Treviranus guessed, a mere sham. I am Gryphius-Ginzberg-Ginsberg" (Borges, *Labyrinths*, 86)]. Thus, despite their different conclusions – Treviranus that there were to be three crimes while having doubt about the third (sham) murder, and Lönnrot being convinced that there would be four crimes and that the third did indeed occur – both have a theory that would propose to solve the crime. Lönnrot, based upon his rhomboid theory, goes to the very spot where the third crime is to occur. Treviranus, despite being thrown off by Scharlach's map, is indeed correct that there will be three crimes, and they do follow the equilateral triangle pattern, even if the points that are valid are different than those given. In either case, there remains a single

[55] These characters are also linguistically linked, as John Irwin notes, with *Lönnrot* containing an element of the German term for red (*rot*), and a Swedish prefix which indicates hidden. Thus *Lönnrot* is the "hidden red," while Red Scharlach is "doubly red," as his name translates to scarlet red. Scharlach can also be interpreted as an allusion to Sherlock, thus making them both detective like (or at least analytically minded) (Irwin 30).

[56] Note also that Treviranus is linguistically linked to the concept of three, with his name containing the term "tre," close to the Spanish number three, while "viranus" could be considered as a derivative of "veritas," thus making him something akin to "three is the truth," or could be connected to the latin root 'vir' meaning man, making Treviranus 'three man.'

conclusion: Lönnrot is murdered by Scharlach. There was a solution to the puzzle, yet we, as reader, are as misled by both detectives.

The story is complicated, however, by this final subversion of the conclusion. While there are conflicting interpretations of the evidence, leading both investigators to reach a conclusion, neither is able to solve the crime. Despite the fact that Lönnrot arrives at the 'correct' destination for the final enactment of the crime, he fails to discover the true nature of the plot, the identity of the murderer, or discover the victim of the final act. Thus, the epistemological quest that the detectives embark on at the beginning is wholly ineffectual, and leads only to the demise of the detective, despite his careful observations and reasoning skills. In fact, it is the following of those procedures that ultimately leads to his demise. This presents us with two problems related to the epistemological structure. Firstly, in the course of the story, the investigations of the detectives lead them to two different conclusions, which seem to them inevitable based upon the evidence, but which are wholly wrong. This leads to the notion that close observation of the evidence is not sufficient to reach an accurate conclusion, and thus brings into question, although not overtly, the validity of the classical structure itself. Secondly, from the perspective of the reader, we are affirmed of the notion that there is, in fact, a solution to the dilemma that we have been following. We are afforded the perspective to identify the murderer correctly, and understand the plot, and thus our notion of the classical structure is reaffirmed, despite the inability of the detectives to arrive at that understanding, at least until it is too late. In the end, the notion of an absolute truth is reaffirmed here with an acknowledgement that there in fact exists a position from which knowledge is sufficient to solve the crime or understand the situation, despite the detective's inability to arrive at that position. This changes the dynamic between the author, reader, and detective and which principles are reinforced, yet, what remains unchanged is the epistemological structure of the story. The reader becomes the only one capable of reconstructing the events accurately, taking away the

authority previously embodied in the figure of the detective, and by extension society. This certainly changes the political implications of this form of literature in consciously not reinforcing the idea that 'society' will always enforce its moral codes (set down in a series of laws and protected by the police force (police procedural, forensic) or government (spy novel), as is generally the case in modernist detective fiction. Here the implication is more democratic, for although the authorities are bested the notion that there is an answer, and that with careful observation and even the benefit of seeing others fail, you, the reader, can understand the solution. Thus the solution is, ultimately, available to everyman.

Umberto Eco, in his novel *Il nome della rosa*, presents a similar structure. His novel commences with the arrival of the character of William of Baskerville, a medieval detective of sorts. An anecdote, similar to that of the Dupin and the fruiterer in Poe's first story, establishes William as an excellent observer of information and human behavior, establishing him as a classical detective. Upon arrival at the abbey, he is presented with a single crime, the apparent murder of a monk, Adelmo, who has been found at the base of the library tower.

The idea of a classical detective progression, however, is quickly subverted in William's conception of the first murder. After several conversations he comes to the conclusion that there was no murder after all. "Delitto? Più ci penso e più mi convinco che Adelmo si è ucciso." (Eco, *Nome*, 98) ["Crime. The more I think about it, the more I am convinced that Adelmo killed himself" (Eco, *Name*, 102)]. William does not explain this suspicion as based upon a logical deduction derived from all known evidence, with the surety that he identified the horse Brunellus in the opening scene, but rather as an appeal to Occam's razor, the philosophical concept (from the historical era in which the novel is set), by which the simplest of two or more possibilities is deemed the correct one. He explains this with reference to the case of Adelmo.

> "Non occorre moltiplicare le spiegazioni e le cause senza che se ne abbia una stretta necessità. Se Adelmo è caduto dal torrione orientale bisogna che sia penetrato in biblioteca,

> che qualcuno lo abbia colpito prima perché non opponesse resistenza, che abbia trovato il modo di salire con un corpo esanime sulle spalle sino alla finestra, che l'abbia aperta e abbia precipitato giù lo sciagurato. Con la mia ipotesi ci bastano invece Adelmo, la sua voluntà, e una frana. Tutto si spiega utilizzando un minor numero di cause" (Eco, *Nome*, 99)
>
> ["one should not multiply explanations and causes unless it is strictly necessary. If Adelmo fell from the east tower, he must have got into the library, someone must have first struck him so he would offer no resistance, and then this person must have found a way of climbing up to the window with a lifeless body on his back, opening it, and pitching the hapless monk down. But with my hypothesis we need only Adelmo, his decision, and a shift of some land. Everything is explained, using a smaller number of causes" (Eco, *Name* 103).]

Faced with resistance to the gathering of evidence, and presented with two distinct, and plausible, possibilities, this presumably classical type detective admits already that there could be more than one possible solution. In this, with the more simple deductive model hindered, William switches to a more inductive model of investigation, in which he poses a hypothesis (here the more rational of the two, by virtue of Occam's razor) and tries to discover whether his theory holds when faced with further evidence. This parallels the Auster and Pynchon texts, in which they switch methodology in order to continue their investigation.

The investigation is complicated by a series of subsequent, apparently related murders, which divert the inquiry from that of the death of a single monk, to the solving of a series of murders. The inquest follows, like Marlowe in *The Big Sleep*, shifting explanations in the face of each subsequent body, even as all seem to lead William into the labyrinth of the library itself. The conclusion, however, follows the path of Borges' short story, in that William of Baskerville, although arriving in the correct location at the end, ultimately fails to understand the workings of the case at all.

At the end, the ultimate cause of the series of murders is Jorge de Burgos, the blind librarian of the abbey, whose physical characteristics can be taken as a reference to Borges. Borges, a great literary influence on Eco, was also blind and once served as the director of the Argentinean National Library. Borges's short story, "La biblioteca de Babel," serves as an obvious model for the

library at the abbey. Burgos, like Red Scharlach, counts on the astuteness of his detective adversary to find and arrive at the ultimate location. "Sin dal primo giorno ho capito che tu avresti capito. … Eri meglio degli altri, ci saresti giunto comunque. Sai, basta pensare e ricostituire nella propria mente i pensieri dell'altro." (Eco, *Nome*, 469) ["From the first day I realized you would understand. … You were better than the others: you would have arrived at the solution no matter what. You know that it suffices to think and to reconstruct in one's mind the thoughts of the other" (Eco, *Name*, 565)]. William, however much he resembles Poe's protagonist in cleverness or technique, fails to arrive at the final solution accurately. Instead, he arrives in the library purely by chance, after having incorrectly ascribed the murders to a sequence related to the seven trumpets of the Apocalypse. As Burgos admits, "[ha] fabbricato uno schema falso per interpretare le mosse del colpevole e il colpevole vi si è adeguato (Eco, *Nome* 473) ["[he] conceived a false pattern to interpret the moves of the guilty man, and the guilty man fell in with it" (Eco, *Name*, 573)]. Burgos himself did not commit each murder, but set the wheels in motion, thus being ultimately responsible. In the final conversation with Burgos we find out that all of the murders were committed to maintain the secrecy of a single book, Aristotle's treatise on Comedy. William ultimately discovers this solution, thus learning the truth behind the sequence of murders (as does the reader), despite the detection process being a failure and our knowledge of the situation coming through a more or less unsolicited confession.

Both Borges's story and Eco's novel end with the detective learning the solution to the crime, while also realizing that his own detection failed to produce a satisfactory result. Despite their personal failure, both arrive at the knowledge of the correct solution, demonstrating that the trial and error process they had been using was still valid. They had simply made incorrect judgments. Yes, despite the detective's failures, the reinforcing qualities of modernist detective

fiction and the concept that there is, ultimately, an accurate solution and absolute truth, is maintained.

Thus, because there ultimately is a solution, we see that both Borges' and Eco's stories conform not to the postmodern structure of consciousness associated with anti-detective fiction, but rather to the modernist structure of consciousness. Here we have root structure, even if we are unable to see the root – the modernist structure guides the reading. Yet, the political and psychological implications of the distancing of the reader from the detective, and the failure of the detective to arrive at a solution that only the reader is in a position to understand (or have explained), creates a different dynamic than more traditional modernist detection, something which pushes the epistemological envelope and allows one to consider the type of structure that is found in postmodern detection. Thus, like McHale and others, I propose these stories represent late modernist detection. The term is important as the emphasis on structure warrants the inclusion of this type of detection under the modernist heading, making it another sub-genre like the police procedural, forensic, spy novel, each of which have their own specific traits and social, cultural and political implications. Yet, it seems that this type of detective fiction, generally, develops or becomes more widespread after modernist detection is already well-known (it, in fact, plays with the conventions of both classical and modernist detection), and thus the assignation of *late* modernist has some logical force behind it.[57]

Alan Wilde uses the term late modernism to talk about a transitional period between modernism (early modernism) and postmodernism. The distinction for him is a different means of dealing with epistemological assumptions. "The early modernist tendency to connect truth with

[57] This term is of course already in use. Charles Jencks uses it (in architecture) to distinguish a type of modernist architecture after High Modernism has run its course, but which continues to follow the same basic logic, and contrasting it with Postmodern architecture, which rejects the modernist logic. "The Late Modernists have, for the most part, taken the theories and style of their precursors to an extreme and in so doing produced an elaborated or mannered Modernism. By contrast Post-Modernists have modified the previous style, while building upon it, but in addition also rejected the theories almost completely" (Jencks 43).

depth, and at times to sacrifice the phenomenal for the reality that is presumed to underlie it, gives way to a counterassertion that truth inheres in the visible. …. Reading appearances correctly is, in fact, the project of late modernism, its enemy not a failure to penetrate to some more authentic reality but a sort of cultural or psychological dyslexia, which blurs vision itself" (Wilde 108-9). As the quote indicates, both early modernism and late modernism are concerned with a revelation of the truth, but differ in how it is obscured or how it can be clarified. Postmodernism breaks with these two linked phenomenon in asserting that truth cannot be revealed (there is no position from which to determine the truth-value of any given claim). I argue that the structure of consciousness, makes this distinction more clear, and consequently makes the terms of late modernism meaningful as it highlights the continuity from one modernist form to another. Brian McHale uses Wilde's categorization of late modernism being a transitionary period between (early) modernism and postmodernism, although prefers a different term and identifies the characteristics of the transition differently. My use of the term follows the transitionary aspect, but redefines the boundaries of the various categories considered.

Verisimilitude and Realism

I want to further address how one can argue that detective fiction (if not all fiction to some degree) reflects and reinforces a particular understanding of reality, and how this is expressed as such in its verisimilitude. This understanding of reality changes depending upon the type of detective fiction presented, as expressed in the structure of the investigation and in the relationship of the reader, author, and detective. S.S. Van Dine, in the September 1928 edition of *American Magazine*, presented a series of rules for the detective fiction genre. The rules are designed to give a semblance of order, and to purge the popular form of writing from overused motifs and preserve it for a new generation of fans. Van Dine's rules are specific to the classical detective fiction form, which is

presented as a type of intellectual game, written so that "The reader must have equal opportunity with the detective for solving the mystery" (Van Dine 129). His rules, which he claims "every respectable and self-respecting concocter of literary mysteries lives up to" (Van Dine 128), are set up not only to maintain the pact between reader and author, by which the reader has a "fair" chance to solve the puzzle-game along with the detective, but also to present a world which reflects the world the reader inhabits. To that end, "there must be a sufficient descriptiveness and character delineation to give the novel verisimilitude" (Van Dine 130). This characteristic, combined with other rules which rule out supernatural explanations and pure chance, establish a relationship between the fictional and the world of the reader in as much as they have the same set of rational guidelines. Thus the world of detective fiction, according to Van Dine, is designed to resemble the world that the reader inhabits. By extension, the mode of detection inherent in the detective novel is set up as valid and ordinary in the world of the reader, reinforcing that form of detection.

Later, Raymond Chandler, one of the foremost writers of the hard-boiled variety of detective fiction, presents a similar notion with regards to this subgenre. The opening line of his essay, "The Simple Art of Murder," states that "fiction in any form has always intended to be realistic" (Chandler *Simple* 1). His essay, however, goes on to juxtapose the classic deductive form of detective fiction, with such proponents as Agatha Christie, S.S. Van Dine, and Dorothy Sayers, with that of Dashiell Hammett. He claims that the classical form was simply a parlor game, with little connection to reality, whereas Hammett "was one of a group … who wrote or tried to write realistic mystery fiction" (Chandler *Simple* 15). In discussing Sayers' claim that detective fiction is simply a "literature of escape" rather than a "literature of expression," Chandler goes on to argue that this is due to the unreality of the characters and situations necessary for the classic detective story.

> I think what was really gnawing at Miss Sayers' mind was the slow realization that her kind of detective story was an arid formula which could not satisfy its own implications … If it started out to be about real people, they must soon do unreal things in order to form the

> artificial pattern required by the plot. When they did unreal things, they ceased to be real themselves. (Chandler, *Simple* 14)

What is interesting in this contradistinction is that both Van Dine, when presenting his rules of detective fiction, and Chandler in his promotion of Hammett's hard-boiled style at the expense of the classical detective story, each present his version of the genre as based on a form of realism or verisimilitude. A major critique of the stories that violate the rules of detective fiction is their lack of credibility due to the supernatural or unrealistic elements of the text. This is the very criticism that Chandler levels at the entirety of the classical detective story.

Scholars studying postmodern detective fiction also discuss realism and verisimilitude. Anne Hopzafel claims that the postmodern detective novel,[58] like the other two classifications, is based on the historical circumstances from which they arise.

> While belief in rationality was central to the motifs of the classical detective novel, and the incorporation of the 20th century urban American reality the main concern of the hard-boiled novel, the anti-detective novel finds its points of reference in a fragmented, postmodern society that is marked by political and cultural disorientation and insecurity. (Hopzafel 22)

This historicization of the subgenre of the postmodern detective novel addresses the inability of an individual to gain the perspective necessary, in such a fragmented and decentered society, to present the type of certainty and knowledge claims that particularly characterize the ending of the classical and hard-boiled detective novels. The postmodern detective novel, in its own way, actually presents a more complex understanding of reality reflecting, as Hopzafel claims, a differing social order and means of understanding one's relation to, and ability to understand, the society in which one lives and operates.

Each of the forms herein presented reflects a certain understanding of the society in which they are written. The classical form seeks to present in the text the idea that, through careful observation, the detective (and, through the process of the intellectual game, the reader) can come to

[58] She uses the term anti-detective novel.

a complete understanding of the truth of any inquiry. Developed after Romanticism, this is a type of nostalgic throwback to the theories of the Enlightenment, and the structure of the classical detective story is designed, in part, to reinforce that ideal (whether or not, as Chandler claims, it is unrealistic).

Similarly, the modernist detective novel, whether depicted in the American hard-boiled variety of the urban squalor of Los Angeles or San Francisco, or the police procedural of later generations, reinforces a societal mentality that through hard work and determination crimes will be solved. Perhaps stemming from a time of rampant violence in the cities (such as the Valentine's Day Massacre of gangsters in Chicago) or widespread disregard for the law (during the time of prohibition), the genre reinforces both a sense of societal justice through the private investigator/police detective, as well as a faith in the moral compass of such a hero. Chandler describes him as such: "He is a relatively poor man, or he would not be a detective at all. He is a common man or he could not go among common people. He has a sense of character, or he would not know his job;" and furthermore, "he is the best man in his world and a good enough man for any world" (Chandler 20). This hero is represented as an ordinary individual, no smarter or better off than the stereotypical common man, and as such presents a reflection of the hopes of a typical man off the street.

Finally, postmodern detective fiction is, in a certain sense, mimetic of the reality of the contemporary age.

> Postmodernist fiction, if critics such as John Gardner, Gerald Graff, and Charles Newman are to be believed, is morally bad art, and tends to corrupt its readers. It does so by denying external, objective reality. There was a time when denying the reality of the outside world could be seen as a bold gesture of resistance, a refusal to acquiesce in a coercive "bourgeois" order of things. But that time has passed, and nowadays everything in our culture tends to deny reality and promote unreality. (McHale 219)

McHale presents the status of contemporary culture (citing Graff) as unreality, yet maintains that postmodernist fiction remains mimetic, reflecting just that level of unreality which the world

demonstrates. I disagree with the notion that contemporary society exists as a "kind of unreal reality that modern reality has become" (Graff 180), contending instead that we have simply come to a new understanding of reality (I would argue anti-reality and unreality are simply negative terms used to denigrate the concept in advance, preserving a positive term for a preexisting notion of 'reality' that the critic wishes to preserve). The contemporary world has, rather, become understood in a new way, which is based on the structure that is reflected in postmodern literature in general and specifically here in the postmodern detective novel. The critics' argument is truly not against the nature of the literature, which they agree is mimetic, but rather against the culture and social structure itself, which is understood in a way that they do not accept. Culture and society no longer function according to strict rules, preordained or passed down by tradition, but rather social choices are undertaken via a myriad of criteria and moral codes, with no reference to a higher, absolute ideal. It is this nature that is reflected in the postmodern detective novel.

Ewert's article also deals with the problems in determining the proper term for this category of detective fiction, which I call postmodern. There have been a number of terms posited to explain the differences in this type of detective fiction from the more traditional classical and hard-boiled forms. Ewert uses the term 'metaphysical detective fiction.' Patricia Merivale and Susan Sweeney also use this term in their compilation of essays, *Detecting Texts: The Metaphysical Detective Story from Poe to Postmodernism*, and define the subgenre as follows:

> A metaphysical detective story is a text that parodies or subverts traditional detective-story conventions – such as narrative closure and the detective's role as surrogate reader – with the intention, or at least the effect, of asking questions about mysteries of being and knowing which transcend the mere machinations of the mystery plot. (Merivale 2)

This category, however, addresses the concept of the detective story not by the way in which the detective goes about the investigation, nor the solution to the problem, but is rather concerned with which kind of questions are posited in the first place. Thus, Elana Gomel's term "ontological detective story" could be paired with a term "epistemological detective story" to include those texts

that Merivale and Sweeney contend are "tales that focus explicitly on epistemology" (Merivale 4), under their heading of metaphysical detective fiction, regardless of method or outcome. In this way they would encompass "such writers [as those who] have used Poe's ratiocinative process to address unfathomable epistemological and ontological questions" (Merivale 4), and are thus "concerned with metaphysics" (Merivale 4). While interesting, the question of what is being detected – whether it be actual crime, medical investigation (as many popular TV shows such as *House, M.D.* exemplify), or metaphysical concerns – does not aid one in understanding the basic assumptions presumed by the method of detection, and thus the category of metaphysical detective fiction is fundamentally different than any division of classical, modernist, or postmodernist methodology could encompass.

The term postmodern is also problematic, as I discussed in the introduction. One specific notion I would like to dispel is the idea that this concept is limited by a chronological sequence, in which postmodern detective fiction must be identified as superseding modernist detective fiction, or that, as Tani hopes to understand, one can identify periods as specifically modern or postmodern (Tani 38). Although I certainly recognize the historical development of the genre, and argue above that each form of detective fiction reflects a differing understanding of reality, in my presentation of detective fiction I separate these texts strictly on the basis of their epistemological structure. Thus it is possible for texts written using classical, modernist, and postmodernist structure to all be written at historically the same time (as is the case, in fact, with Andrea Camilleri, Dan Turéll, and Paul Auster all writing in the mid-eighties using structurally different methods). I would further note that in order to argue that postmodern detective fiction has supplanted modern or other forms of detective fiction (which a strictly historical argument would need to contend),[59] it would be

[59] David Harvey, in *The Condition of Postmodernity*, makes such an historical argument about postmodernity in general, attributing the shift to postmodernism to "the crisis of overaccumulation that began in the late 1960s and which came to a head in 1973" (Harvey 328). I am still not sure this socio-cultural change can be pinned down so neatly, or

necessary to show that postmodern fiction is more popular or prevalent. This does not seem to be the case, but rather it seems that postmodern detective fiction (like postmodern fiction in general) has a rather limited appeal, where modernist detective fiction (thinking just of American television there are an abundance of police procedurals and forensics, topping all ratings charts) and even classical detective fiction (again with shows like *Monk* and *Pysch* and even the *Law and Order* series producing a classical detective character in *Criminal Intent,* as well as the creation of several Sherlock Holmes franchises) remaining extraordinarily popular.[60] So while it is possible to argue that postmodern detective fiction developed more recently (since perhaps the 1960s, if we start with Pynchon's novel discussed here), it has not replaced earlier forms of fiction, just as the understanding of reality associated with that fiction has not supplanted other understandings of reality (those associated with modernist detective fiction, for example). On the contrary, I would argue (and will do so later) that those forms of reality are far more common than any vision associated with the postmodern.

Conclusion

The three types of detective novel presented here, the classical, as represented by Poe, Christie, and others, the modernist, as represented by the hard-boiled Chandler, as well as police procedurals and the late modernist contributions of Borges and Eco, and the postmodern approach employed by Auster, Pychon and Nolan, reflect the three structures of consciousness discussed in the introduction. There is the positivistic model of the classical story along with the twisting and turning modernist approach, as presented by Chandler among others, both of which ultimately resolve in a solution. There is a middle ground, represented by Borges and Eco, which continue in a modernist conception, while alluding to a worldview in which absolute truth may not exist. Finally

whether the aesthetic changes, which he argues reflect such a change, overlap with his proposed timeline. In any case, it would require a more broadly defined cultural study than my literary analysis would allow.

[60] This is perhaps even more true in British and Scandinavian television markets, for example.

there is the net pattern presented by the stories by Auster, Pynchon and Nolan, in which both the scope of the investigation, the means by which it is conducted, the very connections made, and the final non-solution all lead to a complete questioning of the possibility of any absolute basis of knowledge. These epistemological structures are both characteristic of the subgenres of detective fiction here presented, but are also related to the philosophical structures and historical times from which they sprung. In the following chapter, I will demonstrate how this pattern of structures works not only in the epistemological investigations foregrounded in detective fiction, but also in ontological quests which are brought to the fore in science fiction.

What world is this? Who am I (in it?)?

The structure of the ontological formation in Science Fiction

Science fiction is trying to find alternative ways of looking at realities.
Iain Banks

Pondering our place in the universe is a time-honored tradition, and the theme for a great number of novels, films and aesthetic output of all kinds. Science fiction, in particular, offers a unique vantage point on such discussions, and through that lens we will consider a number of literary and filmic texts which deal specifically with concerns about ontology and subjectivity. While the previous chapter focused on detective fiction, and laid out how texts of that epistemological genre conform to classical, modernist and postmodernist structures of consciousness, this chapter will discuss how science fiction, while focusing on other metaphysical concerns, can be seen to use the same three structures. Relatively recent films, like *Men in Black II*, *Independence Day*, and *Inception* exemplify these particular mindsets, the classical, modernist, and postmodernist. In Barry Sonnenfield's 2002 film, *Men in Black II,* the revelation that Laura (Rosario Dawson) is the key to freeing Earth from destruction, is not the result of anything she does or becomes in life; rather, it is a consequence of who she *is*. Her innate identity, as The Light of Zartha, is revealed, and through this discovery (the *anagnorisis* of the Aristotelian tradition) that she is able to act to save her planet (and Earth). In so doing she reflects a classical understanding of subjectivity. In Roland Emmerich's 1996 blockbuster, *Independence Day*, the end of the film shows the US President (Bill Pullman) proclaiming that July 4th will no longer, in future, be known only as an American holiday, but the Independence Day of the World, as the invasion is repelled through the concurrent assault on the alien space ships, combined with cybernetic hacking which defeats the alien mothership. Only through an encounter with otherness, and a reassessment of themselves in the process (now considering their common humanity over individual national identities), do the heroes defeat the enemy, thus revealing the film's modernist structure. Christopher Nolan's 2010 foray into science fiction, *Inception*, offers a consideration of the manifold levels of dreams and perceived reality, and the closing scene famously leaves viewers to wonder whether there is a wavering of the spinning

top (signifying a return to reality) or not (signifying a continued dream state). By leaving the answer open, Nolan blurs the line between dream and reality, making it impossible for the viewer to determine the stability of the ontological levels of the film. But as he claimed in a 2015 Princeton graduation speech, that is precisely the point: “The way the end of that film worked, Leonardo DiCaprio’s character Cobb — he was off with his kids, he was in his own subjective reality," he said. "He didn’t really care any more, and that makes a statement: perhaps all levels of reality are valid. The camera moves over the spinning top just before it appears to be wobbling, it was cut to black” (Lee). The ending thus reveals a postmodernist structure of consciousness (even as audience demands to know whether the top is wavering or not reveal their modernist mindset).

As we have demonstrated in a previous chapter, it is possible for texts with an epistemological dominant to be postmodern. As a corollary to that, one must explore whether texts with an ontological dominant can be modernist. Thus, we will now take up the second half of Brian McHale’s main thesis from *Postmodernist Fiction*, in which he argues that those texts identified by an ontological dominant (in which questions of being and identity are of primary focus) are postmodernist. “The dominant of postmodernist fiction is *ontological*. That is, postmodernist fiction deploys strategies which engage and foreground questions like the ones Dick Higgins calls ‘post-cognitive’: “Which world is this? What is to be done in it? Which of my selves is to do it?” (McHale 10). Again, contrary to McHale, I argue that this is not the case. Both modernist and postmodernist texts can be found that discuss, primarily, epistemological and ontological questions. The differentiation between modernist and postmodernist poetics lies not in the type of questions posed (or proposed first, as with McHale’s use of the dominant), but rather in the means by which these questions are answered. These means correspond to the structure of consciousness, the underlying structural metaphor grounding the understanding of reality with which a given text operates and is interpreted.

In this chapter, I explore this structure of consciousness in relation to ontological questions (which McHale argues are postmodernist by definition), and have therefore chosen to concentrate upon science fiction. This type of text involves an exploration of being and subjectivity, which can be understood in a broader context as a reflection of the search for identity itself. Thus, using science fiction as a representative ontological genre, I seek to challenge the idea that such texts are tautologically *post*modernist. Parallel to the argument put forth in the previous chapter, there are science fiction texts which have an ontological dominant that correspond to each of the structures of consciousness identified earlier – the classical, modernist and postmodernist – and it is this structure, manifested in the responses to questions of ontology and subjectivity which is determinate.

The chapter will proceed with a brief history of the science fiction genre, following which representative texts will be discussed to highlight their respective relationships to the three structures of consciousness. These texts were chosen for several reasons. They are all well known, canonical texts in science fiction, as well as representative of various chronological and thematic developments within the genre. They are also some of clearest examples of each of their respective structures of consciousness, and finally, as a collective, they demonstrate firstly that there are classical and modernist as well as postmodernist science fiction texts, and secondly, the means by which such texts can be interpreted as modernist or postmodernist based on the interstice of the text and the reader's own structure of consciousness.[61]

[61] As I do with other types of texts earlier, I assert that the texts do provide evidence, often clear evidence, of the structure of consciousness at work. However, I also contend that the reader has a stake in the interpretation, and thus one can make a modernist reading of a postmodern work (as McHale provides in *Constructing Postmodernism*) or a postmodern reading of a modernist work.

Rethinking Science Fiction and Postmodernism

Histories of science fiction, like those of detective fiction, divide the genre into distinct chronological and typological categories. The start date and founding authors of science fiction have often been debated – from the *Epic of Gilgamesh* to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* to HG Wells and Jules Verne – but it is certain that this type of imaginative fiction was not considered as a coherent independent genre until the 1920s. Adam Roberts notes that some critics "insist on searching out 'fantastic' or 'science-fictional' elements in literature as ancient as literature is itself" (Roberts 47). But the importance of such a parallel, is "the metaphorical basis of an encounter with difference" (Roberts 49). It is the reasoning behind science fiction, rather than the chronological origins, where science fiction draws its critical potency, with the common tropes functioning as metaphors for the encounter with otherness, often represented by alien worlds and speculative identities. This chapter deals specifically with these interstices, the representations of both ontology and subjectivity within science fiction, with the constant aim to elucidate the postmodern.

As a consolidated genre from the 1920s onward, science fiction is often discussed in a number of traditional categories, from the pulp science fiction of Hugo Gernsback, to the Golden Age (with authors like Asimov and Heinlein), to the New Wave (JG Ballard, Philip K Dick, Samuel Delany, Philip José Farmer), followed by discussions of gender (feminist science fiction), and race. The 1980s brings a discussion of the rise of cyberpunk, which is either discussed as a subsequent movement or in relation to its use of technology (in a section similar to those of gender and race).[62] There have also been numerous descendants of cyberpunk: steampunk, biopunk, splatterpunk, punkpunk, but the main one of interest to this study, due to its mimetic features and correspondence

[62] This is roughly the approach of *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, in which science fiction is broken down chronologically, while race and gender (and other categories) are treated later as sub-genres. It is also the fundamental structure that Bruce Sterling alludes to in his definition of cyberpunk in the preface to the *Mirrorshades* anthology. See also: Roberts 2000, Aldiss 1986, and Seed 2005.

to cyberpunk, is postcyberpunk which we will consider in the case of *Snow Crash*.[63] While there are different strategies which inform the various categorizations of science fiction, for the purposes of this study of postmodernism, I will only discuss some common characteristics of the genre. I will specifically consider the way subjectivity and the ontology of worlds are depicted, and how these concepts are rendered differently in various forms of science fiction. I contend that there is, with regards to ontological concerns, a development from a classical model, through a modernist approach, to a more postmodern structural pattern, parallel to the approach described in the previous chapter with regards to epistemological patterns in detective fiction.

McHale argues that all science fiction is, perhaps necessarily, a postmodern concept. Reiterating his parallel definition, from *Postmodernist Fiction*, to that of detective fiction in the previous chapter, he claims: "Science fiction, we might say, is to postmodernism what detective fiction was to modernism: it is the ontological genre *par excellence* (as the detective story is the epistemological genre *par excellence*)" (McHale, *Postmodernist* 16). He continues to maintain the distinction in his later work, *Constructing Postmodernism*, despite its focus on the constructedness of postmodernism. The ontological dominant, and its ties to SF and postmodernism, continues to be a key position in McHale's definition.

> Both science fiction and mainstream postmodernist fiction possess repertoires of strategies and motifs designed to raise and explore ontological issues. SF, that is, like postmodernist fiction, is governed by an ontological dominant, by contrast with modernist fiction or, among the genres of "genre" fiction, detective fiction, both of which raise and explore issues of epistemology and thus are governed by an epistemological dominant. (McHale, *Constructing*, 247)

[63] Postcyberpunk represents, like postmodernism, a chronological bind whose boundary with cyberpunk is not always clear. Most often it is marked by its chronology, after the Bruce Sterling-defined cyberpunk period ended, or by its optimistic look towards the future as opposed to the more bleak perspective found in traditional cyberpunk. "Postcyberpunk uses the same immersive world-building technique [as cyberpunk], but features different characters, settings, and, most importantly, makes fundamentally different assumptions about the future. Far from being alienated loners, postcyberpunk characters are frequently integral members of society (i.e., they have jobs). They live in futures that are not necessarily dystopic (indeed, they are often suffused with an optimism that ranges from cautious to exuberant), but their everyday lives are still impacted by rapid technological change and an omnipresent computerized infrastructure" (Person, Lawrence, *Notes Toward a Postcyberpunk Manifesto*).

Although I agree that, in the realm of genre fiction, detective fiction forefronts epistemological questions and science fiction forefronts ontological questions, I disagree that this shift is strictly characteristic of mainstream postmodern fiction. Just as the texts of detective fiction, with their various responses to epistemological questions, present classical, modernist, and postmodernist patterns, I contend that not all science fiction works are elements of postmodernist poetics, even if they do forefront ontological issues. Instead, the ontological constructs are a touchstone by which to determine the type of poetics (classical, modernist, postmodernist) that is at work within science fiction texts. To reiterate, the difference between modernist and postmodernist poetics lies not in the type of questions asked (epistemological, ontological, etc.) but rather in the *answer* provided: Modernist poetics suggests an answer to metaphysical concerns, while postmodernist poetics demonstrates the impossibility of such an answer.

As with detective fiction, I don't intend this to be an overarching means of defining the genre. There are many methods (literary technique, trope, theme, authorship, national origin, gender, race, chronological sequence) that are useful for differentiating the various texts of the genre. I have chosen this particular method (the tripartite division of classical, modernist, and postmodernist ontology and subjectivity) in order to reach a definition of postmodern science fiction and further an understanding of postmodernism in literature in general. I do not intend to call into question the means by which science fiction is often classified chronologically. I believe such histories are vital in understanding the genre, especially in tracing the changes in the speculative nova that appear in connection to advances in science and technology. My intention here is simply to provide a way to view the ontological issues that are often present in science fiction works, - an approach which, if these issues are highlighted in a given set of science fiction texts, can be applied as a system of classification. One could also classify SF thematically, as many literary historians of the genre do, compartmentalizing themes like alien encounters, advance robots, artificial

intelligence, virtual reality, utopian/dystopian societies, etc. as a means of organizing the vast amounts of literature. The division I have chosen is however meant to highlight the structural pattern of ontological concerns and that pattern's changes within the genre.

Darko Suvin, in *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, defines science fiction as a version of estranged fiction and opposed to that of naturalistic fiction. As such, science fiction doesn't have a "straightforward relationship to the 'zero world' of empirically verifiable properties around the author" (Suvin 18) as much mainstream literature does. Rather, "through concentrating on the cognitively plausible futures and their spatial equivalents, [science fiction] can deal with the present and the past as special cases of a possible historical sequence seen from an estranged point of view – since any empirical historical point or flow can be thought of as one realization among practically innumerable possibilities" (Suvin 21). Using this definition, we can see how the concept of otherness functions as a dominant device in science fiction, through the positing of innumerable 'other' possibilities which can be contrasted both with the protagonist (or his/her world) and with the reader/audience (or his/her world).[64] A difference from the world of the reader is one of the defining characteristics of science fiction, as outlined in Suvin's theory of the novum[65], and is of particular importance, as I shall demonstrate, for understanding the postmodern structure of consciousness as it is expressed in science fiction. It is therefore necessary to consider both the world within the narrative as well as the relationship between that world and the world of the reader when considering the ontological constructs found within each text.

Otherness, and its various uses within the texts, will be one of several means of highlighting the structures of consciousness revealed in the case studies below. These texts will be presented in a

[64] I will use reader as a convention for both the reader (for fiction) and audience (for film), simply for the sake of convenience. My approach to film in this study will be to treat film as text and focus more on the narrative than on the filmic elements at work.

[65] Darko Suvin, in *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, defines a novum as "a totalizing phenomenon of relationship deviating from the author's and implied reader's norm of reality" and contends it is a (if not the) defining characteristic of science fiction.

similar pattern to the previous chapter, with classical structures being discussed first in Doris Lessing's *The Marriages Between Zones Three, Four and Five* and Isaac Asimov's *Foundation* series, which consider individuals and larger social structures in similar ways. This will be followed by a look at modernist structures, which will be presented first with a discussion of Robert Heinlein and hard sf, and subsequently with examples of late modernism. Here we will see how texts which presume to show indeterminability regarding which world one occupies, and who one is in such a world, are revealed in analysis to only suggest the postmodern condition, while in effect reinforcing a modernist framework. In this section, William Gibson's short story 'The Gernsback Continuum' and Svend Åge Madsen's 'Stig' will be employed in discussing ontological questions, while Ursula Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* and the film *Blade Runner* will be used to discuss subjectivity. These texts are critical in demonstrating that science fiction is not a predominantly, or even mainly, a postmodern genre, since even some texts that allude to postmodernist discourses in fact operate within a modernist structure of consciousness, again in contradiction to the assertions by McHale. Finally, we will turn to a selection of texts which I construe as presenting a postmodernist structure of consciousness. These texts – the *Matrix* trilogy, Neal Stephenson's *Snow Crash*, and the 2004 television series *Battlestar Galactica* – present situations in which the demarcation lines between worlds, or the definitions which allow us to differentiate ourselves from aliens or artificial intelligences, are elided to such a degree that there is no difference, and in essence the categories, both human and non-human, real and virtual, cease to be meaningful. This exemplifies the postmodern condition, and represents what I argue is the space necessary for meaningful change, which these texts, and those like them, allow for.

I am ... what I am at the moment I am that.
Doris Lessing, *The Marriages Between Zones Three, Four and Five*

Ontological Certainty or Predestination: The Classical Approach

The Marriages Between Zones Three, Four and Five

Doris Lessing's *The Marriages Between Zones Three, Four and Five* offers a classical approach with regards to subjectivity, in which there is a confrontation with the other, and a consideration of one's own identity, and yet the innate identity of the characters is reinforced. These characters are defined based on characteristics and assumptions that are within themselves. In encounters between these characters, the relationship with the other doesn't force a re-evaluation of the individual's identity, but rather reinforces their own subjectivity. This can be seen as parallel to Aristotle's classical theory of anagnorisis, which is first described in relation to Oedipus Rex, and highlights the point at which the recognition of Oedipus's scar allows for the revelation of his true identity.

Lessing's text provides the fable-like story of Al Ith, the queen of Zone Three. Through the intervention of an unnamed, alien force, this independent, self-sufficient woman, living in a type of feminist utopia, travels to the neighboring (and inferior) Zone Four and enters into a marriage with their King, Ben Ata. This interaction regenerates an internal spiritual movement towards enlightenment, while simultaneously reinforcing the identities of both partners in the marriage, despite their differences. Most scholarship focuses on this regeneration, reading the two cultures as part of a whole (a native race manipulated by the Canopeans to achieve a spiritual harmony akin to Sufism).[66] However, I will focus specifically on the identities of the two protagonists and their encounter, through which the formation of their identities is highlighted.

Both Al Ith and Ben Ata have well defined cultural contexts, which also define their roles in society and their individual identities. "If they were nothing else, these two, they were representatives and embodiments of their respective countries. Concern for their realms was what

[66] "Lessing's *Marriages* … has been recognized as thinly veiled allegory by nearly all the reviewers" (Draine 144-5).

they were" (Lessing, *Marriages* 45). As they are representative, the individual encounter that Lessing describes functions as a stand in for a larger cultural exchange, a product of the ripple effect of their leader's experience. This is part of Lessing's overall project, throughout the Canopos in Argos series.

> Science fiction writers are concerned with those conditions of existence which transcend, while determining, the individual case. Their task is a difficult one – to expand the reader's consciousness so that it can grasp events from the alien perspective of huge vistas of time and space. (Here we see surfacing Lessing's consistent theme, the attempt to transcend the limits placed on consciousness by the thought conventions of a particular historical moment and situation). (Draine 152)

Thus, while focusing on the individual experience, and the localized transcultural site, the effects in the novel are greater than just those upon Al Ith and Ben Ata. In the novel, they represent a change throughout the zones, and in the larger project, this particular encounter is representative of the entire spiritual harmony of the Universe.

The site of their encounter is in Zone Four, which although presented as culturally inferior to Zone Three (not least due to the numbering system, but also due to the reactions of the other occupants of the respective Zones) still represents a neutral location. The presence of Al Ith so disrupts Ben Ata's customary dominance as to displace him from his cultural context. Al Ith is both physically and emotionally removed from her contextual space. "In this novel, Al·Ith, the queen of Zone Three, is the unwilling pilgrim from one spiritual state to another" (Draine 164). Thus, their marriage bed, which neither of them chose, becomes the site of this encounter with otherness.

Although they both change through the product of their marriage, their identities do not change in reaction to each other's differences, but rather develop in a linear fashion. They come to a greater understanding of who they already are through this interaction with someone else, yet do not define themselves in contrast to the other. They enter into the situation with both skepticism and reluctance, yet with a sense of duty to a higher power. "They looked at each other with a frank exchange of complicity: two prisoners who had nothing in common but their incarceration. This

first, and frail, moment of tolerance, did not last" (Lessing, *Marriages* 29). Initially, they approach the experience with tolerance, a positive outlook on an anxious and undesired encounter. The experience, consummated in a series of more and more tolerant and productive sexual encounters, proves meaningful, as both individuals strive for understanding and acceptance of each other's otherness. They entered as disparate individuals, representative of nearly antagonistic worlds, into an experience where both attempt to come to an understanding beyond their own conception.

> Their people were what *they* were, their thoughts were. Their lives could be nothing else, or less ... yet now both were aware, and deeply, so that they were shocked and stirred to their depths, that all this concern and this duty of theirs had not prevented them from going very wrong ... They were looking at each other, not shrinking from each other's gaze at all, but both trying to enter in behind the sober, thoughtfulness of his grey eyes, the soft gleam of her black eyes, so that they could reach something deeper, and other. (Lessing, *Marriages* 45) (emphasis in original)

This encounter allowed both Al Ith and Ben Ata, especially upon later reflection, to recognize that their respective cultures were stagnant, that they had 'gone wrong'. The encounter provided a needed reflection and stimulus to set out on the path of enlightenment that is built into their cultures. This encounter, though, remains fleeting, and although it allowed each of them, individually, space for reflection, they remain culturally distinct. After their union they return to their respective situations, seemingly unaltered in relation to each other.

> For looking at each other now, returned to their absolute separateness, their otherness, these two denizens of their different realms could not believe what they had won together during their hours of submersion in each other. She was to him, again, a foreign woman, everything about her alien, though dear now in a way that estranged him more than bound him. (Lessing, *Marriages* 70)

The nature of their understanding seems to exist only in the moment, and their encounter serves to reinforce, rather than mediate, their cultural differences. The moment recalls John McLeod's transcultural threshold, where the tension between conversation and silence, and engagement and displacement reacts to produce a positive effect. Although Al Ith and Ben Ata meet across the threshold, it is through a process of estrangement and recognition of difference, the maintenance of

which punctuates their encounters. As they return to the marriage bed, their encounters become increasingly focused on difference, rather than understanding (although still with mutual respect). "The two entered their room from opposite arches, and stood examining each other. As usual it was their difference that had to strike them first: both, matching the long days of questioning and wanting and longing, with the reality of this stubbornly self-contained individual, felt only a sort of exhaustion" (Lessing, *Marriages* 125). The realms function as distinct cultures within a multicultural society, tolerant and accepting of each other, even while cultural markers and boundaries remain intact. There is no blurring of the boundaries between the zones, but the hostility and distrust have been removed through the encounter between Al Ith and Ben Ata, and the common path to enlightenment reinstated.

This pattern follows a religious principle. The idea of the story is for the characters to recognize "the importance of self-knowledge" (Marchino 252), characteristic of Lessing's novels in general. Lessing uses themes from Sufism, a form of mystical belief that she studied from the early 1970s, to connect a search for self-identity (an identity which one already possesses and yet does not yet fully understand) to one's role within society. Both concepts, self-identity and social role, are interconnected, and despite their mutual lack of self-consciousness, Al Ith's and Ben Ata's identities are equally predetermined. Although there is change throughout the text – Al Ith and Ben Ata both have character arcs and, at least in the case of Al Ith, move upwards joining those in the 'next' Zone (Zone Two) – the movement always develops linearly. This movement is made possible through the encounter, yet their differences do not change their identities in a dialectical fashion. They come to a greater understanding of who they already are, yet do not define themselves in contrast to the other.[67]

[67] If one considers this novel as part of the *Canopos in Argos* series as a whole (this is the second volume of that series) rather than as a stand-alone novel, and considers that each of the texts in *Canopos* presents the story from a different perspective, taken as a whole they constitute a vastly different approach, ontologically. For example, the first novel, *Shikasta*, offers multiple races co-existing on a single world, caught in a Manichean struggle between good (Canopos)

Foundation

Just as Lessing provides an example of a classical ontological model for individual identity in science fiction, Isaac Asimov, stalwart of the Golden Age, provides an example of the classical ontological model for the construction of the universe. In his perhaps best known work, the *Foundation* series, he initially creates a scenario in which mathematician Hari Seldon, through the application of 'psychohistory', puts the galaxy on a course (the so-called 'Seldon Plan') to regain the status of empire in only 1000 years, rather than the tens of thousands of years that would be required absent intervention. The fictional science of psychohistory is defined as

> that branch of mathematics which deals with the reactions of human conglomerates to fixed social and economic stimuli … implicit in all these definitions is the assumption that the human conglomerate being dealt with is sufficiently large for valid statistical treatment … [and] a further necessary assumption is that the human conglomerate be itself unaware of psychohistoric analysis in order that its reactions are truly random. (Asimov 16)

The Seldon Plan itself is the example of the linear ontological construct.

Throughout the series of the first four short stories, as originally published,[68] which make up the volume *Foundation* the plan is portrayed as inevitable. Based on his advanced knowledge of the science of psycho-history, the galaxy is led on a (seemingly) inevitable course to the reconstruction of a Galactic Empire. Asimov takes us through a series of crises, each predicted by Hari Seldon, whose image appears in a holographic projection to either give guidance or congratulate the future citizens on their successful resolution of each crisis, which had no other possible conclusion. "To that end we have placed you on such a planet and at such a time that in 50 years you were

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and evil (Sirius). *Shikasta* plays with multiple perspectives, which provides a strict contrast to the linearity of *Marriages.* "If *Shikasta* triumphs through a pluralism of styles and attitudes, its sequel, *The Marriages Between Zones Three, Four and Five* (1980), succeeds on an altogether different basis. Where *Shikasta* is all turmoil and variation, *Marriages* is all calm and unity" (Draine 144). Thus, the classical approach can only be considered if reading the narrative alone, and absent the broader picture associated with the *Canopos* series or the author/reader relationship.

[68] The stories often collected in the three volumes of the *Foundation* trilogy were originally published in *Astounding Science Fiction* starting in 1941. The first story published in the collected edition, however, was not written until the other stories were completed. It was, in fact, written "at the request of Martin Greenberg of Gnome Press who was the original publisher of the Trilogy" (Patrouch 63). Thus, for the sake of this study, the first story, "The Psychohistorians" will be considered at the time of its creation (1950), rather than where it fits chronologically in the narrative (first in the series).

maneuvered to the point where you no longer have the freedom of action. From now on, and into the centuries, the path you must take is inevitable" (Asimov 64).

The linearity of the narrative, like that of the individuals in Lessing's novel, is, in a way, artificial. The classical ontological construct only appears linear and can only be seen if the scope of one's perspective is limited greatly, such limitation also being a tenet of psychohistory. In this case, within the narrative, Seldon has deliberatively removed information from the citizens of Terminus to force their actions along a particular path, creating a quasi-religion to do so. The individuals in Asimov's narrative retain their free will, as there is no inevitability with regard to *individual* actions. Furthermore, as Asimov progresses with his series of stories, he removes the limitations and complicates the picture, perhaps inevitably, as the classical construction fails once its boundaries are considered.

The trilogy itself is loosely based on past history. Asimov himself, in his 1953 essay 'Social Science Fiction' cites Arnold Toynbee as inspiration, although the use of past history to determine a future course is something that Toynbee argued against.[69] Charles Elkins finds that the linear structure also fails literarily, arguing that, "it is a fetter on the imaginative possibilities of the speculative novel. Instead of events growing out of the inner logic and premises of the narrative situation, the plot and characters are forced to conform to a predetermined template" (Elkins 99). Yet, despite Elkins' objections, Asimov's story does allow the reader to reflect on the possibility of a positivist approach to history in comparison to those argued for by Hegel, among others. Through the use of the fall of an Empire, comparable to that of Rome as we understand it today, the parallels between Western Civilization and Asimov's Galactic Empire become explicit. Thus, within the constraints of a given narrative, and in the genre of science fiction which has arguably the clearest

[69] Charles Elkins notes, in Science Fiction Studies, that Asimov refers to the first six books of Toynbee's *A Study of History*.

presentation of ontological concerns, one can certainly find representations of a classical approach to ontology.

"If you find this world bad, you should see some of the others."
Philip K. Dick (1977)

Ontological Uncertainty: The Modernist Approach

Dialectics and Hard SF

Travels to foreign lands, used as a foil to discuss one's own land (and often the troubles or problems therein) is by no means a new concept or limited to science fiction (although it is a very common trope within SF). Even within the field, depending on how broadly it is defined, travel to other worlds, or one's own world in another time, is a well-worn tale. Texts such as Dante's *Divina Commedia*, Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and Mark Twain's *Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* all offer some version of this idea. The creation of a different ontological plane, whether born of fantasy, religious inspiration, or legends of a distant past, allows for a redefinition of one's own assumptions about the world one inhabits. This theme has evolved into a common trope depicting interaction between planets, with varying degrees of distance, beginning with trips to the Moon in early works like Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* and Kepler's *Somnium*, entering the science fiction genre per se with H.G. Wells's 1901 *First Men in the Moon*. This trope allows for the creation of estrangement, to return to Darko Suvin's definition, and presenting the reader with a world different from his or her own is vital to understanding science fiction. It occupies the bulk of 'Golden Age' SF, at least in the popular imagination, and Robert Heinlein, a mainstay of SF's Golden Age, explored this theme in his Future History series, a collection of short series which, as a whole, present an alternative timeline to humanity's development on Earth. Yet, it is not the concept of space travel that is essential to these approaches to science fiction but the encounter with difference itself. The recognition that what one is encountering is Other – whether

an alien life form or the landscape of another planet - forces a reconsideration of who we are, or where we are from. Many of our most iconic science fiction texts, such as H.G. Wells *War of the Worlds*, Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land* and *Starship Troopers*, Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, and Stanislaw Lem's *Solaris* explore the issue, each with a very different approach. What remains constant is the encounter with Otherness and the exploration of the ways in which we differentiate 'us' from 'them.'

Thus, the concept of Otherness plays heavily in the modernist approach. Basically, one's identity is formed, in this model, in response to an outside force. As briefly described above with reference to *Independence Day*, the common trope of first contact (including alien invasion) highlights this. In that example, in response to the outside threat, the national/supranational subject is formed. As Lincoln Geraghty explains:

> Between 1990 and 2001 alien invasion narratives focused on the alien swarm, rather than the individual, as threat. …In many alien invasion films the invading collective is all that humans encounter. The entire species is characterised as a pestilential entity, focused on invasion, destruction and consumption of our own planetary resources. All attempts at trying to interact with these aliens as individuals – as achieved with E.T. and the benevolent aliens of the 1980s – is futile since they have no concept of personal relationships or individuality. For Americans to defeat the oncoming swarm, they must assume their own sense of collective responsibility and join together. Paranoia and xenophobic distrust of national differences have to be put aside to successfully combat the alien hive mentality. … Typically, once threatened with such an alien attack, humanity is shown to unite and form a global village to protect its citizens from the onslaught. (Geraghty 89)

In these films the confrontation with an alien force, set on the destruction and conquering of Earth, coalesces humanity into a single unit, dispelling national, class, racial and other differences while confronted with this new and unique global threat.[70] This revised collective identity is opposed to the innate identity which one finds in the classical approach described earlier. While the classical

[70] In the case of *Starship Troopers* the intentions of the aliens are obscured by the propaganda nature of the narrative, which, through parallels to typical wartime propaganda (specifically that of Nazi Germany) makes one question the reality of the information presented. As Geraghty notes, "*Starship Troopers*' view of otherness is a priori evil; its fascistic and imperialistic overtones position the alien as inferior in contrast to the humans, who are enlightened and therefore justified in colonising the aliens' homeworld. … However, the film satirises the explicit notion that the monstrous aliens can be exterminated only when humanity unites with the implicit suggestion that humanity itself has become on such aggressor." (Geraghty 90)

mindset doesn't allow for alteration of one's identity, the modernist construction is under constant revision, searching for the true nature of one's identity. Thus, each encounter with otherness helps to shape and redefine who one is. This is also true in coming to an understanding of one's own reality, which we will see in William Gibson's short story 'The Gernsback Continuum' and later in the *Matrix* case study.

In this section, I will consider different scenarios in which either the ontology (the world building) or subjectivity are at the fore, demonstrating how the case studies presented exhibit the strategies at stake in the modernist structure of consciousness. In this, I will be following Donald Hall's formulation of the distinction between identity and subjectivity.

> For our purposes, one's identity can be thought of as that particular set of traits, beliefs, and allegiances what, in short- and long-term ways, gives on a consistent personality and mode of social being, while subjectivity implies always a degree of thought and self-consciousness about identity, at the same time allowing myriad of limitations and often unknowable, unavoidable constraints on our ability to fully comprehend identity. Subjectivity as a critical concept invites us to consider the question of how and from where identity arises, to what extent it is understandable, and to what degree it is something over which we have any measure of influence or control. (Hall 3-4)

In using Hall's definition, I will explore how in the cases of individual subjectivities, in a modernist construct, are formed in relief, molded in reaction to the assertion of the Other.

This modernist structure of consciousness informs on both an individual, world, and even a meta level. Perhaps the best example of the use of the modernist mindset in science fiction, even as it forms the foundation for standard interpretations of the genre as a whole, is the ongoing discussion about 'hard science fiction.' In *The Ascent of Wonder*, David Hartwell asserts that: "Hard sf is about the beauty of truth. … about the emotional experience of describing and confronting what is scientifically true" (Hartwell 30-1). This seems to get at the core of what hard sf proclaims to be, the combination of a focus on scientific accuracy in the presentation of its technology, combined with a certain positivistic attitude towards the future which is exemplified in the (strongly held) belief that science will be the impetus for the solution of the world's problems. This attitude is

illustrated in Heinlein's Future History series, as well as in many stories by Isaac Asimov, though both authors have, in more recent years and in the minds of some, been excluded from the hard sf canon by virtue of their focus on social issues.

The term 'hard sf' itself emerges in 1957[71], and does not denote a specific trend or turn in science fiction. Prior to the introduction of the term, those stories which we would nowadays categorize as hard were simply considered sf. It was only following a change in direction among some prominent science fiction writers, altering social conventions, and the emergence of other voices writing sf (generally seen as the effects of the 1960s and 70s counter-culture movements), that the need for a return to traditional forms of science fiction (as seen by proponents of what would become hard sf) emerged. Kathryn Cramer argues that "the term 'hard sf' is used similarly to 'Golden Age sf' and has always been nostalgic, referring to a lost era of 'real sf'" (Cramer 189), and that the evolution of the use of the term, and the notorious infighting among fans and practitioners of the subgenre, demonstrate that the definition of hard sf is a product of constant reevaluation, reconsideration, and repeated attempts at finding the correct or true definition. Interestingly, one of sf's break-off movements, that of cyberpunk, also evolves out of a struggle to properly define science fiction. Bruce Sterling's call for a new movement in *Cheap Truth* is a condensation of the call by British *Interzone* for a new '*radical hard SF* story' that would harken back to traditional approaches (Heinlein's focus on technology) and concentrate on current science (Cramer 194). This can both be seen in what Paul McAuley labels 'radical hard sf,' defined as "SF rooted in the core traditions of SF but also surfing the wave of the present," (quoted in Cramer 195) as well as the movement which Sterling's call helps spark, that of cyberpunk, best exemplified by William Gibson. Whether one can ever define 'real sf' or even 'hard sf' remains determined by the

[71] The term originates as an essay in *Astounding* by P.Schuyler in November 1957, as noted in *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction* (Cramer 196).

mindset of the reader, with those who ascribe to this debate, which is at the heart of the definition of 'hard sf' at all, following a modernist outlook.

"The 'Net' is a waste of time, and that's exactly what's right about it."
William Gibson, *New York Times Magazine*

'The Gernsback Continuum'

"The Gernsback Continuum" by William Gibson first published in *Universe 11* in 1981, and then later anthologized in the *Mirrorshades* collection, exemplifies the position in which ontological uncertainty is presented, but then reinscribing it in a modernist frame, what I term late modernism. Gibson's short story, in which two mutually exclusive worlds are placed literally on top of one another, is a germinal, perhaps even foundational, text in the cyberpunk movement. The protagonist/narrator, a photojournalist, is sent to the southwest United States to photograph futuristic buildings from the 1930s, a "kind of alternate America: a 1980s that never happened" (Gibson, "Gernsback" 5). In the course of the assignment, he starts to see visions of 1930s objects, such as a twelve-engined plane, as "actually" present in his reality, interacting with contemporary space. The narrator is unsure what to make of these ever more frequent occurrences, whether they are actually happening, or whether he is hallucinating and has gone insane.

Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, in "Cyberpunk and Neuromanticism," argues that, "cyberpunk is part of a trend in science fiction dealing increasingly with madness, more precisely with the most philosophically interesting phenomenon of madness: hallucination (derangement)" (Csicsery-Ronay 189). In my opinion this is because cyberpunk, as much of science fiction (and fantastic literature more generally), uses a process of metaphor literalization to act out the concepts that other genres express via conceit or allusion. Cyberpunk, in dealing with the questioning of reality, in face of the ever-more real idea of virtuality, makes "reality" literally into a hallucination or take the form of a collective dream-like state.

This becomes clearer when considering the protagonists encounter with a young couple near their 1930s futuristic automobile. “Sanity had ceased to be an issue; I knew, somehow that the city behind me was Tuscon – a dream Tuscon thrown up out of the collective yearning of the era. That it was real, entirely real. But the couple in front of me lived in it, and that frightened me” (Gibson, ‘Gernsback’ 9). Gibson presents the idea of a hallucination in a different light. He demonstrates that, in a certain sense, all things are a form of a hallucination. The protagonist consults a friend on the issue, who assures him that he isn’t, in fact, crazy. “Of course not. It wasn’t like that at all; it was ‘in a setting of clear reality,’ right? Everything normal, and then there’s the monster, the mandala, the neon cigar. In your case, a giant Tom Swift plane. It happens *all the time*. You’re not even crazy. You know that, don’t you?” (Gibson, ‘Gernsback’ 6). Gibson subverts the idea that hallucinations, in the contemporary world, are a function of insanity, and rather presents them as a normal occurrence.

The world that of the young couple represents the “80s-that-wasn’t,” a world, “that knew nothing of pollution, the finite bounds of fossil fuels, of foreign wars it was possible to lose” (Gibson, ‘Gernsback’ 9). To the protagonist it represented a (bad) dream world, with “all the sinister fruitiness of Hitler Youth propaganda” (Gibson, ‘Gernsback’ 9), a world which invaded his own, but which could be distinguished from it ontologically. There was even a cure, to prevent one from seeing the invasion of reality by this dream state: really bad media (such as *Nazi Love Motel*, really bad Nazi themed pornography).

Scholarly criticism of Gibson tends to focus on his rejection of a utopian vision in favor of a more realistic, fragmented future scenario (characteristic of his later works). Veronica Hollinger states that, “Gibson’s story is not simply an ironization of naïve utopianism; it also, I think, warns against the limitations, both humorous and dangerous, inherent in any vision of the future based upon narrowly defined ideological systems that take it upon themselves to speak ‘universally,’ or

which conceive of themselves as 'natural' or 'absolute'" (Hollinger 214-5). While I agree that this story rejects concepts of natural and absolute values (at least those easily recognizable in the dream scenario), I contend that the story maintains the idea of a fundamental reality, perhaps not "perfect" (which Gibson sets up as a concept to be avoided) but at least "real" and recognizable.

The dream state is distinguishable from one's own reality, and with the help of television, one can return to a simpler state of experience. Thus, while the text presents the notion of a merging of realities in which there is a lack of reference for an absolute truth, and even of the reality of one's own world, ultimately the realities are separated. The text asserts a single, 'correct' reality, and undermines the idea that both worlds are equally real. There is, at the end of the narrative, an assertion that the worlds, although seeming to overlap and coexist, are distinct. The narrator is able to distinguish the dream state from his own, contemporary, reality. This ultimately presents a notion of a late modernist approach to the ontological concerns of which world we inhabit. In this approach, the narrative presents doubt as to the reality of the narrative world and there is the seed of ontological uncertainty, yet, ultimately, that doubt is resolved, both within the narrative and for the reader, within the confines of the text. The narrator, despite his doubts, is able to determine his ontological state accurately, and the reader is given no reason to doubt its accuracy.

'The Good Ring'

The modernist ontological structure is further complicated in Svend Åge Madsen's short story, "Den gode ring" ["The Good Ring"], originally published in the volume *Maskeballet* [*The Masquerade*] a collection of connected short stories narrated by three people caught in a castle by an explosion. The collection belongs to a second phase of Madsen's œvre, characterized by the "revelation … that the complete deconstruction of meaning in fact results in a hopeful condition for mankind: fundamental relativism sets the individual free" (Andersen 270). 'Den gode ring,' which

allows for that conclusion on certain levels, represents a situation in which a particular reality is identifiable as the correct option, thus, I argue, reinforcing a (late) modernist ideal.

The story depicts a poor farmer, Stig, who is given the opportunity, via a 'magic' ring, to confront the entities, the Brains, that have created his world (as a type of petri dish experiment for historical/anthropological research, attempting to determine their own past). He is then offered the chance to choose which world on which he would like to continue his existence. At first Stig doubts the story of the Brain (and his colleagues), stating "Min verden kan ikke være uvirkelig" (83) ["My world can't be unreal" (72)]. Then, after the Brains have explained that they have a number of worlds in a similar state to Stig's own, he asks if he can see the others, in order to determine their reality. "'Jeg vil se nogle af jeres andre verdener før jeg tror på jer. Hvis I ikke vil vise mig andre planeter ved jeg at min er den eneste rigtige verden,' udbryder Stig beslutsomt" (85) ["'Before I believe you I'd like to see some of your other worlds. If you won't show me other planets I'll know that mine is the only real world,' Stig exclaims with firmness" (74)].

After visiting the three other worlds (simultaneously, although he experiences them, and they are presented to the reader in the narrative, one at a time), Stig is told that he must choose which world to return to, in order to live out the rest of his existence. The three worlds each present a different version of reality. The first presents a happy version of his own world, in which he and his wife, Karen, have created the world exactly as they want it to be, and are thus happy as a consequence. In the second world, which is more technologically advanced, in which Stig can create duplicates of himself, or Karen, as well as alter their sizes. The final version presents a collective consciousness in which all people are interconnected, "De er sig selv, og de er sammen, og de er gruppen" (91) ["They are themselves, they are the same person, they are the group" (79)].

Stig remains, after all of his visits and his conversation with the Brains, firmly focused on the idea of authenticity. He tries to ascertain which of the four versions (his own included) is the

one that leads to the Brains' evolution. "Hvilken af de fire verdener er den rigtige model" (92) ["Which of the four worlds is the authentic one?" (79)]. Despite the Brain's assurance that this is an inadequate question, and that there is "ikke kun én sandhed," (92) ["not simply one truth" (80)], Stig claims that "lige meget hvilken jeg vælger vil jeg hele tiden spekulere på om jeg har valgt rigtigt" (93) ["regardless of how I choose, I'll always be wondering whether I made the right choice" (80)]. Despite this uncertainty, Stig does finally make a decision to return to the original, seemingly quite unhappy, existence to which he was born. The story implies, through this ending, that the other worlds presented a reality so far removed from his own world that it was only proper, for Stig, to remain in his own, leading to the conclusion that this is the "real" world for him. This still leaves the possibility, or perhaps quite more explicitly a probability, of a "fundamental relativism" as Andersen states. However, Madsen presents us with a situation in which an ontological determination can, indeed, be made. Although the epistemological questions, on which Stig remains focused, are ultimately unresolved, the worlds remain ontologically distinct and decipherable, despite the suggestion that they are, in fact, overlapping in some sense. Thus, while the epistemological question remains unanswered (and unanswerable, not even the Brains have an answer to the question of which is the authentic world), the ontological distinction is clear and distinct. The reader, at the end of the story, is left with the knowledge that Stig has returned to his "own" reality. This is based, both within the narrative and with regards to the reader/narrative relationship, on the basis that this reality most closely resembles their own.

It is, in fact, the reader who has the greatest role to play here in determining the ontological approach at work in the text. The reader identifies with Stig, as the protagonist of the story. Thus, by extension, the assertion of the world resembling the reader's own also reinforces the reader's world as the 'real' world. This world is then defined in contrast to the other worlds presented. Consequently, although these alternative worlds exist simultaneously, and the Brains offer no

privileging of one world over the other, there is an assertion that for Stig, and thus for the reader, they are Other worlds, by which the original world can be defined as the real one. Similar to the idea of multiple planets, or the idea of time travel, the idea of parallel universes allows an almost philosophical approach to the positive and negative consequences of various worlds, without making any judgments or attempting to present a 'better' alternative. Madsen here seems only to want to sow doubt about the inevitability of the reality in which Stig (and through comparison, the reader) exists. Thus, while an ontological doubt is presented, as with the overlapping worlds of Gibson's story, and the epistemological issues remain unsolved, in the ontological sphere Madsen's story also remains a late modernist text.

Late modernism, in which the doubt often associated with postmodernism is presented and yet not performed, has been presented here in the consideration of texts in which we have analyzed the ontological status of their worlds. The next section will continue to look at late modernist texts, which focus their ontological considerations on the status, not of worlds, but of individuals: Ursula Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* and Ridley Scott's film (based on the Philip K. Dick novel) *Blade Runner*.

"We all know interspecies romance is weird."
Tim Burton

The Left Hand of Darkness

Ursula Le Guin's 1969 novel, *The Left Hand of Darkness*, deals with a contrast between planets, specifically between Gethen (translated within the narrative to Winter) and the rest of the worlds of the Ekumen, a federation of planets which is developed throughout her Hainish cycle. However, while there exists this multiworld scenario behind the structure of the novel, the narrative focuses on the individual experience. The protagonist, Genly Ai, is the sole representative of the Ekumen on

the planet, in their attempt to make an alliance and have Gethen join the federation. Thus, all interaction between the cultures occurs on an individual, rather than world, level.

Generally classified as a soft SF writer, Le Guin tends to focus on speculative societies, typically involving issues concerning gender and religion, rather than on technological developments typically associated with hard SF. Although *The Left Hand of Darkness* does feature travel to distant worlds and some technological developments (the ansible for communication, cryostasis allowing travel of many light years at sub-light speed), this does not remain the focus of her novel. She also uses her texts as thought experiments, purposefully playing with ideas in order to highlight certain differences. For Le Guin, "The purpose of a thought experiment … is not to predict the future … but to describe reality, the present world" (Le Guin, xii). In this case, she focuses mainly on the intercommunication (and miscommunication) of the various characters in her story. One of the largest barriers to communication between Genly, the male envoy of the Ekumen, and the inhabitants of Gethen, is that the Gethenians are a race of androgynes.

Through their interaction, Le Guin discusses the possibility that gender need not necessarily exist in the strict predetermined duality that it is often portrayed in our culture (and that of Genly, with whom the audience tends to identify throughout the text). The majority of the time, the Gethenians are not at all sexual (akin to the periods of time many animals are not in heat) and in those periods they do not exhibit either masculine or feminine sexual organs or features. It is only during specific periods (approximately once a month) that the Gethenians become gendered. The gender of each Gethenian is undetermined until *kemmer*, this sexual period, is entered. "Normal individuals have no predisposition to either sexual role in kemmer; they do not know whether they will be the male or the female, and have no say in the matter" (Le Guin 91). In fact, the process itself determines which gender role an individual will take, because it occurs in reaction to the potential partner's gender role. "When the individual finds a partner in kemmer, hormonal secretion

is further stimulated (most importantly by touch – secretion? Scent?) until in one partner either a male or female hormonal dominance is established. The genitals engorge or shrink accordingly, foreplay intensifies, and the partner, triggered by the change, takes on the other sexual role" (Le Guin 90). It is only through reaction to the other in the relationship that gender roles are asserted.

This trait, according to the narrative, eliminates a great deal of friction that is inherent in our society. As any individual can take on either masculine or feminine roles – both biologically and socioculturally (and often do, both siring and giving birth to future generations) much of the aggressive behavior (war, rape) is eliminated on Gethen. In that way, it is an interesting experiment in feminism, a way for SF to explore feminist ideals by providing a platform for describing gender roles differently. The narrative itself discusses this explicitly: "There is no division of humanity into strong and weak halves, protective/protected, dominant/submissive, owner/chattel, active/passive. In fact the whole tendency to dualism that pervades human thinking may be found to be lessened, or changed, in Winter" (Le Guin 94). Yet, even by providing an alternative gender, or way of describing gender, Le Guin doesn't fundamentally alter the way we look at gender as an ontological construct. Even her description of the mating process of the Gethenians reinforces the idea of a duality. She does, however, present the idea that the binaries that we use to construct identity are not fixed or static, but can be altered with new ways of thinking. It is the presentation of the concept of fluid identity formation found in a postmodern structure of consciousness, but without a commitment to that structure itself. This is mainly due to the position of Genly as outside the androgyne construct. The reader, through Genly's point of view, still experiences the androgyne as Other in relation to himself.

This process that Le Guin describes with gender can be further extrapolated to other dualities as well. It forms the basis of how individual identity is constructed, reacting to an Other, and setting a boundary by which one is defined as belonging to the category that inhabits the

opposite position to that assigned the Other. Individually in their sexual process, Gethenians experience this in each period of kemmer, a revolving and ever changing occurrence. Other science fiction texts use this same binary notion applied to different categories of Otherness to construct various parts of our own individual (and in some cases collective national or human) identity. This common SF theme can be found in numerous texts using the first contact scenario, either on an individual basis (like here with Genly Ai, or with the buddy cop relationship of *Alien Nation*, or the interactions between Wikus Van De Merwe and the 'prawns' in *District 9*) or on a more collective basis, as discussed earlier.

Le Guin's novel also broadens the concept of identity beyond that of exclusively gender. By placing Genly Ai as the sole character that resembles the reader, it forces the reader to identify with his experience. This is reinforced by having the majority of the story, ten of the twenty chapters, narrated in the first person by Genly himself. The remaining chapters are either narrated directly by others (five chapters) or are presented in the third person (five chapters), but it is important to note that the entire text is chosen and presented by Genly. As Spivack notes, "His is the overall structuring consciousness of the book" (Spivack 45). Genly's story is also the story of the construction of his identity. Through a series of negotiations, he learns to see himself in relation to the Gethenians. The Gethenians, individually and in their commonality represent the Other for Genly. This concept is not absent for the Gethenians, however, and they also recognize the necessity of otherness for the construction of one's identity. "As Estraven points out, duality is not unknown to the androgyne, for there is always the Other. Recognition of the Other is a lesson from childhood and maturity alike, and we need this recognition for our psychological growth. Le Guin's idea of androgyny leads toward a meeting of strangers and of the sexes, not away from it" (Bucknell 76). What Le Guin has done has simply changed the focus away from a typical male/female dichotomy to that of a male/androgyne differentiation, or simply a human/alien distinction.

As androgyny is not the norm for Genly (with the reader in a similar position), it takes a long time for him to come to terms with this new form of subjectivity. The entire text is a working out of how to communicate and negotiate with a new type of identity, both the foreignness of the Gethenian society and sexuality, but also how that redefines the way that Genly views the world. This is ultimately accomplished through a close personal relationship with Estraven, which develops while they are isolated together having been exiled from the two main nation-states on Gethen. Genly ultimately has to recognize, and accept, that Estraven contains both masculine and feminine parts, and it is only when the feminine side of Estraven becomes apparent, during kemmer, that Genly is finally able to see Estraven as he/she really is. Bittner claims that for Genly, in their isolation, "the categories (e.g., male-female, and all other dualisms) he has used to see Estraven vanish, and he can, when he is otherwise blind, perceive Estraven as he-she really is. Genly Ai experiences the 'shift of identity' Frye speaks of when the ways in which he sees, which *are* his identity, shift" (Bittner 15). While Genly does go through an identity shift of his own, demonstrable in his description of his 'own' kind at the end of the novel, the duality that he uses to come to terms with Estraven remains. It is not exclusively the male/female duality, but it is still a duality, that of oneself and other that codifies both his own role and identity and the position of Estraven (and by extension the reader) relative to Genly.

The reader must also come to terms with the androgyne construct that Le Guin has created. There has been some criticism that Estraven's feminine side was not made more explicit, perhaps by discussing his giving birth or taking on a more traditional maternal role, which may have further highlighted Estraven's androgyne characteristics for Genly and have allowed a quicker positioning of Estraven as other. However, as mentioned, it is only through Genly's narration that Estraven is clearly seen, and so his perspective colors and guides the understanding of the reader as well. "In *The Left Hand of Darkness* Genly Ai's point of view develops slowly, so that his discovery of the

feminine nature of Estraven does not come close to the end of the novel, and the reader has no basis for getting ahead of the narrator" (Spivack 58). Thus, while Le Guin here does provide a scenario in which gender classifications are fluid and interchangeable, thus rendering the concept of gender, outside of the specific sexual situation, ill-suited to identification, this scenario is only described as a singular case, that of the planet Gethen, within the story. The story as a whole doesn't simply present this aspect, but rather uses that as a foil by which to define Genly, and by extension the reader. It is through this 'outside' perspective that we are able to understand the androgyne as other, and thus redefine humanity. We do so, however, by the same modernist approach as in previously discusses human/alien encounters. This suggestion of ontological indeterminability (the postmodern approach), while the larger structural elements of the story do not support that reading, and in fact reinforce the modernist structure, is what I call late modernist, as it continues to follow the modernist dialectical approach.

"More human than human" is our motto."
Blade Runner

Blade Runner

The 1982 film *Blade Runner* offers us yet another perspective. In this film, based on Philip K. Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, the protagonist, Rick Deckard, is a bounty hunter sent to exterminate escaped replicants, a sophisticated type of android. The narrative focuses on Deckard, who is working a case, reminiscent of a hard-boiled detective story, involving the identification and elimination of a specific group of fugitive replicants. There are rules that state that replicants are not allowed to be on Earth. They were designed for the colonies (Mars specifically) and are legally bound to live there, as the virtual slaves of their human owners. Joseph Francavilla attributes this displacement to a fear that the replicants, who are arguably more advanced at this Nexus 6 stage than humans, will replace the humans in their own realm.

> Initially, there is often competition or rivalry between doubles for the same space or location, the same position or rank, the same right to existence. (To prevent this competition, the humans in *Blade Runner* have forbidden the replicants, under penalty of death, to return to Earth.) This competition further implies the threat of displacement: the original self may lose its uniqueness and its identity to the other self which replaces the original. (Francavilla 7)

A further hindrance to the replicants is their built-in 4 year life span, designed prevent the replicants from acquiring too much experience, especially the capacity to form emotions.

The narrative sets up a difference, ontologically, between the humans and replicants as a premise to the story. Deckard's mission, characteristic of the detective genre which the film emulates, is an epistemological quest. He uses a polygraph-like device, the Voigt-Kampff test, to gauge emotional response to sets of questions, thus reinforcing both to himself and to the audience that not only is there a specific difference (true emotion versus programmed emotional response) between humans and replicants, but that this difference makes it possible to distinguish between them with a degree of certainty. Morally, this is important, as Deckard is charged not only with locating and identifying the rogue replicants but 'retiring' them as well, since they must be destroyed if discovered on Earth; thus being able to distinguish between the replicants (replaceable machines) and humans is vital. The preferred term, 'retirement,' also reinforces the emphasis on making a distinction between the replicants and humans.

The text, however, proceeds to question many of these premises, casting doubt both on the reliability of the Voight-Kampff test as well as the identity and humanity of the characters themselves. This is done both in the source novel as well as in the film, although in somewhat different ways. Dick's novel introduces the character of J.R. Isidore early on. Isidore is one of the few humans remaining on Earth, partly through apathy but mainly because he has not been able to qualify for off-planet emigration. "Worse still, he had failed to pass the minimum mental faculties test, which made him in popular parlance a chickenhead" (Dick 19). Isidore's character, especially in juxtaposition to the android character Rachael, with whom he comes to share a living space, begs

the question of what criteria are used in determining who is human and who is not. Isidore, based on a mental test, does not qualify to join the rest of the humans on the colonies. In contrast, the Nexus 6 androids are considerably more intelligent than Isidore, yet are not given the same rights. It is clear that intelligence alone is not the distinguishing factor.

The Voigt-Kampff test that Deckard administers measures the subject's responses to affective stimuli, suggesting that one's emotional response is the determining factor. The text also suggests that this factor is not completely determinate. One of the concerns presented is that "schizoid and schizophrenic human patients …those, specifically, which reveal what's called a 'flattening of affect'" (Dick 37) would fail to pass the test. However, the text doesn't concentrate on the ontological difference here, leaving any hints of doubt obscured and instead focusing on the detective's ability to ascertain the difference. "If you can't pick out all the humanoid robots, then we have no reliable analytical tool" (Dick 38). By focusing solely on the epistemological concerns, the text relies on the premise that there is an ontological difference, assuring both Deckard and the reader that the androids are different than humans, and with the appropriate test he can reasonably and justifiably 'retire' the rebellious replicants.

The film also takes up the question of ontology by inviting the audience to speculate about Deckard: Is it possible that Deckard himself is a replicant, even if he would then be unaware of his status? "He is figuratively, if not literally, a sophisticated replicant. The film even suggests that Deckard may be a replicant himself without knowing it, secretly created by Tyrell or by someone else. The viewer is encouraged to speculate about Deckard's identity because of Rachael's questions and because of the fact that Deckard never takes the Voight-Kampff test" (Francavilla 12). Much of this speculation can be read into the novel as well, although it is less explicit. Francavilla argues that even absent any evidence that Deckard is a replicant, he switches roles with Roy Batty, the leader of the rebellious replicants, with Batty taking on human characteristics while

Deckard remains cold, methodical, and even absent any emotional attachment in the process of 'retiring' beings that are virtually identical to humans. Dick's novel, however, doesn't ascribe any emotional content to the androids, as the film does, and thus, even if the novel does posit questions about the defining characteristics of humanity, the use of emotions as a defining line remains (at least for 'normal' humans). The film changes this by giving Batty human emotions (especially evident in his confrontation with Tyrell and later with Deckard), making the only discernable difference the built-in lifespan of the replicants and the audience's that they are, in fact, androids – synthetic organisms manufactured to appear humanoid.

It is, again, this last fact that truly differentiates this film, which uses a late modernist approach, and from postmodern texts. The audience is afforded a position by which one can determine the ontological status of the characters. Scott Bukatman argues that *Blade Runner* goes as far a possible in this regard, especially with the character of Deckard. *"Blade Runner* is a film that, possibly, pushes the idea of the posthuman as far as a mainstream movie can; after all, we can never be certain of Deckard's ontological status" (Bukatman 'Who Programs You' 198). This is further developed with the Director's Cut of the film (from 1992), in which the much discussed unicorn scene is added. The scene, a dream sequence in which Deckard sees a unicorn running through a meadow, is coupled with Graf, one of the other policemen, leaving an origami figure of a unicorn for Deckard at the end of the film. This implies, to some critics[72], that Deckard's vision of the unicorn is an implanted memory indicating that he is a replicant, since Graf knows about Deckard's memory. Slavoj Žižek, in *Tarrying with the Negative*, argues that Deckard needs to be a replicant for the film to have its most potent implications. It would then, especially as the audience, reluctantly[73], identifies with Deckard, be possible for us to confront our own humanity. "It is only

[72] It convinced Paul Sammon, author of *Future Noir: The Making of* Blade Runner. "The only logical conclusion is an inescapable one: in the Director's Cut, Rick Deckard *is* a replicant" (364).
[73] Francavilla argues that it is Deckard's replicant characteristics (even if he is human) that make him difficult to immediately identify with, even if he is the clear protagonist of the film. "One of the reasons audiences may have found

when … I assume my replicant-status that 'I become a truly human subject'" (Žižek 15).[74] In fact, Ridley Scott has come out and clearly stated, in an interview with Digital Spy in 2014, that Deckard is a replicant.

Yet, despite these arguments, it doesn't seem that the answer to whether Deckard is a replicant or not has been definitively answered. Terry Rawlings, the film's editor, claims "Ridley himself may have definitely felt that Deckard was a replicant, but still, by the end of the picture, he intended to leave it up to the viewer to decide whether Deckard was one" (Sammon 364). Scott Bukatman, in his monograph on the film goes further, stating that answering the question actually takes away from the impact of the film. "The Deckard debate is, in some ways, a denial of what the film really does offer, which is a double reading: undecidability" (Bukatman, *Blade Runner* 81-2). However, even as there is doubt as to Deckard's ontological status, it remains clear that in principle, the truth could be determined – he either is or is not a replicant – regardless of whether or not this information is accessible to us. Furthermore, as mentioned, there is no blurring of the line between android and human in the film. It is a clear premise that there is a distinction between the two, with the focus both of the film and of the internet-based discussion being on the epistemological problem of how to determine his status, rather than on any problems with the ontological question itself (what is human?, for example).[75] We are left in doubt only because we are not provided with the right information, not because we question whether there is a distinction between the replicants and the humans. There is no melding of the idea of human and Other, in the film. Thus, while the film alludes to the ontological problems dealt with in a postmodern approach, it maintains a modernist

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it hard to identify with the character of Deckard is first, that he is a cold-blooded killer, and second, that he is initially and throughout most of the film a dull, dreary, mechanical, unemotional man" (Francavilla 12).

[74] Bukatman also points out that he makes a similar point about virtual reality, strengthening the importance that both modernist visions we have discussed have to the psychoanalytical process. "Žižek makes an identical point about virtual reality: 'true, the computer-generated 'virtual reality' is a semblance, it does foreclose the Real; but what we experience as the 'true, hard external reality' is based upon exactly the same exclusion. The ultimate lesson of 'virtual reality' is the virtualization of the very 'true' reality: by the mirage of 'virtual reality,' the 'true' reality itself is posited a semblance of itself, as a pure symbolic edifice' (Žižek 44)" (Bukatman 1997 89-90).

[75] This is not to say that it doesn't spark the ontological question, just that this is not what is presented in the film. The focus for Deckard is solving the crimes, not determining whether he is, or is not, human.

approach to ontological considerations. The only questions within the film that are truly indeterminable are epistemological, and answers to those questions are not ruled out logically, but are only unanswered by virtue of missing information.[76] This is different than in texts like Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49* and Christopher Nolan's film *Memento* (discussed in a previous chapter) in which those epistemological questions were left not just unanswered but unanswerable.

"We are an impossibility in an impossible universe."
Ray Bradbury

Ontological Indeterminability: The Postmodernist Approach

In contrast to both the classical and modernist approach, the postmodern approach leads to a blurring of the ontological lines between two worlds (nominally real and virtual), individuals, or classes of individuals (human/alien, human/android), to the point where there is no discernable difference. It therefore allows characters to transcend boundaries that otherwise seem distinct, and in a science fiction context, presents boundaries and connections that have so far only been conceived allowing readers to consider the consequences thereof. Hollinger discusses how the William Gibson's seminal 1984 cyberpunk novel, *Neuromancer*, presents this phenomenon.

> Along with the "other" space of cyberspace, *Neuromancer* offers alternatives to conventional modalities of human existence as well: computer hackers have direct mental access to cyberspace, artificial intelligences live and function within it, digitalized constructs are based on the subjectivities of humans whose "personalities" have been downloaded into computer memory, and human bodies are routinely cloned. (Hollinger 207)

Each of those features allows the exploration of boundaries that don't map onto our current reality, which opens up a space, through technology, not only for a description of an estranged future, but of the possibility of transcending existing boundaries and binaries.

This section will present three cases of the postmodernist approach to ontology and subjectivity. Though I agree with McHale that science fiction is an ontological genre, we differ on

[76] This then becomes a Deluezean radicle or tipless root, driving the structure of consciousness of Blade Runner. There are answers here, so we are operating in a structure with hierarchy and perspective.

its affinity with postmodernism. I claim that there can be both modernist and postmodernist science fiction texts. I presented texts which represent a modernist structure of consciousness in previous sections, which demonstrated how texts by Gibson, Madsen, Le Guin and Dick (including the acclaimed adaptation of his novel) allow the reader to ascertain the truth of ontological distinction or individual subjectivity. In this section, we will discuss the *Matrix* trilogy, Neal Stephenson's postcyberpunk text *Snow Crash*, and the re-imagined version of the television series *Battlestar Galactica*, each of which provide a depiction of the postmodern structure of consciousness with respect to ontology and subjectivity, showing the distinction between the two mindsets. The section will be progressively more introspective, moving from the large (world-building) to the small (individual encounters). The discussion of the *Matrix* will focus on the differentiation between the virtual and the real. Stephenson's text will do so likewise, but with a focus on the individual, and the blurring of the lines between computer virus and human virus, and between modern and ancient technology. Finally, we will discuss *Battlestar Galactica* in which the difference between computer and human on an individual level, and all lines of what defines human (and what defines android/robot) are systematically erased, bringing both sides of the Otherness equation into question. What Francavilla argues *Blade Runner* attempted, namely that "the metaphoricity of androids can be seen in their resemblance to human beings; at a certain point, as in *Blade Runner*, they are, or soon could be, virtually indistinguishable from humans" (8), becomes, in these postmodern texts, a reality rather than a potential. The consequence is that "this allows the android to substitute for humans and to infiltrate human society. Eventually all the boundaries are blurred between master and slave, hunter and hunted, hero and villain, the inanimate and the animate, the human and the nonhuman" (Francavilla 8).

> Deep in the human unconscious is a pervasive need for a logical universe that makes sense. But the real universe is always one step beyond logic."
> Frank Herbert, *Dune*

The Matrix **Trilogy**

The Wachowski's trilogy of films, *The Matrix* (1999), *The Matrix Reloaded* (2003), and *The Matrix Revolutions* (2003), taken as a whole present a single cyberpunk text.[77] The first volume sets up a dichotomy between a virtual world which closely resembles the late twentieth century United States, and a real dystopic world 200 years in the future (from our contemporary perspective). After discovering clues to this reality, the protagonist, known in the virtual world of the Matrix as Thomas Anderson, is presented a choice between taking a blue pill (in which case he is returned to the simulated life of the Matrix) or a red pill (in which case he is freed from the Matrix and wakes up in the real world). Anderson, of course, selects the red pill, which allows him to be removed from the computer's, intricately designed human farming system and taken to a ship, the Nebuchadnezzar, based out of Zion, an underground enclave of rebel humans.

Thus, from the very beginning the dichotomy between reality and virtuality is set up in the trilogy, with the choice between a known domain (the virtual world of the Matrix, with which Anderson is familiar) and 'truth' (the dystopic 'real' future) being played out early in the first film. The film then proceeds to deconstruct the seeming reality of the Matrix, a world that closely parallels the audience's own reality. Neo (Thomas Anderson's new persona in the real world) learns to manipulate the virtual environment, which does not, necessarily, conform to the laws of the natural world (the simulation, although good, is a computer controlled universeand its laws can be hacked or circumvented). The worlds remain differentiable and distinct, via a difference in color palette (limited, muted colors, mostly blacks and greys, and a characteristic green reminiscent of old computer monitors) and brightness (the Matrix is invariably more brightly shot) as well as a difference in context (the characters' clothing, surroundings, and interactions). The characters must be physically inserted into the Matrix by means of a physical brain link, and consequently in the real world they bear the mark of this input (in the back of the head, by which a spike directly enters

[77] The transmedia whole of the Matrix franchise could be seen as part of this universe, and thus all part of the single 'text' for the purposes of this dissertation, which will, however, only discuss the three films.

the brainstem), while characters within the Matrix (their virtual selves) bear no such mark. Thus, not only are the worlds distinct, but so are the characters' personæ within the various worlds, creating within the text two identities for each "free" individual.

This dichotomy between the multiple characters, is quickly deconstructed, for while the virtual characters are not bound by natural laws within the Matrix, the real and virtual characters are tied together, as things that affect one affect the other. This is clearly shown in terms of life and death. It is stated that a character who dies in the Matrix is killed in real life (the body cannot sustain itself when the mind thinks it is deceased). This presumably happens to numerous virtual characters that are temporarily occupied by the Agents of the Matrix (computer programs designed to hunt down the infiltrating virtual versions of the free individuals). This is also clear throughout the fight scenes, when the physical harm that comes to the virtual characters cause their real bodies to writhe and bleed, even if they are only connected via mental link. The reverse, of course, is also true, as harm that comes to the real characters necessarily impacts their virtual avatars. This is demonstrated via the betrayal of Cypher, who kills some of his fellow crewmates by removing their link to the Matrix (physically ripping out the link) leading to their real deaths, and the collapse of their virtual characters. Thus, while there are two distinct worlds, there is, truly, only one personality, which can both enter, and exist apart from, the Matrix.

The idea that the worlds themselves are distinct and differentiable is also brought into doubt later in the trilogy. In the second installment, *The Matrix Reloaded*, Neo is able to protect Zion from the attacking machines by stopping them with only his mind (as he was able, within the Matrix, to stop bullets once he gained control over his virtual self, and its relations to the natural laws or the code). This leads one to believe that the world that was originally presented as real, and which Morpheus understood to be the "truth" when offering Neo the red pill, is perhaps indistinguishable from the Matrix itself. If Neo can manipulate things in the real world in the same way that he

manipulates things in the virtual world, this calls into question the reality of the "real" world (of the dystopic future). How can one then distinguish between them? This is further complicated by the integration of Agent Smith, an evolved form of Agent, though presumably still a function of the computer program running the Matrix), into the world of Zion. Agent Smith is able to overwrite the identity of one of the characters in the real world, Bane, and assume his identity. While the ability of Agents to take over the simulated bodies of humans wired into the Matrix is common, and accepted from the very beginning, it seems impossible that a computer program can overwrite the identity of a human outside the constraints of virtuality. The suggestion, as with Neo's ability to alter the natural laws, is that the world of Zion can be considered no more real than the Matrix. There is no way with the information presented to either the characters or, importantly, to the audience, to determine the veracity of the claim that Zion is real, that the Matrix is virtual, or that the worlds are, in fact, multiple. The notion that the audience is in doubt is critical to the postmodern approach. If the audience were given knowledge of the distinct ontological states, then there would be a perspective by which one could distinguish the states, even if unbeknownst to the characters within the narrative. By virtue of the audience's lack of such knowledge, it becomes possible to identify directly with the characters, instead of having a bird's eye view of the story, and thus to immerse oneself in the indeterminacy of the reality of the story. Thus, not only for the characters, but also for the audience, there remains no possibility of an answer to the ontological inquiry of what kind of world is presented in the film.

This suspension of ontological closure represents the postmodern structure of consciousness, which metaphorizes postmodern poetics. This is useful in allowing the audience to question the constructedness of their own reality. Science fiction writer and critic Gwyneth Jones argues that what is necessary in science fiction is "not a suspension of disbelief, it is an active process of translation" (Jones 6). She claims that the construction of worlds is a necessary tool to apply the

lessons of SF to contemporary society. “But there is nothing like constructing a world, or recognizing a constructed world, for teaching you to see your own world as a construct” (Jones 6). In postmodern poetics, while considering ontological inquiries, however, the very boundaries that would be able to demonstrate that a world is constructed are broken down, after being highlighted and presented as boundaries. This leads one to consider not only that the world one inhabits might likewise be a construct (Are we in the Matrix ourselves?), but even what it would mean for such construct to exist. All of the boundaries and understandings of ontology, the very notions concerning what a world is, let alone which world we inhabit, are brought into doubt, leading to a discussion of the very nature of “world.”

> “This Snow Crash thing--is it a virus, a drug, or a religion?”
> Juanita shrugs. “What's the difference?”
> Neal Stephenson

Snow Crash

Snow Crash is a 1992 novel by Neal Stephenson, which is most often described as postcyberpunk. It presents a dystopic future, focused in the United States, which has been divided up into corporate interests functioning as independent states. This novel also presents, as do most cyberpunk novels, a global online network, the Metaverse (a variant on Gibson’s cyberspace), in which one enters with an avatar into a three-dimensionally rendered universe. As the novel explains, “Your avatar can look any way you want it to, up to the limitations of your equipment” (Stephenson 36). As a continuation of cyberpunk, it has an archetypal hacker main character, here aptly self-named Hiro Protagonist (Hiro being short for Hiroaki) as well as maintaining the aesthetic in terms of the protagonist (contrasted with the primarily suburban surroundings). Hiro, like Neo, leads a rather double life, a ‘warrior prince’ within the Metaverse, but an undistinguished hacker outside of it. This frames the virtual space as the realm of imagination – an escapist fantasy – the world in which Hiro is most comfortable and the place where he is accepted and belongs.

Snow Crash, in contrast to Gibson's pioneering *Neuromancer* represents a later generation, both in terms of the postcyberpunk subgenre (the novel is published 4 years after the 'end' of cyberpunk), and in terms of the protagonist (who ten years into his hacking days, is now the 'old man' of the hacker community). Stephenson thus presents science fiction for a new generation (assuming that the generations are moving much more quickly in the digital age), for whom virtual worlds, augmented reality, and digital communities have become familiar. "The postcyberpunk viewpoint is not outside the fishbowl looking in, but inside the fishbowl looking around" (Persson). The characters interact with each other in a mediated fashion, not only connecting to the Metaverse, but using mediated technologies, such as overlays of city maps in Hiro's delivery truck. Entrance into the Metaverse is also done using existing technologies, including goggles and a computer interface, rather than 'jacking-in' as one would in the Matrix. The use of technology is not presented as frightening or horrific, as the dolphin character Jones is in Gibson's "Johnny Mneumonic," or singular as Case in *Neuromancer*, but as ordinary, even improved. "Your mistake," Ng says, "is that you think that all mechanically assisted organisms – like me – are pathetic cripples. In fact, we are better than we were before" (Stephenson 248). Far from being an overarching enemy, technology has been seamlessly integrated into society.

Yet, one of the main elements of fear in *Snow Crash* is the breaking down of ontological boundaries. As designed the Metaverse and Reality are distinct. This is presented clearly in the novel in a number of ways. Hiro Protagonist, as mentioned, leads a very different life in Reality than he has online. "So Hiro's not actually here at all. He's in a computer-generated universe that his computer is drawing onto his goggles and pumping into his earphones. In the lingo, this imaginary place is known as the Metaverse. Hiro spends a lot of time in the Metaverse. It beats the shit out of the U-Stor-It" (Stephenson 24). Hiro spends his time within the Metaverse, primarily in a

virtual city he helped to construct, and specifically in the Black Sun, where the 'rules' of the Metaverse are laid out for the reader.

Unlike the *Matrix*, it is not possible to 'die' in the Metaverse, and have this effect you in Reality, at least as designed. Essentially, someone who 'dies' in the Metaverse is simply ejected, more like in a video game than in the Matrix, which has one hardwired to the virtual space. An avatar 'killed' in the Metaverse prevents the user from re-logging in immediately, until the 'body' is disposed of, a program (and concept) that Hiro developed. This also causes the illusion of the reality of the Black Sun, and by extension the Metaverse, to break down. "It breaks the metaphor. The avatar is not acting like a real body. It reminds all The Black Sun's patrons that they are living in a fantasy world. People hate to be reminded of this" (Stephenson 102). So, while the Metaverse is virtual, it is also made to look as real as possible, particularly true for the Black Sun, and the effect can be enhanced further if the user possesses superior technologies which render facial features accurately and allow for in person meetings within the Metaverse to have all of the same features as those in Reality. Yet, this blurring isn't simply an illusion available to a classed elite.

Boundaries between virtual and real spaces reinforce other such boundaries between technology and the body, and between hardware and software. As the novel progresses, those lines, clearly drawn and rule-based with the description of the Metaverse, dependent upon the novel's distinct science fiction nova, get progressively blurred. The most high-profile blurring of the line occurs when Da5id Meier, the owner of The Black Sun, decides to try snow crash, a virtual drug. He insists, as Hiro does, that he is not vulnerable to its effects because his computer is protected against all sorts of viruses. Unfortunately, the virus is not limited to his computer. "'Why would anyone show me information in binary code? I'm not a computer. I can't read a bitmap'" (Stephenson 74). We come to learn that not only did Da5id's system crash, or rather snow crash (the screen turned to black and white pixels), but so did Da5id himself. This virtual drug not only

wiped out the computer, but the hacker, outside of the machine. "'Da5id's not a computer. He can't read binary code.' 'He's a hacker. He messes with binary code for a living. That ability is firm-wired into the deep structures of his brain. So he's susceptible to that form of information'" (Stephenson 200). Da5id's snow crash isn't depicted as an epileptic fit, or any of the other causes which are known to interact between a screen and its user, but is an infection directed by his ability to read the binary code (like Tank or Neo in the Matrix). Crossing the boundary between the virtual and the real, and its dangers, reinforces our anxiety with technology (as it becomes more and more ubitiquous), in numerous films (*Videodrome, eXistenZ, Unfriended, The Ring*) and recent television series like *Black Mirror*.

While 'classic' cyberpunk texts typically have a conspiracy which is at the heart of the novel (as does this one), the snow crash virus has no such origins, it is unconnected to the religious movements, the novels red herrings. The origins of this virus are ancient, and are steeped in historic, and possibly supernatural lore. Essentially, Da5id and other hackers (Hiro included) are susceptible to the virus because, through their technological abilities, they have altered their brains' deep structures. "You were forming pathways in your brain. Deep structures. Your nerves grow new connections as you use them – the axons split and push their way between the dividing glial cells – your bioware self-modifies – the software becomes part of the hardware. So now you're vulnerable – all hackers are vulnerable- to a *nam-shub*. We have to look out for each other" (Stephenson 126). Thus, not only is there effacement between the virtual and real worlds, as presented in the *Matrix* case, but it is possible for technology to fundamentally alter the brain's chemistry.

The *nam-shub* is presented as a type of mystical incantation, a performative speech act that goes beyond the illocutionary forms theorized by J.L. Austin. These incantations fundamentally alter the brain's deep structures. The narrative further allows that the virus, or rather the metavirus (which alters the brain structures which allows for the viruses to attack) is naturally occurring. "Any

information system of sufficient complexity will inevitably become infected with viruses – viruses generated from within itself" (Stephenson 396). Essentially, the system will produce its own viruses and these viruses then reproduce and infect other hosts, eventually taking over civilization itself.

Interestingly, it turns out that the virus has created human civilization. Thus, it is civilization that Hiro and his confederates are trying to 'undo'. The nam-shub of Enki, which is the antidote to snow crash, allows for 'thinking' and thus the solution to the dilemma. Essentially, it allows 'hacking', which means altering your environment to suit your needs. The novel presents this as an ancient battle between the forces of civilization (and domination) and free-thinking. The "key realization was that there's no difference between modern culture and Sumerian. We have a huge workforce that is illiterate or alliterate and relies on TV – which is sort of an oral tradition. And we have a small, extremely literate power elite – the people who go into the Metaverse, basically – who understand that information is power, and who control society because they have his semimystical ability to speak magic computer language" (Stephenson 406).

In the novel, this distinction between civilization and free thinking is presented as two linguistic theories, the universalists, who at the core believe in a fixed structure, and the relativists represented by the hackers. "But it seems to me there is a key difference," Hiro says. "The universalists think that we are determined by the prepatterned structure of our brains – the pathways in the cortex. The relativists don't believe that we have any limits" (Stephenson 276). This also seems to represent the difference between the modern and postmodern condition. Lyotard presents postmodernism as a duality with modernism. Essentially, *Snow Crash* presents the fight between good and evil as the fight between order and free will, between a center that can hold and the ability to think for itself. Lyotard states that, "A work can become modern only if it is first postmodern. Postmodernism thus understood is not modernism at its end but in the nascent state, and this state is constant" (Lyotard, *Postmodern* 79). The virus represents an attempt to close off

thought, limiting the ability to manipulate one's environment, essentially stifling creativity. The antidote allows for the removal of those constraints, restoring our lack of any limits. Thus, what this allows is a postmodernist structure of consciousness. The novel effaces the boundary between the real and the virtual, with the virus able to directly attack the mind in either space, and then, through individual actions demonstrates the virtues of the free-thinking postmodernist mindset.

"We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be."
Kurt Vonnegut, *Mother Night*

Battlestar Galactica

The post 9/11 remake of *Battlestar Galactica* provides another intercultural, and individual, encounter in which to look at subjectivity. While Lessing's *The Marriages Between Zones Three, Four and Five* provides a look at the classical approach, with an innate identity reinforced through sexual encounters within a marriage, and *The Left Hand of Darkness* provides a situation in which Genly's identity shifts in reaction to his relationship with Estraven, *Battlestar Galactica* demonstrates a third possibility. It tells the tale of the invasion, and near annihilation, of the human population of a group of planets at the hands of their cyborg creations, the cylons. Although the conceptual lines between the humans and the cylons (an advanced generation that looks, feels, and bleeds like humans) are indistinct, the ontological distinction is initially maintained partly by the continued search for a cylon detector (within the narrative) and partly by the audience's perspective, since they are clued in to which characters are cylons. Thus the audience is initially given a perspective by which the ontological distinction is possible, seemingly eliminating the doubts essential to the questions that come with the postmodern approach. Yet, throughout the series, the lines between cylon and human are distinctly, and progressively, blurred. Looking specifically at the characters of Sharon[78] (Grace Park) - in her two distinct incarnations, Boomer and Athena - one

[78] The Sharons are the generic name for the Number Eights (the eighth of the twelve human-like cylons). There are two specific Sharons delineated in the series, Lt. Sharon 'Boomer' Valerii and Sharon 'Athena' Agathon, which I will

can see their attempts at understanding their own identities, first perceived as innate, then through comparison with the humans, and finally, through a postmodern approach, by analyzing personal relationships.

Initially, Boomer is a Raptor pilot assigned to the battlestar *Galactica.* Her identity is wrapped up in that of the military, and by all accounts she is a fine officer. The show reveals, however, that Boomer is a secret agent of the cylons, and a cylon herself (despite her lack of knowledge of this state). The audience is cued into this development by the introduction of multiple characters played by the same actor, multiple copies of a single model of cylon. Boomer herself comes to understand this development after she attempts to assassinate Commander Adama (Edward James Olmos), captain of the *Galactica* (Episode 1.13). There seems to be no epistemological method to determine the difference between a cylon and a human, despite some effort made by Dr. Gaius Baltar (James Callis) at creating a test, using blood samples (Episode 1.8). Despite the robotic nature of the evolved humanoid cylons, they are made of organic material and a physically indistinguishable from humans in every way.

Although the audience can tell the difference (they are clued in to different cylon characters through presentation of the doubling of cloned cylons), on a diegetic level no human character can, with any authority, tell the difference. This cylon/human distinction is further blurred through the relationship between Athena (a different iteration of Sharon) and Karl 'Helo' Agathon (Tahmoh Penikett), while they are stranded on Caprica in the first season. Caprica, at this point, is a post-apocalypic waste land, a planet once central to human civilization which was destroyed in a cylon nuclear attack (shown during the mini-series backdoor pilot to the series). Helo encounters Athena, who he assumes is his fellow crew member from *Galactica* returned to the planet to rescue him

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specifically refer to by their call-signs, Boomer and Athena. Athena, a call-sign this individual only receives later in the series, retains the memories from Boomer's experience on *Galactica*, so the identity process is known to her in her relationship with Helo on Caprica later in the first season. Some scholars distinguish the two characters as Galactica-Boomer and Caprica-Boomer, or simply Boomer and Sharon.

(Episode 1.1). Both Helo, who is physically separated from his ship and other humans altogether, and Athena, who is sent by her fellow cylons on an undercover mission to find out what Helo knows, are separated from their own cultural context. This is particularly important for Athena, as she is forced to exist as an individual, despite coming from a culture of collectivity. As Robert Moore notes, "when we first meet her, Sharon[79] is a member of a culture that does not tolerate the individual" (Moore 107). Just as in Le Guin's text the androgynous nature of the Gethenians already challenges our sense of identity construction, here too the characteristics of the cylons present a challenge to the audience. These figures are both created and machines, but at the same time produced through strictly biological matter and experience thoughts and emotions. Matthew Gumpert argues that they are essentially "Haraway's cyborgs: hybrid beings, both human and machine, and therefore neither human nor machine, whose very ontological indeterminacy represents a challenge to the old essentialist notion of identity" (Gumpert 147).

Whether or not the cylons represent only cyborgs, or can also be read as metaphorical stand-ins for culturally distinct humans, they still come to represent the Other for the human characters within the series, with whom the audience tends to identify[80]. Yet, this remains true only as long as the cylons don't take on individual identities and characteristics. The series opens with several cylon characters having relationships with human crew members, specifically Boomer and the Six model that comes to be called Caprica Six (Tricia Helfer). In reaction to more individualized experiences, they develop individual traits which later in the series threaten the cylon society. This concept is carried over to the relationship between Athena and Helo. "Just as Boomer and Caprica Six are changed because of their having loved individual human beings, so also is Sharon changed

[79] Moore refers to Athena simply as Sharon.

[80] Although one could read this metaphor as postethnic, following David Hollinger, I find that reading in this SF context to misread the application of technology. While it is probably also a postethnic, and indeed as I argue elsewhere, postgender, universe, this particular encounter is more aptly read as posthuman, dealing with the problems of eliding technology and humanity, and their inevitable fusion in the future (thus the end of both cyborgs and humans in this context).

through her relationship with Helo" (Moore 2008, 109). This alteration in Sharon's character comes through an encounter on the surface of Caprica. It is in this space that Athena rejects her cylon culture to save Helo's life (Episode 1.8), and also where Helo learns that Athena is a cylon and chooses her despite his engrained prejudices (Episode 1.13, 2.6).

Through their relationship, both characters alter not only their prejudices towards the other, but fundamentally change their own identity in reaction to the change. What is more striking, however, is that the line between cylon and human is completely blurred through this interpersonal relationship. Athena's ability to express emotion, shown to be genuine, and betray her people, demonstrates that the cyborg creation has evolved to the point of being indistinguishable from humans. Furthermore, they are reproductively compatible, as their relationship produces a daughter, Hera (Episode 1.13, 2.18). The identities Helo and Athena thought existed prior to their encounter, and their reevaluated selves in reaction to each other, fail to maintain the cylon/human dichotomy, showing that it is impossible to determine the difference between the species. As such, using the category of human and cylon (at least when referring to the evolved version) ceases to be meaningful, demonstrating a postmodern approach to subjectivity, one in which dichotomies traditionally used, such as male/female, majority/minority, and here human/cyborg, cease to be determinate.

In the postmodern approach, cultural differences are elided, rendered either illusory or unimportant. This approach is based on an underlying commonality, which becomes, through a stripping away of other culturally imposed factors, the only identity markers remaining, allowing a reconciliation between Athena and Helo which also destroys their respective cultural identities as both cylon and human. This is in contrast to Le Guin's text, in which cultural understanding it is achieved through perceived and yet accepted difference, the differences and Otherness being the new common thread. In the postmodern structure of consciousness, difference is not just

undetectable, but ungrounded, making a positive outcome of the encounter possible by allowing Helo and Athena the freedom to choose their allegiances and alter stereotypes and prejudices.

> In the posthuman, there are no essential differences of absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism, robot teleology and human goals.
> (Katherine Hayles 1999: 2-3)

Conclusion, or What does sf tell us about Postmodernism?

The previous discussion highlights the fact that structures of consciousness aren't bound to generic categories. To position a generic category, be it detective fiction, romance, horror, or science fiction, has having a universal stance or approach to fiction, or aspects of fiction, does a disservice to both the specific genres and to the variety and breadth of literature available in all national traditions. Postmodernist fiction is not a generic category, but rather a mode describing literature in a wide range of categories. Literature that can be labelled postmodernist, reflects a postmodernist structure of consciousness, which can be seen in the specific literary, narrative, and conceptual choices made in the presentation of these works.

Thus, I chose canonical works of sf to demonstrate that each of the three identified structures of consciousness – classical, modernist, and postmodernist – can be and are reflected in the genre, just as in a previous chapter I presented the same pattern in detection fiction. Similar cases could be made for other genres, for mainstream fiction, and even literary fiction. Postmodernism is an aesthetic expression of a way of thinking of reality, and cannot be conceived in terms of chronology, even if its academic expression was first manifest in the relatively recent past, and it has not supplanted previous worldviews or forms of expression.

Thus far, we have considered a collection of texts which adhered to a specific genre, and considered them from a specific metaphysical vantage point. This was done by design, and as I have argued previously, both the genres and the specific cases are worthy of further study using a variety

of approaches, many of which are bound to yield fruitful scholarship. This project will now turn to a consideration of texts which can be shown to reflect the postmodern structure of consciousness in a variety of ways, and which I will term 'postmodern novels'. Those texts, Svend Åge Madsen's *Tugt og utugt i mellemtiden* and, as a comparison, the canonically postmodern *Gravity's Rainbow* by Thomas Pynchon, will be discussed in order to demonstrate how the postmodernist structure of consciousness can be seen in the presentation of ideas such as ethics and social justice, as well as in particular literary techniques.

The Postmodern Novel

Much will appear incomprehensible.
But back then, the world was incomprehensible.
Ato Vari

This chapter will focus on an analysis of Svend Åge Madsen's *Tugt og utugt i mellemtiden* [*Virtue and Vice in the Middle Time*] and how, using certain literary and narrative techniques, it demonstrates, or enacts, a postmodern structure of consciousness. As argued previously, the defining characteristics of literary postmodernism are not the specific literary techniques used (i.e. pastiche, intertextuality, playfulness, mixing of genres, metafiction) or philosophical questions considered (epistemology, ontology, ethics, psychology, etc.) but rather how those techniques are used or how those questions are answered. Postmodern texts, as has been discussed with detective fiction and science fiction texts earlier, produce the understanding that questions of truth and identity/reality are unanswerable. The use of literary features such as pastiche and mixing of genres, in a postmodern context, are utilized to support the irresolvable nature of postmodern texts (whether consciously by the author or not) and this use is made possible by virtue of a different underlying structure supporting those works. Madsen's novel reflects the postmodern structure of consciousness, not only with regard to epistemological and ontological questions, as we have explored, but also social justice, ethics and psychology. By showing how such ethical dilemmas and psychological entanglements are also founded on this structure, I show in this chapter how this methodology isn't limited to those dominants discussed in the previous chapters. Furthermore, I propose to enhance the analysis by providing a comparative look at a canonical postmodern novel, Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*. While there are many novels that could be considered in such an analysis (including some of those texts discussed in the previous chapters, such as Paul Auster's *City of Glass* and William Gibson's *Neuromancer*), these two texts were particularly chosen for the range of philosophical questions they touch upon as well as the various narrative and literary strategies they use within their texts. Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* is considered a

canonical postmodern novel, in fact McHale argues "no matter how it is characterized, however, the fiction of Thomas Pynchon appears to be universally regarded as central to its canon" (McHale 97). I will argue that the text corresponds both with traditional readings of postmodernism but also supports the redefinition of postmodernism via the postmodern structure of the consciousness. Through a reading of Svend Åge Madsen's novel, and comparisons in its elements to the canonical *Gravity's Rainbow*, I will demonstrate the breadth of the analysis using the postmodern structure of consciousness, and how this is a better tool with which to discuss literary postmodernism.

Svend Åge Madsen – *Tugt og utugt i mellemtiden*

Tugt og utugt i mellemtiden, often considered Svend Åge Madsen's major work, was first published in 1976. The novel is, from the beginning, a blend of genres. The main story contains characteristics of historical fiction, the adventure novel, detective fiction, psychological thriller, the Gothic, the Romantic novel, science fiction, Christmas stories, as well as letter-writing, diary entries, and parables (Gemzøe 351-2).[81] This is not only a common postmodern feature, but a trademark of Pynchon as well. 'Especially characteristic of Pynchon is the unstable, disorienting interaction of his complex style with models derived from popular genre fiction, movies and television: the very definition of avant-pop' (McHale 101). To further complicate the story, it contains a frame narrative presented as written by a future individual, Ato Vari, and both the frame story and this overarching[82] author evoke interesting questions about genre, identity, and ontological boundaries, questions also raised in the various narrative levels evoked in Pynchon's novel.[83] Even the preface, which was also presented as written by a future academic, Komani, divides Madsen's novel into

[81] These are only some of the narrative devices and forms of intertexuality identified by Anker Gemzøe, in great detail.
[82] Gemzøe describes Ato Vari as a '*panoramisk fortæller*' (262) with reference to Lubbock's distinction between the scenic and the panoramic. He furthermore classifies Vari as having a '*ydresyn'* (262) or '*vision sur*,' an outside perspective, using Poullion's structuralist vocabulary. This position is further complicated later in the novel, and will be discussed in relation to ontological levels later in the chapter.
[83] Many of these are detailed in McHale's *Constructing Postmodernism* primarily in chapters 3 and 4, though some of the key points, and my own interpretations, will be brought up later in the chapter.

two genres, a story of love and a story of hate, further defined as a 'crime story' (the story of hate) and a 'romance' (the story of love). This mix of genres does not serve just to demonstrate Madsen's erudition, but each evocation of a genre or particular text (there are many specific allusions to, for example, *Frankenstein, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, The Count of Monte Cristo, The Mysteries of Paris*) is used to create reader expectations, to present a type of identification or to propose a method of thinking about a situation. The discourses used are familiar and often not identified explicitly. Madsen then twists each traditional reading to demonstrate that such a reading has, in fact, been constructed and therefore demonstrates the artificiality of the narrative and the underlying philosophical basis for the narrative.

This analysis will consider a range of philosophical positions, with their associated narrative elements, and demonstrate how each is systematically undermined through the discourse of the novel. These positions are undermined through the various points-of-view of the novel, through the mutability of the characters and their relationships, through the social construction of roles based on group dynamics or consideration of otherness, and finally through a question of morality, specifically through an analysis of the romance elements of the story. These narrative motifs will then be tied to the structure of consciousness, demonstrating how the metaphor of the rhizome, as the defining metaphor explaining epistemology, ethics, ontology, social justice, etc. within the text works, and can become the means by which the literary elements of the novel (even the use of intertextuality, genre-mixing, metafiction) become relevant and meaningful.

Whodunit? And how do we know?

Starting with the story of hate, the crime story, *Tugt og utugt i mellemtiden* presents a complex critique not only of the contemporary (mid-1970s) judicial system of Denmark (and most Western countries) but of the underlying epistemological system that is the basis for it. This is done in

several ways. Firstly, it is done diegetically (within the context of the novel), through the discourses and rhetoric of Alster's three targets of revenge. Each of them, in their own way, presents an argument that conventional judicial systems either do not apply or are not effective in the way they are normally understood. On an extradiegetic level (for the reader but not the characters), the system of retribution and punishment is undermined through the repeated narration of the same scenes, through different perspectives, with each subsequent revelation adding new information and changing both the understanding of the crime committed within the text as well as the reader's understanding of the same events. Throughout, the reader is often afforded more information than is generally available to most characters within the novel, specifically the legal and judicial systems. This is typical of many modernist forms of detective fiction, such as the police procedural. Here, however, this is done through specific points-of-view rather than providing objectively confirmable information, which allows for more doubt than traditional detective stories. I will return to the larger ontological questions concerning authorship and who is telling the story later in the chapter.

The main plot (if one can identify a single overarching plot within the novel) is that of Ludvig Alster's revenge. Alster was incarcerated more than 12 years prior to the beginning of the narrative, and the novel begins with his escape from prison, reflecting the story of *The Count of Monte Cristo*. Alster maintains his innocence (despite overwhelming circumstantial evidence) and sets out to avenge his removal from society on the three people he blames, the judge Michael Deden, the journalist Laura Jennson, and finally the detective Thomas Ard. His method of revenge is to attempt to frame them for crimes they also did not commit, thus condemning them to the same fate as Alster, false imprisonment.

The reference to Dumas, however, functions not as simply pastiche, either in Jameson's formulation as a 'blank parody' (16) in which the author uses another's language and style in a 'random cannibalization of all the styles of the past' (17), or in Hutcheon's conception of a

"monotextual form that stresses similarity rather than difference" (Hutcheon, *Parody* 35). Rather Madsen here uses this intertextual, or interstyle, referencing to invoke certain expectations for the reader, to place them in a particular world. He does not focus on difference, or on similarity, but in a complex way similar to Hutcheon's parody (without the sense of ridicule of either the referent text or any outside satirical target) represents "repetition with a critical distance" (Hutcheon, *Parody* 6). This serves to relate the two stories and "require that the decoder construct a second meaning through inferences about surface statements and supplement the foreground with acknowledgement and knowledge of a backgrounded context" (34). Critically, however, Madsen does not make many explicit references to these intertexts, which allows for the possibility of the situations to be evoked in a generic way, using the reader's expectations based on genre and convention, even without more than pop cultural knowledge of the background text itself.

In this context, Madsen presents these three attempts split up into different books of the novel, although the stories bleed from one to another. While Alster remains steadfast in his selected targets, his point-of-view as to the desired outcome, and accomplishes his goal of framing these individuals for various crimes, the story becomes as much about their trials as about Alster's revenge. In this way, Madsen additionally evokes the detective story genre several times within this element of the novel, activating for the reader certain expectations as to police and juridical procedure, burden of proof and the consequences of having committed a crime. The reader knows, throughout these trials, that these new crimes were not committed by those being put on trial, as we have access to further information and other points of view by which we are presented with a different narrative of the event. Crucially, it is not the individual crimes, each of which can presumably be 'solved' from within the context of the story, but the overall interweaving of the story that presents a refutation of both classical and modernist detective story structures. Furthermore, the exposure of the lack of underlying foundation for the processes leading to the

trials and incarceration of those 'new' criminals works to undermine both Alster's original incarceration and all such methodologies. Madsen, through the continuous reproduction of competing narratives, each of which counteract and contradict those preceding, undermines the epistemological expectations of the reader, specifically evoked by reference to detective fiction codes, and presents the reader with so much doubt as to undermine the epistemological process overall. Detective fiction is particularly useful for Madsen, as is it for most postmodern writers, because it is a widely known and understood genre. "Hence the attractiveness of that model to the postmodernist writer: it is obvious when the rules are being broken because every reader knows, at least subliminally, what the rules of the detective story are" (Merivale 104). In addition, each of the 'victims' here, within the context of the novel, presents an alternative position to the dominant view of social justice and epistemological methods acted out within the story, further complicating the situation and providing the reader with plausible alternative theories of social justice and epistemology, without the tools or basis to distinguish 'accurately' between them.

This invocation of the detective fiction genre is also prevalent in Pynchon's texts. We have already seen a more detailed analysis of the detective fiction motif in *The Crying of Lot 49*, but it is also found in myriad of his other novels, notably *V.* and *Inherent Vice*. *Gravity's Rainbow* also takes up the motif early in the novel with the attempt to track, systematically, the landing positions of the V-2 rockets, which cannot be detected as they land (the process is inverted, with the sound arriving after the rocket). Roger Mexico and the aptly named Pointsman are both integral to this aspect of the story, with Mexico's assertions serving to undermine Pointsman's at every turn. As Pointsman asserts that there are answers, and tries to interpret a pattern in the incoming rockets, Mexico dissuades him.

> 'Can't you … *tell*,' Pointsman offering Mexico one of his Kyprinos Orients, which he guards in secret fag fobs sewn inside all his lab coats, 'from your map here, which places would be safest to go into, safest from attack?'
> 'No.'

> ‘But surely …’
> ‘Every square is just as likely to get hit again. The hits aren’t clustering. Mean density is constant.’
> Nothing on the map to the contrary. Only a classical Poisson distribution, quietly neatly sifting among the squares exactly as it should … growing to its predictable shape …
> ‘But the squares that already *had* several hits, I mean – ‘
> ‘I’m sorry. That’s the Monte Carlo Fallacy. No matter how many have fallen inside a particular square, the odds remain the same as they always were. Each hit is independent of all the others. Bombs are not dogs. No link. No memory. No conditioning (Pynchon, *Gravity’s Rainbow* 65)

Thus, Pynchon sets up the reader to both expect a positivistic searching, paralleling the modernist reading strategies typical of the detective genre (and most traditional readers (McHale *Constructing* 61-64)) and become open to a postmodern reading (which McHale calls negatively capable, invoking Keats). As we also see in Madsen, Pynchon then problematizes each of the points at which a complete interpretation could be plausibly maintained, here through the systematic dismantling of the epistemological basis for the mapping of the rockets landings (which are also tied to Slothrop’s erections, and the chemical Imipolex G).

Returning to Madsen, and starting with a discussion of the individual cases (the three crimes, investigations and trials which are set in motion by Alster), I will then move on to a wider discussion of the notion of social justice and its relationship with epistemology. Ethical and ontological considerations, notions of subjectivity, and a consideration of the role of psychology will follow.

The Cases - The Good, The Bad and the Practical

Michael Deden, a local magistrate, is charged with the murder of a young woman whom he has brought home, rescued from a local gang and to whom he intends to provide assistance. The police find the mutilated body of such a woman in his home, and Deden cannot explain how she has met her fate. She is found in his living room, beaten beyond recognition, all while Deden has been in the apartment, a fact to which he freely admits. The reader has access to information that Alster tried to

frame Deden by premeditatedly leaving the self-latching windows ajar, coming in through the window and substituting the body of an (coincidentally present) accident victim for Deden's 'guest,' whom he then secreted out the window again. The window relatched itself, presenting the police with the exact locked room scenario as Edgar Allan Poe's "Murders in the Rue Morgue", to which they refer. "Jeg har også læst den novella. Så vidt jeg ved strejfer der ingen aber om for tiden" (Madsen, *Tugt* I 173). ["I've read that story, too. As far as I know, no apes are loose at the moment" (Madsen, *Virtue* 155)]. Using that literary mise-en-scene, they dismiss Deden's suppositions of a similar occurrence, someone coming in through the seemingly locked windows, as extremely unlikely. Already here the police are functioning in a world based on probability rather than precision, practicality rather than ultimate truth. While Deden is asserting a world in which truth is determinable, and people are fundamentally honest, a world which is reflected in the classical detective story and maintained by classical detectives like Dupin, the story presents a police force reminiscent of a police procedural, in a more modern society. This represents not only references to detective fiction, but a blurring of the lines of the sub-genres, therefore evoking competing conceptions and expectations both for the diegetic participants as well as the reader. In some sense, Madsen presents the world of the police as more verisimilar, similar to Chandler's claims for hard-boiled fiction in the 1950s, but on the other hand, the police here are inaccurate and the classical reference is a better parallel to the actual situation, even as it is dismissed as unrealistic. This blending thus serves to diminish the reliability of such generic referencing to provide the reader a stable ground for interpreting the story.

In addition to framing them for crimes that they have not committed, Madsen uses the character's own personality traits as factors in how Alster attempts to frame them, a type of *contrapasso*. In this case, Deden's inherent honesty is part of his downfall, as he does not think of the potential complications from the legal position before phoning the police, which is even more

shocking from a hard-nosed magistrate. Deden's defense in his trial also carries through on this character trait, in which his 'alibi' is also socially embarrassing, even if the description is meant to extend his sense of benevolence. During the time of the murder, Deden is masturbating, sexually aroused by the perceived helplessness of Lilaiomai (from her perspective), despite knowing that he will ultimately provide assistance to the otherwise helpless and destitute girl.

The complication in this case comes from Deden's honesty, or naivety, in relation to the police investigation. As he did not commit the crime, he sees no problem in providing information about his whereabouts (in the apartment), activities (masturbation), and the situation (the woman was a stranger he had brought back to the apartment). These facts, however, are suspect to the general workings of the police (and readers of detective fiction, specifically police procedurals), and provide him with means, opportunity, and possible motive for the commission of the crime. By presenting honesty to a fault, in essence, Madsen is critiquing any ideology (even truth, justice, honesty, and moral superiority) as being necessarily tied to the practical and is thus only relatively applicable. The ethical implications of this will be addressed later in the chapter.

Both the framing of Laura Jennson and Thomas Ard occur in similar patterns. Alster recruits a suicidal man to frame Jennson by killing himself in her home, in front of her, while recording a conversation between them. As a journalist, she thinks of the implausibility of the news story related to the suicide and, rather than attempt to call the police and explain the situation, tries to dispose of the body. In essence, she believes the *truth* won't sell, and hence isn't believable, and acts accordingly. Alster then returns the body to her home ahead of her return, to which Jennson knows the more compelling headlines would revolve around her 'crime' rather than the mystery of the returning corpse. He not only uses her cynical nature against her, but also her journalistic tools and epistemological point of view, i.e. the idea that truth is what sells, rather than having an

objective, independently confirmable value. Relying on her frame, Alster condemns her to live with the consequences of her standpoint on the truth, one which further undermines any value *truth* has.

In the story of Thomas Ard, Alster attempts to frame him for his own murder, expecting Ard, who has the opposite moral code of Michael Deden (despite his role as police detective), in that he essentially lies and commits criminal acts as often as possible, as a matter of course. Alster, posing as Ard's driver, lures him to a deserted dock and then instigates a long planned 'accident' which should kill Alster and make it likely that Ard will be convicted, as the only one at the scene (again, means, motive, and opportunity are provided). Ard, however, proves too clever for Alster's plan, and reacts to Alster's accident by, against his normal behavior, pushing Alster out of the way and becoming injured in the process. Yet even here, Alster's plan was to use Ard's nature, his admitted behavior as one who only does 'right' when absolutely necessary, against him, assuming he would let Alster die rather than lift a finger to save him. The practical nature of Ard's response further reinforces the relativity of Ard's moral position, making it no more consistent, and therefore no more valid, than Deden's, especially in the eyes of the reader. It is, in fact, his relative application of his moral code, which allows him a successful outcome to the attempt at framing. Alster had relied on Ard treating his moral code as an unalterable ethical underpinning, and the failure of that, with Ard committing an act of 'good,' undermines not only Ard's position, but the stability of all ethical systems that are absolute.

Let's do it again: The use of reenactments and the retelling of the crime

In each of the revenge plots, Deden, Jennson, and Ard, there is a distinct difference between the truth provided to the authorities and what the audience 'knows' to be true. Despite problems with point of view, which I will return to, even the reconstructions of the crimes come to be problematic from an epistemological perspective. Following Todorov, in essence the detective story can be

considered as the narration of an event that happens before the case begins, the narration of the crime. As Brooks interprets it: "Tzvetan Todorov has noted that the work of detection that we witness in the detective story, which is *in praesentia* for the reader, exists to reveal, to realize the story of the crime, which is *in absentia* yet also the important narrative since it bears the meaning." (Brooks 24-5) Peter Brooks, like Todorov, initially places the truth-value on the level of the story (*fabula*) not that of the narrative (*sjuzet*). This is contradicted by the way Jennson and Deden see things (and how Ard wants people to see things). Yet, the narrative is all that the reader has access to, and thus is the only place meaning can reside – "The story is after all a construction made by the reader, and the detective, from the implications of the narrative discourse, which is all he ever knows" (Brooks 25). There may, in fact, be a *true* story beyond the narrative, but in each of these cases, even on the diegetic level (leaving aside the level of the competing narrators, the author, and the reader, for now), only the narratives present the information from which the story can be deciphered. And in Madsen's novel, they contradict themselves more and more as it proceeds.

In the nouveau roman, for example, Robbe-Grillet uses this detective story element to give the reader certain expectations of detection and then uses those against the reader, twisting the story to present a different 'primal scene' than the crime (which often did not happen at all).[84] Madsen uses the detective story similarly, creating several repeated detective stories within his novel, each of which seems to repeat not only a previous story within the novel (often back to the Alster story, which is not narrated again until the end of the novel) but also literary detections (Deden's story, for example, resembles the "Murders in the Rue Morgue"), such that the reader can access the information of how to read the story through this repetition. At the same time, each retelling is different, providing more information than that which was previously allowed for. Thus, as each

[84] Anker Gemzøe, although specifically not discussing the relationship between the two authors, implies that there is a connection in admitting this failure at the beginning of his work. 'Den største blokering viste sig at være mit fravalg af de mest ekstreme former for fransk efterkrigsmodernisme: Alain Robbe-Grillet forekom(mer) mig kedelig og som teoretiker tynd' (Gemzøe 21). 'The biggest hindrance demonstrated itself to be my neglecting the most extreme forms of French postwar modernism: I found Alain Robbe-Grillet boring and theoretically thin.' (Translation mine).

crime is solved, and then reassessed (through subsequent investigation and the application of new evidence), the methodology used to make the conclusions in the first place retains less and less credibility. This is true both within the text as well as for the reader. The multiple narrations of the same event offer a type of onion peeling effect. Each offered conclusion loses its force when revealed to be missing, yet again, a crucial piece of evidence. One also has doubt sown into the process by the very action of the repetition, as the *need* for repetition undermines assertions of the accuracy of the conclusions. Pynchon's novel offers the situation with Pökler and Ilse as an example, in which the annual return of Ilse to visit who is presumably her father, is brought into question through the repetition, as Pökler begins to doubt her 'true' identity. This is complicated by the War time scenario, the father and daughter's imprisoned status, and their eventual (fantasy) relationship – the status of each erased through narrative tricks as well as the repetition of the elements, blending the diegetic and extradiegetic levels of this part of the novel.

In Madsen's text, on a diegetic level, some characters advocate for a reform in legal procedure to allow for more personal considerations, which are not part of the system as it stands, which includes these suspect retellings and renarrations of events. They promote the adoption of the Jutlandic code, which is also ironically the basis for the legal system in Denmark, now called the Danish Code. With the Jutlandic code, Madsen is referring to the period prior to 1683 in which Denmark had two different legal codes, *Jyske Lov* and *Sjællandske Lov* (Jutlandic Law and Zealandic Law, respectively). The Code of Jutland states 'Loven skal være ærlig og retfærdig, taalelig, efter Landets Sædvane, passende og nyttig og tydelig, saa at alle kan vide og forstaa, hvad Loven siger. Loven skal ikke gøres eller skrives til nogen Mands særlige Fordel, men efter alle deres Tarv, som bor i Landet.' (Riis) ['The law must be honest, just, endurable, follow the Conventions of the Land, appropriate and useful and clear, so that all can know and understand what the law says. The law is not to be made or written to any man's particular advantage, but in the

best interests of all who live in the land'].[85] As 1683 is a part of Ato Vari's 'Middle Period,' this could be interpreted as falsifiable information, allowing the text to be interpreted as a type of 'historiographic metafiction', referring to Linda Hutcheon's postmodern category. This claim could further be substantiated with the number of accurate architectural and geographical references Madsen provides for the city of Aarhus, both the city in which he lives and the setting for the novel. Gemzøe argues that his novel could be read as a *samtidsroman* (contemporary novel) (237) because both the time of writing and the setting take place in 1976-7 (this despite other factors, which, Gemzøe also notes, make it function more as a historical novel than a science fiction or projected future novel). Similar arguments to historiographic metafiction can be made in the use of real figures like Pavlov in *Gravity's Rainbow*, the use of the V-2 rocket, and the Wartime (including both immediately before and in the postwar period, as we transverse time in the novel) setting, each of which evokes and air of authority and reality.

Madsen's novel uses the idea of reenactments to demonstrate to the general public how the crime took place (a type of narrative within the narrative), but each of the reenactments demonstrates their failings within the story. In the case of Laura Jennson's reenactment, her own release is foreshadowed (while the audience is in on the joke from the start due to information acquired from the narrator previously) by her inability to complete the elements of the reenactment clearly (or even to recall what she was supposed to be reenacting), despite her own confession. The driver (a disguised Alster, and also the actual perpetrator of the crime) has to stand in for her at key points (exactly those points in which he was present, performing those exact actions, like moving the body and replacing it in her house and in the boot of her car). Thus the reenactment, if looked at objectively (rather than allowing the driver a pass as he is 'standing in' for the defendant in those places) would note that she could not have performed those tasks as the reenactment suggested (as

[85] Translation mine.

she was physically unable, and could not have been in two places at once). Even without the reader's privileged position, it seems that the investigation was faulty but the reader's knowledge further emphasizes the structural failure of the process.

Alster's own conviction, consequently, was also based on such a reenactment. The end of the novel presents yet another reenactment of that crime (with the new, supposedly *true* ending) which exonerates Alster. Yet, this reenactment is also interrupted, with new elements entering, new characters being present in previously unsearched and undisclosed locations (Uwe hiding where he had access to Lilaiomai, for example) and is never completed. This reenactment, the embodiment of the narrative that is meant to finally explain the plot of the 'primal' story, is thus also tainted by an inability to be properly and completely narrated. Is this the truth? Does Rimby explain everything? Or does the story simply end here, as it was ultimately Alster's story and, now that he is exonerated and chooses his exile (suicide?), he is no longer interested in the truth (if there is such a thing). In any case, the *truth* seems just as elusive as ever, because each of the methods used to produce the *truth* have been undermined, either through appeal to inadequate systems of truth (Deden's, Jennson's), the inability to reenact or narrate the story itself, or through the inability to access enough points of view to gain complete access to the information (and with all of the information undermined, it presents no possibility that such an outside perspective could be, credibly, achieved). This demonstrates postmodern structure of consciousness, as we remain 'in' the system and there is no outside perspective from which to gain knowledge of the *true* nature of things. So, while this is different than the situation in Auster's *City of Glass*, in which things are clearly contradictory, in essence, *Tugt and utugt i mellemtiden* ends in roughly the same way as *The Crying of Lot 49*. Stefano Tani describes it this way: "The result is open-endedness, suspension of the solution; Oedipa the artist and post-modern detective quits sizing up clues and accepts mystery as her story 'ends' as it started" (Tani, 'Dismemberment' 29). Here it is the reader, as with Pynchon's novel,

who is left in the most suspense. As with Oedipa, we are left with no way to solve the mystery we are originally presented with, but are rather presented with multiple solutions each of which have doubt, as well as a process which is equally dubitable. A 'solution' is no longer achievable.

'Back then I thought we shouldn't punish one another.' (*Virtue and Vice,* 266*)*

In addition to the impact on social justice from this epistemological uncertainty, there are also ethical considerations. Individual morality, alluded to in the situation with Thomas Ard above, is presented as even more varied and nuanced than the multiple epistemological stances above. A number of characters act out forms of morality on a relatively consistent basis, as well as reflect upon the general sets of beliefs to which they refer when making such decisions. Dominic Rainsford argues that this is specifically what we mean by ethics.

> Our decisions in these matters, even if we do not believe in a morality grounded on anything more than contingency, expediency, or self-interest, can be said to be governed by moral concepts: ideas of how to behave when we find ourselves in certain relations to other individuals, relations which affect their happiness or well-being. In so far as we reflect upon, question and theorize these moral concepts we may be said to be engaging in moral philosophy or ethics. (Rainsford 1)

Michael Deden is perhaps the most consistent individual in the story, who acts very rationally with a system of conformity to the law and in general acting out what he perceives to be good, which is equivalent to contemporary moral standards of 1970s Århus (from Ato Vari's perspective, a common caveat). His exposition of his theory is given in court, while he stands trial, presenting the reader with his (and arguably, Ato Vari's interpretation of Aarhusian) ethics. On the other end of the spectrum, Thomas Ard, for example, works under the assumption that he is in fact evil, and those acts which he commits (and finds exciting) are exactly the opposite to acts that Deden normally pursues. Within the novel, the only seeming referent to whether a given system is considered good or not is based on its acceptance by others. In different contexts, different ethical behaviors are rewarded, with no overarching ethics being consistently promoted. For example,

within the criminal underworld, Uwe is originally consistent with that world's morality and only in reaction to individual stimuli (the encounter with Lilaiomai) does he deviate. Madsen is describing a world of moral relativity, with the only basis for 'choosing' being conformity to a social group or class, in larger (all of Danish or Århusian society) or smaller (leather jackets) degrees.

On the other side of the spectrum, there is the idea of moral mutability. Uwe, originally a member (leader) of the white leather jackets, an organized crime group which has a reactionary morality to which he conformed, transforms his behavior after meeting the female protagonist of the novel, Lilaiomai. He initially saves her from sexual assault and enslavement at the hands of his gang, in an intertextual reference to Sue.[86] This action violates their social code, in that he considered someone else's feelings. After his expulsion from the gang, he adopts a wholly different moral stance, affected by his feelings for Lilaiomai, but also consciously changes his behavior (and dress and language) as he no longer needs to conform to the leather jacket social norms. He rather changes to conform to the opinion that she expresses of him.

> Jeg synes slet ikke, du ligner en læderjakke, Uwe. / Jamen, ….. hvad så? / En flink fyr med en brækket næse. Lidt romantisk og megle selvstændig – det er næsen der gør det – men også en der trænger til hjælp – det er øjnene – og som godt kan lide at hjælpe andre. / Jeg tror du har ret, Lilaiomai. Du har beskrevet mig helt rigtigt. Jeg kan mærke at det allerede er på vej, det var derfor jeg havde det så underligt før (Madsen, *Tugt* I, 113).
>
> I don't think you look like a leatherjacket, Uwe. / Well, …… what then? / A nice guy with a broken nose. A bit romantic and very independent – it's the nose that does that – but also one who needs help – that's the eyes – and who likes to help others. / I think you're right Lilaiomai. You've described me to a T. I can feel it starting already, that's why I felt so strange before (Madsen, *Virtue*, 98)].

Thus Uwe changes his ethical code, as well as other parts of his identity, in reaction to those surrounding him, having thus no internal guiding set of moral principles. His ethics, although unexamined, seem to be reactionary and greatly influenced by conformity and

[86] Sue is also alluded to in Pynchon's novel, with Prentice Pirate's 'long-running fantasy of his own, rather a Eugène Sue melodrama, in which he would be abducted by an organization of dacoits' (Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow* 15) having similarities with Lilaiomai's actual experiences in underground Aarhus.

emotion. This individual nature of ethical discourse resembles Levinasian considerations of ethics. Later in the novel, it is insinuated that his membership in the criminal gang was similarly reactionary and contrary to his upbringing and genetic predisposition (although he further calls those ideas in question).

Uwe is not the only character with ethical mutability within the novel. Ludvig Alster also changes his moral stance at least twice in the period of the novel. The first change occurs due to his long prison term, as he becomes a different person with a specific moral stance, that of revenge. After a series of encounters with Lilioaimai and Clara, who both evoke his sense of internal justice, Alster recants some of his previous stances on revenge and its suitability. In one sense, it could be argued that Alster has retained, or regained, a conventional sense of morality that does not rely on social conventions, which he has shunned at this point. However, that would presuppose that his previous actions had been absent moral considerations, when in fact they were well thought through and logically based. His ethics, the careful consideration of his moral actions in relation to an other, have changed, as did Uwe's, in reaction to the influence of a single individual, in this case Clara. Both for Alster and Uwe, the moral change has come in recognition of another individual, one who was a stranger at the time of their influential encounter. Both individuals recognize a responsibility to this other, which is prior to their own establishment of self-identity or subjectivity. This notion of a pre-ontological ethical responsibility reflects Levinasian ethics. Levinas claims that the encounter with the other starts a process, but one prior to the epistemological and foundational to the ontological, which make one responsible for the other. "The process of reflection stirred by the face of the individual is not a thought *about* – a representation – but at once a thought *for*, a non-indifference

towards the other which upsets the equilibrium of the calm and impassive soul of pure knowledge" (Levinas 67, original emphasis). This is presented in both Uwe and Alster.

Uwe alters his nature, going against social conventions, his adopted morality, and the ethical norms of his sub-culture, the white leather jackets, at the prospect of Lilaiomai's injury. Somehow, Lilaiomai's claim on Uwe, a perfect stranger, takes precedence over his own subjectivity (however constructed). As Levinas states, "what concerns my selfhood is the specific circumstance in which that right has meaning. It is as if the shadow of death the other face confronts were my business, as if that death were my concern. In this reminder of my responsibilities by means of a face that has a claim on my selfhood, the stranger is my neighbour" (Levinas 67). Uwe becomes responsible for saving Lilaiomai, even if it means eradicating his own sense of identity (which is later reconstructed in the image she sees of him).

Alster forms a relationship with Clara, whom he first encounters at the train station as he escapes from prison. Her actions then, in saving him (although this certainly breaks her own moral conventions), and his actions later in releasing Deden and Jennson, reflect the moral obligations that Levinas describes. Both come with a full-scale revaluation of his identity (and ethical stance) after the recognition of their responsibilities for the lives of others. Furthermore, both encounters potentially lead to the death of the person involved in the change (as do Uwe's actions as the penalty for defying the leather jackets is also death). Clara is strangled by Rimby (although she thinks it was in fact Alster). Alster, after releasing Deden and Jennson, confines himself to a piece of underground (in the canal) bricking himself in. Levinas further claims that one's own death is a potential price of the responsibility of living with others. "In my closeness to my fellow beings, and the promise of peace it brings, lies my responsibility for someone else, the impossibility of leaving that person to face the mystery of death alone. In practical terms, this entails a willingness to die for him. Living in peace with others can demand that much" (Levinas 67).

Levinas argues that one's ethical responsibility precedes the consideration of one's own identity. This is particularly true if one's identity is constructed in relief, based on an encounter with an other, for if one has a responsibility towards the other, then that encounter is already predetermining aspects of one's individual identity construction. However, Madsen presents a number of ways in which identity is constructed throughout the novel, creating uncertainty in terms of subjectivity and ontology, just as he has done in the realms of social justice, epistemology and ethics, reflecting the novel's postmodern structure.

Who am I? - It is all so subjective

The notions of identity and subjectivity are already not identical. Donald Hall makes a distinction between the two concepts, defining subjectivity as a meta-term evaluating and interrogating the more innate phenomenon of identity.

> For our purposes, one's identity can be thought of as that particular set of traits, beliefs, and allegiances that, in short- or long-term ways, gives one a consistent personality and mode of social being, while subjectivity implies always a degree of thought and self-consciousness about identity, at the same time allowing a myriad of limitations and often unknowable, unavoidable constraints on our ability to fully comprehend identity. (Hall 3-4)

Madsen leads the reader to consider variations in the concept of identity, and the construction of one's identity, through a series of characters whose identities are in flux. Through the character of Dr. Knud Monnike, psychologist, he further invites both the characters and reader to consider subjectivity, and the possibility of a conscious changing or controlling of one's identity. However, he also presents the idea of identity as not having "a particular set of traits, beliefs, and allegiances … [that give] one a consistent personality" (Hall 3) through characters whose personality, and in essence their identity, changes throughout the text to assume another's identity. Identity is presented as both essential and entirely socially constructed, as both unalterable and irreducibly performative (in the Butlerian sense). In this presentation, he challenges the reader to consider the problems of

subjectivity, which is "the intersection of two lines of philosophical inquiry: epistemology (the study of how we know what we know) and ontology (the study of nature of being or existence)" (Hall 4). He does this by presenting a number of different scenarios, four of which are neatly summed up in the novel by Monnike, who intends to write a monograph.

The cases are the following, which will be discussed more in detail both with regards to Dr. Monikke's assessment (and the italicized titles are the proposed chapter titles of his monograph) the means by which they undermine theories of subjectivity for the reader. The first case is that of the *double-body*, where by means of a traffic accident two "consciousnesses" are made to share the same bodies. The second, *body-borrowing*, consists of an inmate (in a mental facility) through some means of mental prowess borrows the body of another individual. The third case, *assumption of identity*, consists of a friend of a wealthy and generally well-respected young man admiring this figure and both psychologically and physically changing to the point in which he assumes his identity, effectively creating two of the same (yet, to a certain degree distinct) individuals with the same identity. The final case, *the complete person*, consists of two people, who, similar to the proposal in Plato's symposium, are each born with only part of a consciousness (and accompanying physical defects, i.e. deafness and blindness) are rejoined to form a complete individual. (556)

The first case, presented in the third book of the novel entitled "A Stranger in His Own Body," presented in two successive chapters, tells the story of two characters who, as the result of an automobile accident, share a body. The body is divided between them, with their consciousnesses remaining intact, with each mind taking half of the day (the remaining time they dream the other mind's experiences). Madsen uses this situation not only to comment on identity, but to demonstrate differences in social status, including their individual reactions as well as societies treatment of each of them. Through these social concepts he furthers a social critique, while at the same time reconsiders the boundary between one mind and one body, the sort of

Cartesian dualism some forms of subjectivity are based upon. Regenia Gagnier describes this as one of the forms of subjectivity, the concept that "the subject is a body that is separate (except in the case of pregnant women) from other human bodies; and the body, and therefore the subject, is closely dependent upon its physical environment" (Gagnier 8). In this case, there are two subjects occupying the same body (so rather than just double-body, it is actually also double-mind).

Each of the characters, however, retains their individual sense of identity, which is most clearly represented by their sense of morality. This is demonstrated in Bimpel's reaction to a paranoid episode by Einvald, when he claimed that his sister's deaf-mute housekeeper was spreading malicious rumors against his family. "How could he bring himself to do that to a deaf-dumb girl? How can you dream things like that?" (232) Bimpel here, the lower class character, asserts his morality, as well as questions it as he doesn't yet realize the situation. The blurring of ethical standards coupled with social norms helps challenge accepted notions of higher morality associated with higher classes. This is seen throughout the novel, and is constantly unpeeled as competing stereotypes are juxtaposed as they are here. This is further inversed by the actions of Einvald in attempting to thwart Bimpel's criminal activities, while also gaining control of his memory and new identity. It is an encounter with an uncannily familiar part of town that allows him to understand the "truth" of the situation.

> Han nærmer sig huset. Alle detaljer passer. Men indeni bor der sikkert en lille tyk mand, eller en forvirret familie med et hav af bærn og hunde. Sådan arbejder fantasien. Det ville alligevel være interressant at få et kig indenfor. … Det er kvinden fra drømmen der lukker op. Hende husker han tydeligt. Langt tydeligere end huset, end vejen, end noget andet. …Han kender situationen fra utallige bøger. (Madsen, *Tugt* I 260)

> He approaches the house. All the details fit. But inside there certainly lives a short fat man, or a chaotic family with a sea of children and dogs. That's how imagination works. Anyway, it would be interesting to take a look inside. … It's the woman from the dream that opens the door. He remembers her vividly. Much more vividly than the house, than the road, than anything else. … He remembers the situation from innumerable books. (Madsen, *Virtue* 240)

Initially, Einvald does not recognize the situation that he is presented with, finding himself in unfamiliar surroundings. As he begins to recognize his surroundings, he begins to associate them with his dreams, and is intrigued by the similarity between apparent reality and the dream state. He further connects the concept to that of literature, allowing Madsen to make a comment on the concept of life imitating art, all the while presenting seemingly unlikely real circumstances as fact in his fiction. Ironically, Einvald, whose reality and dream states have been blurred, becomes involved with Jennsøn, the journalist who argues she creates reality.

The social critique is furthered by Einvald and Jenssøn's ability to have Bimpel committed to the care of a psychiatrist, Dr. Knud Monikke, and the psychiatrist's willingness to incarcerate one of the two individuals that have precisely the same symptoms. This demonstrates both the arbitrary nature of the process of committal, which depends not solely on the 'facts' of the given case but also on the source of the knowledge and social standing of the patient. Bimpel is committed to Dr. Monikke's basement on the advice of Jenssøn and Deyk, upstanding members of society, while Deyk, who has the same symptoms, in fact the identical situation, is allowed to be free, and in fact, the committal of Bimpel with the subsequent instructions actually allows him to maintain a much more 'normal' life. Normal here is of course also an arbitrary social determination, as it is assumed that the life and actions of Bimpel would hurt society and are therefore dangerous enough to have him medically incarcerated, a condition only slightly better than that of the justice department. "He's led into one of the cages. It's better than a prison cell. Bigger and with somewhat normal furniture. But it's still a cage. With stout bars, a secure lock." (293) The exact details of the 'merger' are left unclear, whether there was a physical meshing of brain which allowed the 'soul' of the individuals to 'possess' the body of the other, but clearly the personalities remain distinct, reinforcing the concept of an unalterable, essential identity which is not material in nature, but resides in consciousness.

The second case, body-borrowing, consists of the character of Gustav Nonnetit (Crooked), an escaped felon incarcerated in a psychiatric facility on the orders of the police. Nonnetit provides some foreshadowing of this episode at the time of his arrest, in which he presents the Hellerian logic of his incarceration.

> --Men der er et problem, fortsætter Skæven. – Man fængsler for at få folk til at vende om. Jeg har allerede siddet i fængsel, og jeg har vendt om. Det viser sig jo ved at jeg melder mig frivilligt. Jeg vil gerne i fængsel. Men man vil vel ikke risikere at jeg vender om endnu engang?
> …--Jeg er uegnet til straf, for jeg vil gerne sættes ind, og så bliver det jo ikke nogen straf.
> Skæven kan ikke tilbageholde et smil. Men Art lyser op, han har netop haft et af sine gode øjeblikke.
> --Hvis du gerne vil stræffes, så er du gal. Du må desværre spærres inde. Af stede med ham. (Madsen, *Tugt* I 231-2)

> --But there's a problem, continues Crooked. –You put people in prison to transform them. I've already been to jail and I've been transformed. You can see that by my having turned myself in voluntarily. I'd love to go to jail. But do you want to risk my being transformed yet again?
> … --I'm not suitable for punishment because I want to go to jail, and so that won't be any punishment.
> Crooked can't hold back a smile. But Ard brightens, he's just had one of his good moments.
> --If you'd like to be punished, you're crazy. Unfortunately, you'll have to be locked up. Take him away. (Madsen, *Virtue* 212)

Thus Ard and the police, unable to preserve a legitimate justification for the incarceration of criminals (if this is to be a means of retribution by society or a means of rehabilitation of the criminal as to protect society) falls into the trap of Nonnetit's logic, which is then compounded with the decision to admit Nonnetit to Monikke's psychiatric facility, on even less logical grounds. "Jeg overvejede at springe over Gustav Nonnetit (kaldet Skæven). Han er tvangsanbragt her, først og fremmest fordi politiet ikke kan få medhold i at han vil have gavn af at sidde i fængsel, og de kan ikke unde ham at gå fri (Madsen, *Tugt* II 91) ["I considered skipping Gustav Nonnetit (known as Crooked). He was committed to this institution largely because no one will agree with the view of the police that he would benefit from being in prison, and because on the other hand they cannot bring themselves to release him" (Madsen, *Virtue* 401)]. This means of incarceration, the idea that

the insane and criminal are overlapping categories, is not new or unique to this text, but in fact present some of the analysis by Foucault in his treatment of the history of madness. "In short, the asylum restored to its truth as a cage" (Foucault 207).

However, Nonnetit's condition did not manifest itself before his commitment to the institution, but ironically as a consequence of it. Nonnetit wanted to be free so strongly that, in a type of generic intertextuality[87] with the genre of science fiction, he uses mental prowess to take over the body of Emil Bønhose, an upstanding member of society. The story is initially presented in the chapter, "Dr. J's recipe" a further intertextual reference to Dr. Jekyll, as well as the name of a drink that Emil Bønhose prepares from a book of alcoholic beverage recipes.

Essentially, it becomes possible for Nonnetit to occupy, for periods of time, the body of Bønhose. In this scenario, not only is there a separation between the mind and the body (the consciousness can transfer from one mind to another, as in the case of the double-body) but that the mind can act independently of the body and then return, at will (even if only in special circumstances). In this way, the mind becomes the sole location of consciousness, without being tied to any specific body, and completely separating from any materialist hypothesis (which the previous example had left intact).

Emil's actions, as well as the conversations that he has, acknowledge a long held prejudice against the mad and recalls charges of the connection between insanity and old forms of communicable disease like leprosy that were held in the same locations historically, indicating that Nonnetit's insanity (which he assumes) or his consciousness (as the reader seems to understand) is,

[87] This type of intertextuality is presented by Anker Gemzøe in his disseration on Svend Åge Madsen. "In my final "Positioning" I suggest a Bakhtinian 'reinterpretation' of the concept of *intertextuality*, but underline how much of all of the critics mentioned have inspired me. For literary purposes like my own I suggest the following framework of categories: --*Specific intertextuality*: direct influences or polemics, all specific references. – *Epochal intertexuality*: the objective common features between texts in a given period, the 'optics' ('ideologeme', 'episteme') of the given period. –*Generic intertextuality*: all genre relations. –*Stylistic intertextuality*: relations to genre-transcending styles. –*General intertextuality*: the elementary interaction with linguistic, literary, intellectual traditions, in modernity, ever-present as an 'anxious' metaconsciousness." (Gemzøe 538) This quote is presented in the English summary of his disseration presented at the end of the text.

to a degree, infectious. In a conversation with a friend, Emil states the fears of living so close to the asylum. "—Du ved vi bor i Risskov. Lige over for Asylet, sagde han. … Det påvirke en at bo der. I et lange løb. Man kan ikke slippe for det. Al den påvirkning. Der er ikke noget at gøre. Når man har samlet al den ondskab og galskab man kunne hitte på sådan et lille område, så er det ikke så sært at det går galt. Det siver ud" (Madsen, *Tugt* II 101-2) ["--You know we live in Risskov. Right across from the asylum, he said. … Living there has an effect on you. You can't avoid it. The whole effect. There's nothing to be done about it. When you've gathered all the evil and craziness you can find into one little area, it's not surprising that things go wrong. It leaks out" (Madsen, *Virtue* 411)]. This fear is discussed by Foucault, who claims both that, "People were in dread of a mysterious disease that spread, it was said, from the houses of confinement and would soon threaten the cities" (Foucault 202). A similar case to the spreading of the criminal mind of Nonnetit through his taking over the body of Emil, but also to the connection between madness and evil, whether it be intentional or not. "But now the estate of confinement acquired its own powers; it became in turn a birthplace of evil, and could henceforth spread that evil by itself, instituting another reign of terror" (Foucault 202). The asylum in Madsen's text is not presented as a birthplace of evil, but rather as a home of evil and the criminal, who society has placed in the same category as the insane, treating them both to incarceration to, supposedly, protect society from the harms they present.

This situation is paralleled in Pynchon's text in the strange powers of Prentice Pirate, who has a "strange talent for – well, for getting inside the fantasies of others: being able, actually, to take over the burden of *managing* them" (Pynchon, *Gravity's* 13). In both texts the introduction of the science fiction genre calls forth considerations of ontology and otherness. The identities not of Nonnetit and Pirate, but rather those whose minds they occupy, are challenged, as are the understandings by which we generally understand identity and subjectivity. Prentice also presents one of the narrative challenges, or opportunities, of *Gravity's Rainbow*, as in modernist attempts to

find a ‘solution’ to the novel (or at least a coherent reading of its various narrative levels and plot twists) Prentice “the fantasist-surrogate, would be a good candidate for this all-encompassing consciousness” (McHale, *Constructing* 89). In such a reading, Prentice would be able to manage the other characters, and their fantasies, because they would be part of his own consciousness. This is suggested based on the opening sequence of the novel, in which it seems the narrative awakens from a dream containing Prentice, challenging the objective narratorial stance. I argue that this would negate large portions of the novel (objections McHale also makes), but even such a reading wouldn’t allow one to present the novel as a product of a modernist structure of consciousness. Even if explaining the embedded layers, the challenges to effective norms, here of subjectivity and the power of the mind, would be at least introduced, and thus should be read as late modernist. The lack of a consistent presence of Prentice in a narrative voice, and the problems (to be discussed later in the chapter) with the ending of the novel, further challenge the viability of the Prentice as consciousness reading, and suggest that this scene needs to be read within the diegesis of the novel. In that circumstance Pynchon, earlier than Madsen, challenges accepted norms of the limits of the power of the mind, and forces the reader to begin to accept certain scientific nova as a trope in the novel. This invocation of science fiction leans the novel into the ontological dominant, following McHale’s modernist and postmodernist distinction. However, the identities Prentice occupies are also immediately challenged, thus making categories of subjectivity already suspect. This is further compounded by the previously discussed invocation of the detective fiction genre, which is coded as epistemological and modernist. We shall return to that them, and the figure of Slothrop, when discussing narrative structure later in the chapter.

The third and fourth cases round out the possibilities, and in a typical Madsenian fashion, exhausts the possibilities of the identity constructions (as we have also done with ethics and morality), but without specifically privileging any of the categories. Thus, those norms that society

imposes are undermined, but no replacement category is forthcoming. Instead we are given a range of possibilities, from an essential identity, absent the body condition (double body), a migrating consciousness (body borrowing), migrating identity (assumption of identity) and identity division (merged identity). In the third case, far from demonstrating that Vilhelm is the rare exception of a normal individual in a world full of crazy or psychically unstable people, he instead demonstrates the fragility of the individual identity, and the means by which the psychiatric establishment, as presented in the novel, manifests problems that it has needs of solving; creating, rather than treating, cases of interest and the mad. As Foucault states, "Madness deals not so much with truth and the world, as with man and whatever truth about himself he is able to perceive" (Foucault 27). Vilhelm becomes Christian, while Christian relinquishes the identity, leaving only Vilhelm in possession of the identity, one created by the particular set of circumstances of Christian's upbringing, and corresponding to that 'particular set of traits, beliefs, and allegiances' that correspond. Madsen here separates identity from the fixed set of values belonging to a single consciousness, allowing for those to change so completely as to be unrecognizable. Furthermore, the body is also not the locus of such identity, as here Vilhelm replicates Christian's physical characteristics, and earlier there were cases of identity transcending the body. Identity here is not innate, but can be wholly learned, wholly performed, in the best Butlerian sense. Vilhelm performs as Christian better than he ever could have (and he has no doubt with regards to his role).

The fourth case, however, presents the possibility that identity is not only innate but predetermined. As well as being a positive outcome to the love story half of the novel (for two characters who had been systematically mistreated throughout), it presents a notion of predestined love, fate, and a fixed inherent identity characteristic of Oedipus and reminiscent of Plato's symposium. In contrast to the third case, that of Christian, whose class identity was based on his

‘birth’ and dissolves just as quickly, here birth and physical defects play a pivotal role in their identity.

As a consequence of these four cases, all possibilities for one, true, nature of identity are removed. It is plausible for identity to be materialist, fundamentally tied to a body, or entirely transcendent, able to be removed from a body. It is possible for identity to be fixed and innate, or wholly performed. It is possible for identity to be indivisible, even when sharing a body (or two) with another consciousness, and yet also to be split and reunited by fate. Each of these are presented as equally true within the text, and yet represent contradictory means by which identity can be understood, thus undermining any means by which to definitively ascribe the notion. The concept of identity is in question, and the development of a subjectivity for the characters through their own identity consideration is equally problematic. Just as with social justice, ethics, and epistemology, subjectivity is also uncertain in the text, through structural design. Furthermore, it is presented as problematic that all of these forms of identity construction exist, simultaneously, in the text. It is a curiosity, for Dr. Monikke, but is rendered as unremarkable to the characters as a whole. Wilde would suggest that this represents more than simply modernist conventions, even taken to an extreme end, but rather an example of postmodern irony.

> Modernist irony, absolute and equivocal, expresses a resolute consciousness of different and equal possibilities so ranged as to defy solution. Postmodern irony, by contrast, is suspensive: an indecision about the meanings or relations of things is matched by a willingness to live with uncertainty, to tolerate and, in some cases, to welcome a world seen a random and multiple, even, at times, absurd. (Wilde, 44)

This suspensive attitude is found in all of these cases, from Emil Bønhøse’s wife, to Irmelin Dyck’s reaction to the ‘conversion’ of her son. Uncertainty is simply the new norm, reflective of the society in which they live.

Who is telling this story anyway? – Narratological levels and ontological uncertainty

Madsen's novel, in a typical motif of postmodernism, embeds his main narrative in an outside frame story, which isolates the author, and questions the traditional position of the author, narrator, and narrative itself. The "author" of the main narrative is a character from a time in which books were no longer written (Madsen, *Tugt* I 12) [(Madsen, *Virtue* 1)] and feelings such as pain, emptiness and joy are no longer understood (Madsen, *Tugt* I 100) [(Madsen, *Virtue* 85)]. This already puts Madsen's narrative into focus, as the 'author', Ato Vari, is grappling with how one writes a story. Traditional narrative devices are employed, and undermined, as the "author" of the story presents a "'novel' (a fictitious description of a portion of reality)" (preface) set in the Middle Time, defined as between 1500 and 2000. This is characteristic of Linda Hutcheon's historiographic metafiction, which "self-consciously uses the trappings of what [Stanley] Fish calls 'rhetorical' literary presentation (omniscient narrators, coherent characterization, plot closure) in order to point to the humanly constructed character of these trappings – their arbitrariness and conventionality" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 45). This she further calls "typically contradictory postmodern exploitation and subversion of the familiar staples of both realist and modernist fiction" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 45). The historical distance that is made possible by the postmodern narrative device that Madsen employs, also allows him to present a social critique of his own time as a historical narrative and present an alternative future that is no less appealing for the reader, further complicating categories of history and reality, fact and fiction, and past, present and future.

The ontological lines are also blurred as the frame story and diegetic narrative intermingle. Towards the middle of the novel, Ato Vari declares he is unable to adequately feel the characters and have the requisite emotions to depict the world of the middle time. He thus inserts himself into the novel in the form of the character Sjat, who is the manifestation of the sentiment of the writer Stan Pekoral, and will serve to present his view of the way the world should be to the future. This is

characteristic of metafiction, or as Patricia Waugh explains, a particularly category of it. "The entry of the narrator into the text is also a defining feature of what has been called 'surfiction'" (Waugh, *Metafiction* 14), which further "impl[ies] a fiction that self-consciously reflects upon its own structure as language" (Waugh, *Metafiction* 14). In using surfiction, Madsen is calling the reader's attention to the self-conscious nature of the narrative, yet Madsen takes this further, using surfiction, and other metafictional characteristics as a further means of undermining all standard devices and loci of meaning in the text, reflecting its rhizomatic nature.

In this use of surfiction, Ato Vari becomes a character in the novel he is writing, set specifically in Århus, Denmark in the 1970s (the book was first published in 1976) and, as stated in the preface, "gives a splendid and realistic insight into the mores and customs of the period, which the author appears to have studied in detail" (Preface). This preface, "written" by Komani, an historian and specialist in Denmark of the Middle Time, provides the first place by which one can see this novel as a criticism of the customs of Madsen's own society and time (Madsen was and still is a resident of Århus, living in a northern part of the city known as Risskov), and which, in retrospect, also presents an ironic statement, in the guise of academic discourse, of how this 'insight' was acquired. Sjat, furthermore, is set to become the descendent of Ato himself, as Stan Pekoral states:

> *Jeg* er i færd med at skabe en fremtidsperson, lad os kalde ham Ato, i mangel af bedre navn. Men jeg går den anden vej. Jeg skaber ikke en fiktiv person, men en rigtig man i kød og blod. En mand som skal levendegøre os. Sjat here er hans forfar. Jeg lærer Sjat hvordan vores verden hænger sammen. Denne visdom skal gå i arv til hans barnebarn, og igen videre til det næste barnebarn. (Madsen, *Tugt* II 180)
>
> I am in the process of creating the person of the future, let's call him Ato for want of a better name. But I'm taking the opposite tack. I'm not creating a fictitious person, but a real man of flesh and blood. A man who will make us come alive. Sjat here is his predecessor. I'm teaching Sjat how our world operates. This knowledge will be passed down to his grandchildren, and farther on to their grandchildren, and again farther on to the next grandchildren. (Madsen, *Virtue* 486)

Not only does Madsen blur the diegetic lines between the frame and 'main' narrative,′ presenting ontological intermingling between the various worlds of the novel, with interaction between the world of the author and that of the characters in the novel (as in Pirandello's *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore*), but complicates that by providing the possibility of an unresolved hierarchy of worlds, which one would not find in the Italian modernist play. The circular logic of Ato Vari creating a character, Sjat, who creates a real life human, Ato, who writes a text in which he creates a character who … and so on, makes any resolution to the ontological levels structurally impossible to resolve. This is the very problem with ontological uncertainty, following Quine. "What makes ontological questions meaningless when taken absolutely is not universality but circularity. A question of the form 'What is an F?' can be answered only by recourse to a further term: 'An F is a G.' The answer makes only relative sense: sense relative to the uncritical acceptance of 'G.'" (Quine, 53). Without being able to accept any level of the world as primary, the levels remain inevitably blurred and uncertain. Madsen however, also takes this further, implicating his own time into that of the text. This is done through the use of real events and locations, seamlessly blended into the narrative, and intermingled in such a web of intertextuality as to make it seemingly impossible to reconcile for the reader (despite the efforts of Niels Dalgaard to do just that in *Dage med Madsen*).

Similar strategies are invoked in *Gravity's Rainbow*, and the unresolvability of the narrative elements is often cited as one of its postmodern features. Shawn Smith argues that it "owes much of its complexity to its challenging narrative form, which avoids closure and establishes fragmentation as its primary formal device" (Smith 60). This is a deliberate device used by Pynchon, and also by Madsen as we have detailed above, and requires the subversion of our traditional reading and interpretive strategies, forcing the reader into accepting that the novel functions with a postmodern structure of consciousness. As McHale argues, "by confronting us with irreducibly ambiguous, or,

better, multiguous features such as the second-person pronoun, Pynchon compels us to reflect upon our own critical practices, inviting us to become metareaders, readers of our own (and others') readings – and, more to the point, of our own inevitable *mis*readings" (McHale *Constructing* 113). While I disagree with the term 'misreading', which implies an accurate reading available (even if not to us), McHale's fundamental point is that the novel forces us to read differently, and to challenge the assumptions that are standard reading practice. This is specifically done through the blurring of narrative boundaries in Madsen, as also here prominently in *Gravity's Rainbow,* particularly at the end of the novel. Many scholars, taking the final part as the film reel, assert that the entire novel is written as a film. Even if one suggests the line 'the film is broken, or a projector bulb has burnt out' breaks the diegetic frame, the entrance of Gottfried in the rocket complicates the situation immensely. If the you in the final 'frame' is the you of the reader, or even the audience, that still indicates a crossing of narratorial levels for characters (Gottfried) and objects (the Rocket) to enter into the theatre which is also being written of them. This creates the kind of ontological uncertainty that is characteristic of the postmodern structure of consciousness. Yet, I would argue that *Gravity's Rainbow*, similar to Madsen's novel, functions primarily as a quest narrative, with simply a multitude of epistemological narratives to which characters like Pointsman, Slothrop and even Enzian are seeking clear answers. That both the ontological and epistemological aspects of Pynchon's novel are unresolvable defines it as postmodern, rather than an overwhelming focus on ontological issues, which I argue first becomes prominent as the narrative consistency begins to break down, well after the epistemological dominant is asserted.

The problems of the psyche

"Not only can man's being not be understood without madness, it would not be man's being if it did not bear madness within itself as the limit of his freedom." (Lacan 215) This quote from Lacan's

"On a question preliminary to any possible treatment of psychosis" bears out two important notions relating madness and the construction of the individual and consequently society and civilization. First, the notion that it is by defining a limit, an other from which to distinguish oneself, that it is possible to create an identity and truly understand the nature of the individual. Lacan here relates the concept of madness as a means by which to define and understand the concept of sanity itself, and particularly the sanity of an individual. Secondly, it establishes that this identity, this subjectivity created through a distinction between itself and an other, need be necessarily contained within a given identity in order to limit and continually establish itself as a coherent whole. Specifically, Lacan states the concept of madness, perhaps understood as its definition or the understanding of the concept, but also implicitly the very state itself, the capability of madness born within an individual by which to understand ones own sanity and by virtue of this concept be considered a subject, i.e. man.

Lacan's concept, if extended to a society, can be interpreted to create a social definition of sanity and normality, and be a part of the development of a national, ethnic, or group identity.[88] This notion need not imply a means of psychoanalytic consideration, simply the means by which a given group identifies itself through relations to an outside group, defined by the limits of the other. If related to the concept of normality, madness can be viewed as the limit of a given social norm. Foucault, in *Madness and Civilization*, develops the archaeology of the relationship between society and the concept of madness (in the western tradition) which develops the establishment of a social norm through the segregation, public display, and confinement of the mad, insane, and those unable to contribute positively to society. Furthermore, Madsen's position on the future conceptualization

[88] This theoretical consideration is paralleled in the structuralist theorist Lévi-Strauss, as he similarly contemplates the exclusion and inclusion of the Other. "If we studied societies from the outside, it would be tempting to distinguish two contrasting types: those which practise cannibalism - that is, which regard the absorption of certain individuals possessing dangerous powers as the only means of neutralizing those powers and even of turning them to advantage - and those which, like our own society, adopt what might be called the practice of *anthropoemy* (from the Greek *émein*, to vomit); faced with the same problem, the latter type of society has chosen the opposite solution which consists in ejecting dangerous individuals from the social body and keeping them temporarily or permanently in isolation, away from all contact with their fellows, in establishments specially intended for this purpose." (Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes*.388)

of madness, and whether it is possible to read Lacan's statement, as understood above, as a push towards the reintegration of the insane or mad into society to serve as an internal limit and reminder of our own subjective position, questions whether it is in fact possible to continue to identify a distinction between sanity and madness at all.

Madsen, in his novel, presents various cases of madness, and the psychiatric establishment's relationship to individuals considered or treated as mad, as well as those incarcerated in hospitals for the insane. These cases serve to undermine the establishment of the doctor as an objective individual in the treatment of a recognizable disease, and to establish the correlation between madness and criminality, if not in actual behavior, at least in the means of treatment. Foucault claims that, "The madman is not the first and the most important victim of confinement, but the most obscure and the most visible, the most insistent of the symbols of the confining power." (Foucault 225) This is a fitting sentiment for a system, as presented by Madsen, where both the psychiatric facilities and the justice system incarcerate people arbitrarily and the truth has a dubious relationship with reality. This evaluation of madness serves as part of an attack on a larger epistemological issue presented in the text. The idea of knowledge, truth, justice, as well as madness are undermined, and exposed as tools of a social system that is biased towards certain social classes, and dependent on the punishment of those less fortunate, and the undermining of the poor and disenfranchised for its furtherance. It questions the knowledge that is supposed to lead to justice, and the objectivity that should lead to accurate assessment and treatment of the ill. With this system of knowledge and truth undermined, it leads to the questioning of all basis of authority, and the awareness of the arbitrariness of the system presented.

Madsen's four main cases, as presented earlier, may traditionally be understood in terms of psychosis and are presented by Dr. Knud Monikke in defense of a new theory of body-soul relations (in a parody of psychoanalytic style). His theory is presented as follows:

> Den for øjeblikket herskende teori lyder, at legemet er det eneste der er til. Sjælen er navnet på visse egenskaber, reaktioner hos legemet. Denne teori vil jeg i det følgende benøvne den materialistiske.
> Jeg har imidlertid gennem mine undersøgelser fået visse empiriske erfaringer, som skarpt modsiger denne teori. Disse tvinger mig til at formulere og hævde den stik modsætte opfattelse: Det er de mentale processer der er til. Det er dem, og kun dem, der har egentlig existens. Legemet er kun til some en fysisk manifestation, en materiel følgevirkning af de mentale processer. (Madsen, *Tugt* II 250)

> The theory prevalent at the moment says that the body is the only thing in existence. Soul is the name of various characteristics, reactions in the body. This theory I shall call, in what follows, the materialistic theory.
> I have in the mean time, through my research, made certain empirical discoveries, which sharply contradict that theory. These force me to formulate and to hold the diametrically opposed view: It is the mental processes, which exist. It is they, and only they, which have actual existence. The body exists only as a physical manifestation, a material concomitant of the mental processes. (Madsen, *Virtue* 554-5)

The very nature of the presentation, in which Monikke presents his new metaphysical theory based on empirical evidence, can already be presented as critical of the method of psychoanalytic theory, yet it is a theory both not understood by his contemporaries in the novel, nor Madsen's own contemporaneous Danish society. It is, however, presumably the prevalent theory in the future, as represented by Ato Vari (the "author"). Ato Vari, whose extranarrative commentary between books throughout Madsen's novel presents a picture of the future world to the reader, states in one such passage:

> Man opfatter mennesket som en enhed, der ikke kan ændres ved og som ikke kan have noget fælles med et andet individ. Man ser dem som ubodeligt adskilte størrelser. Når et menneske døde betragtedes det som uhjælpeligt mistet. Nogle fantatikere prædikere den opfattelse, og fik en del tilslutning, at det kun var kroppen der var død, mens sjælen levede videre. Skønt det virker så inlysende faldt ingen på den tanke, at det forholdt sig omvendt. Til trods for at man kan se at kroppen er den samme efter døden, mens ånden er blevet tavs, ville folk der påstod dette være blevet betragtet som kættere. (Madsen *Tugt* I 232)

> The human being is held to be a unit which cannot be changed and which cannot have anything in common with another individual. They are viewed as irretrievable separated quantities. When a human being died he was felt to be lost without hope. Some fanatics preached the concept, and found widespread agreement, that it was only the body which had died, while the soul lived on. Even though it appears so obvious, no one came up with the idea that the opposite was true. Despite the fact that one can see the body is the same after

> death while the soul has fallen silent, people who made that claim would have been seen as heretics. (Madsen, *Virtue* 213)

The nature of human understanding in the future seems based on the same empirical analysis as discussed in Dr. Monikke's account of the body-soul theories. As Ato Vari here supports his view of the position of life (in the body rather than in the soul) based upon "obvious" empirical analysis, Dr. Monikke similarly presents isolated case studies, which implicitly would represent, or allow us a window on which to view the normal situation (again similar in process to case studies often presented by psychoanalytic studies, such as Freud.)

Pynchon's constant invocation of Pavlov (a real referent) and Dr. Laszlo Jamf, also places such scientific theories at the fore. The implication of the ties between Slothrop and the chemical Imipolex G, and young Tyrone Slothrop's conditioning at a young age, lends an air of authority to the matter. Yet, those ties are systematically removed. Despite the early assertions of the near one-to-one relationship between Slothrop's sexual exploits and the arrival of the Rockets in the London Air Raids, this is subsequently called into question as we realize that many of those incidents were simply fantasies, including the long and detailed story of Darlene and her mother Mrs. Quoad. So, just as it seemed possible to catalogue the world using Monikke's methods, it also seemed possible to use (Pynchon's version) of Pavlov and the figure of Jamf. Yet both overarching scientific possibilities are equally undermined by the situations with the narrative. Jamf's theories are challenged not only by the Pökler singularity (Pynchon 833), which threatens the final application of his product, but also the assertion that Jamf was fictional all along, as asserted by Mickey Wuxtry-Wuxtry, and that Jamf (and hence the entire scientific sub-plot) was really a psychological projection of Slothrop himself. So, while Madsen undermines the psychology with various aspects of plot, Pynchon uses the psychological to further destabilize the ontology, and suggest that the narrative is even less reliable than we had been led to believe.

The Postmodern Novel – Madsen style

Although I have divided the novel into thematic and philosophical categories, the interlacing of the novel presents the same structure of consciousness (to use William Spanos' term) that corresponds to postmodernism. Each philosophical standpoint, whether epistemological or ontological (as presented in previous chapters) or dealing with ethics, social justice or psychology, represent a scenario whereby fixed and conclusive answers to questions are not only unanswered, but the very questions being raised are undermined and stripped of potential explanative value. There remains no way to determine, for example, inside and outside the narrative when the 'author' of the story is descended, either literally or intellectually, from one of the characters, a character explicitly introduced into the narrative, self-consciously, by the 'author'. The vantage point by which 'truth' is determined is equally undermined. Not only are we not provided with a single narrative which explains the crime committed, as Todorov would suggest, but we are left with the most likely scenario that no such vantage point could possibly exist.

This questioning of grand narratives, of justice, societal norms, and social hierarchy[89] is presented in a manner which reinforces the idea that Madsen's novel, like Pynchon's, has a rhizomatic structure. None of the conventional means by which one can analyze a novel allows for cohesive endings, and the very nature of the narrative itself switches, providing multiple internal narrators who in turn provide competing and unreliable narrations throughout. On both a diegetic and extradiegetic level (if those can be distinguished here), the narrative reinforces structureless structure, both in terms of philosophical questions as well as in terms of literary techniques, in the

[89] The discussion of social hierarchy is further extended in subplots including the quick identification of "rogue" and fringe elements of society as criminal or poor, the assessment of those that are indigent, homeless, or disenfranchised by the social system as lazy and unable to contribute to the social good (however that may in fact be determined) and finally by the concept of madness, both as a temporary or assigned concept (as assigned to above groups by those in a more "normal" social position) or as traditionally defined including admission and treatment by psychiatric professionals and the medical community.

distinct usage of pastiche and intertextuality, in the blending of genres, in the covert use of interstyles and generic intertextuality, all of which reinforce this pattern.

As noted by Hutcheon, "postmodern novels problematize narrative representation, even as they invoke it" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 40), which is certainly true here. Thus, I argue, that due to its structural pattern, *Tugt og utugt i mellemtiden* is an example of a postmodern novel. It is not simply metafictional, although it uses metafictional and surfictional elements, and it is more than simply historiographical metafiction, as it does not have a specifically historical dimension.[90] This discussion is contrasted with readings of a canonical example of a postmodern novel, Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow,* and how that novel addresses the same consideration using different narrative strategies yet by using the same underlying postmodern structure of consciousness.

[90] Gemzøe notes it is a 'contemporary' novel, although presents as an historical novel, yet still not falling well into that category, another of its genre-blurring elements (Gemzøe 544-5).

Coda:

Where do we go from here?:

Postmodernism's Possible Afterlives?

So, what is postmodernism?

Postmodernism, by many estimations[91], is an illusory term, a term that evades fixed definition as one pursues the attempt. This is, in part, because it was defined (always tentatively) as the genre was being initially developed by writers, arguably attempting to show the complete picture from a position *in media res* or worse, *ab ovo*. In addition, many of the early attempts at definition consisted of lists of heterogeneous characteristics exemplifying the particular texts that were held up as examples. Now, in 2015, we are in a position to look back over the past decades and, using that vantage point, draw more consolidated conclusions about the use of literary postmodernism, from which we can discuss the larger cultural phenomenon. A reductive definition, rather than a collection of characteristics, is both needed to properly define the movement and is now in reach.

In summary, I propose that postmodernism represents a different 'structure of consciousness' from modernist and classical periods. Essentially, for writers and readers, the world reflected in literature maps onto a different understanding of reality, which can be represented using a spatial metaphor. As opposed to classical and modernist literature, the postmodernist structure of consciousness can be defined as a rhizomatic structure. Texts that implement this structure throughout, who operate both diegetically and for the reader with a postmodern structure of consciousness, can be considered postmodern. Thus, through the use of the metaphor of the rhizomatic labyrinth, I provide a model by which postmodernism can be more fully understood. I call this metaphor 'the postmodern metaphor,' as I contend that elucidating the characteristics of the rhizomatic labyrinth, and viewing postmodern literature with this in mind, incorporates other definitions or explanations, such as those of Hassan, Lyotard, Baudrillard, Barthes, Waugh and Hutcheon, as well as how techniques like

[91] By scholars on both sides of the debate, such as Richard Rorty and Terry Eagleton.

intertextuality, metafiction, pastiche, playfulness and the mixing of genres, are understood and explicated in a new way with reference to this structural paradigm.

Throughout the dissertation, I have discussed the identification of the postmodern structure of consciousness, focused specifically on the exploration of this structure with regard to metaphysical questions, and defined the use of postmodern structure as that structure which demonstrated uncertainty with regard to those questions. In discussing detective fiction in chapter two, I focused exclusively on epistemological questions, elucidating the differences of classical, modernist and postmodernist structure with regard to questions of knowledge. In the third chapter, on science fiction, a similar project was developed with a focus on ontological issues. The postmodern structure of such fiction was defined with texts that resulted in epistemological or ontological uncertainty, which did not allow for the possibility of finding an 'answer' or absolute truth, but rather, through its very structure, ruled out such certainty as a possibility. In the final chapter, on postmodern novel, the scope was broadened to include other questions – ethical, psychological, political – which were purposefully bracketed earlier, in order to focus on the way the structure worked in a limited, and more easily explained, context. These analyses of Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*, considered a canonical postmodern novel, and Svend Åge Madsen's *Tugt og utugt i mellemtiden* [*Virtue and Vice in the Middle Time*] demonstrate how the texts correspond both with traditional readings of postmodernism but also support the redefinition of postmodernism via the postmodern structure of the rhizome. Furthermore, the characteristics ascribed in the critical literature support the rhizomatic nature of postmodern structure as the underlying metaphor that explains the other characteristics often cited as features of postmodernism. The final chapter, through explicating the similar structure using different literary and narrative techniques, demonstrated that it is the underlying rhizomatic structure

that is common and not simply the techniques used or philosophical vantage points considered.

Through those discussions of the metaphysical structures underlying the novel, I present a reductive definition of postmodernism. This definition relies on the structure of consciousness of both the author and reader, and can be most clearly demonstrated in terms of how certain literary techniques are applied within literature, especially narratological techniques, but also techniques such as the use of irony, metaphor, metafiction, intertextuality, pastiche. By producing open works, to use Eco's terms, authors allow readers to avail themselves of patterns and possibilities that modernist and classical structures eschewed. This reflects postmodern understandings of reality, which mimic and map onto the narrative structures presented in texts by authors like Paul Auster, Thomas Pynchon, and Svend Åge Madsen, to name just a few of the prominent authors in the study. These structures can also be seen in filmic texts, which this project treats using literary readings of film, as we have seen in works by the Wachowski siblings and Christopher Nolan.

Where do we go from here? The Possibility of the Postpostmodern

So, are we at the end of postmodernism, now that we are at the end of this dissertation? The opening presentation of the introduction was a rhetorical paradox, for if postmodernism is representative of an alternative structure, then ascription to that structure is the requisite of postmodernism, and not any specific historical timeframe. Following that logic, the structure of consciousness for which I argue is not a teleological end, but rather a metaphorical representation of the understanding of the world we live in. So, as long as this structure can be seen as mimetic of experience, it remains a valid and fruitful measure by which literature can be understood. That stated, it is possible that authors, and readers, have changed (not

developed per se) their perspective. Can one move on from postmodernism? What would that mean?

On one hand, there are constant thematic and focal point changes in literary history, so while postmodernism as a literary tool does seems to have had a critical heyday in the late twentieth century, its impact cannot be properly understood until some distance has been acquired. Whether a distance of 15-25 years (by some estimations) is sufficient will take an academic consensus, one which arguably has still not been reached even in modernism, given the current resurgence of that field. On the other hand, the very structure of consciousness that I identify as postmodern does not seem to allow for anything beyond or after.

I argue that there are fundamentally three structures of consciousness, which represent different, historically understood, mindsets by which we operate and comprehend the world. These are reflected and represented in literature, as I argue that essentially through both the content and the structure one can come to some tentative understanding of the vantage point of the text itself. As such, literary postmodernism reflects, in a mimetic way, the ways in which its authors and readers understand postmodernity and the postmodern condition, just as modernist writers and readers reflected modernity in their writings. This, however, is tempered by the reader's reaction, as I treat literature as an open process, pushing towards the ideal goal of the writerly text.

These three structures of consciousness, which I term the classical, modernist and postmodernist, can be spatially mapped onto the skein, the maze and the rhizomatic labyrinth, with each of those spatial metaphors containing consequences and patterns which guide fundamental understandings within the text. The classical structure of consciousness takes concepts as given, and answers as absolute. The modernist structure of consciousness is arborescent, and can be exhibited only after such unitary worldviews have been questioned. There remains truth and error, right and wrong, and thus quest and discovery come to the

fore. The postmodernist structure of consciousness has no such hope, nor a nostalgic look towards points ancient or Other. Functioning within the spatial metaphor of the rhizomatic labyrinth, the postmodern structure calls into question the calcification of boundaries and constructions, by demonstrating their lack of foundation, and examining the concept of foundation itself. It is through consensus, through the acceptance of new ideas that change becomes not only possible, but explainable. If boundaries of gender and identity, nation and state, field and discipline are arbitrary, consensus driven notions, then it can become possible to begin a process of destabilizing existing categories and reconstituting boundaries which represent contemporary locally understood constructions. While the postmodern structure of consciousness remains open, it allows for political agency through the construction of an arbitrary, temporary modernist frame with which to operate momentarily, while recognizing this as no more than a Baudrillardian simulacrum, and not an absolute truth or reality.

As stated, Deleuze's rhizome maps a territory in which all concepts are leveled on the same surface, and are thus weighted equally. There is no hierarchy or privileging, in any objective sense, and any such 'arborization' would be done arbitrarily, thus becoming alterable (with limitations only through those of power relations, rather than natural or essential characteristics). In many ways this is the way knowledge is located and organized in the information age, structured in a postmodern pattern. My use of Deleuze's term employs this larger, three-dimensional conception of the rhizome, in carrying over the rhizomatic labyrinth as the metaphor for a postmodern structure of consciousness. One might also consider this four-dimensionally, taking into consideration time which becomes particularly relevant given shifting conceptions over time and, in particular, the challenges of historiographic metafiction and the emerging Neo-Victorian.

Conceptualizing the rhizome in this way seems to render possibilities of moving beyond or outside of postmodernism as someone misunderstanding the point. Fields that are

seemingly disregarded in current postmodern paradigms are not beyond, after, or outside, but simply employ or interrogate aspects not yet considered. In a rhizomatic pattern, I argue, it is not that all points are connected with all other points, but that there is the potential for such connections. Those new avenues of academic inquiry are found in those interstices yet unidentified, and do not challenge the structural paradigm I describe.

Pro-Post-Postmodernism – Or how one argues for postmodernism's afterlife

Contemporary movements, like the post-ironic, postpostmodernism, New Sincerity, and Neo-Victorianism, suggest potential avenues of this 'post'postmodern (chronologically speaking) era. Philosophical movements such as New Materialism could also be considered in this rubric. While there are many movements that could be seen as successors to postmodernism, there is no current academic consensus about these. As such it seems relevant to discuss those current and emerging approaches as potential successors of postmodern theory and how those function in light of my proposed definition. I will commence by specifically discussing the academic considerations of the works of David Foster Wallace, which are relevant to both discussions of New Sincerity and the post-ironic, and then I will move on to discuss the emerging field of the Neo-Victorian. Similar arguments to those I put forth could be made with regard to New Materialism and other postpostmodern movements, some of which I put forward elsewhere. I will further propose three logically possible positions that can be, "not innocently" (Eco, *Postscript* 67), posited as reactions to postmodernist literature.

I commence by considering the movement called New Sincerity. This view, expressed in the work of David Foster Wallace, and picked up by scholars like Adam Kelly, attempts to find a movement which reacts to what it terms the early postmodernists of John Barth and Thomas Pynchon. Wallace's key critical text, 'E unibus pluram' also makes an argument against current forms of literature and tries to postulate how literature will persist in the ever

more dominant world of television. Part forward thinking, and part nostalgic for an age of the novel's cultural dominance (which corresponds to his own artistic mode), Wallace questions the efficacy of what he views the main mode of postmodern literature – the ironic stance. While accepting of a view that suggests a positive critical stance of irony and postmodernism (aligned in his view), he then suggests that this position isn't constructive, only deconstructive. "This is because irony, entertaining as it is, serves an exclusively negative function. It's critical and destructive, a ground-clearing. Surely this is the way our postmodern fathers saw it. But irony's singularly unuseful when it comes to constructing anything to replace the hypocrisies it debunks" (Wallace 183).

Wallace presents several stances as possible outs to this situation. One position, as A.O. Scott refers to it, is to return to the literature from before, a version of neo-modernism, as advocated in texts like Jedidiah Purdy's *For Common Things*, and which calls for a return to common sense. This is not Wallace's position, however. As A.O. Scott claims in his article 'The Panic of Influence': "If one way to escape from the blind alley of postmodern self-consciousness is simply to turn around and walk in another direction—which is in effect what Purdy advises, and what a great many very interesting writers, without making a big deal about it, simply do—Wallace prefers to forge ahead in hopes of breaking through to the other side, whatever that may be" (Scott 7).

Wallace is seemingly looking for a position beyond postmodernism, by which he can create new, authentic, art. One such out, for Wallace, is to follow the example of Mark Leyner, and revel in the ironic. "We can solve the problem by celebrating it. Transcend feelings of mass-defined angst by genuflecting to them. We can be *reverently ironic*" (Wallace 190, original emphasis). The problem is that this rings hollow for Wallace. A clever novel, like Leyner's, that is all surface and seems to have nothing to say represents his exact critique in his imposed dichotomy of literature versus television. The split seems to rest on

Wallace's common sense understanding of high versus low art, with literature's purpose belonging to the former. Literature made to resemble the format and essence of television – as an aesthetic choice – is unpalatable for Wallace, even if he presents it as a possibility.

Another proposed possibility is the diversity of providing the reader with choice, not just the limited choices of television channels, but the ability to manipulate content freely. Wallace cites the theories of George Gilder, who postulated a television which would give one such access, more akin to a combination of modern day internet, personal computing, and social media technologies. We are, in fact, close to achieving Gilder's vision, which for Wallace was simply a future possibility, a negative version of the ubiquity shown by Lerner in his novel. Wallace, however, also criticizes this choice. For Wallace, the ever expanding level of choice is detrimental, as long as it is not paired with some filter, some reason to choose one thing rather than another. "Jacking the number of choices and options up with better tech will remedy exactly nothing, so long as no sources of insight on comparative worth, no guides to *why* and *how* to choose among experiences, fantasies, beliefs, and predilections, are permitted serious consideration in U.S. culture" (Wallace 189, original emphasis). Thus, while Gilder, and even Lerner's novel, present the free expansion which resembles the structure of consciousness I argue is postmodern, Wallace remains nostalgic for the filter of the elite, the authority which guides and informs one's way through the vastness of opinions and ideas, of how to distinguish what is meant behind what is presumably an ironic stance.

Finally, what Wallace seems to present as the alternative to the pervasive stance, is a return to sincerity, a writing of what you mean. Wallace's agenda, which is picked up by scholars like Lise Mortensen, Adam Kelly, Stephen Burn and Tore Rye Andersen, is to discuss how to write a literature that has a sense of grounding in reality, or common sense,

despite a lack of elucidation of either of those concepts. In ‘E Unibus Pluram’ he discusses the next generation of writers, stating:

> The next real literary ‘rebels’ in this country might well emerge as some weird bunch of *anti*-rebels, born oglers who dare somehow to back away from ironic watching, who have the childish gall actually to endorse and instantiate single-entendre principles. Who treat of plain old untrendy human troubles and emotions in U.S. life with reverence and conviction. Who eschew self-consciousness and hip fatigue … The new rebels might be artists willing to risk the yawn, the rolled eyes, the cool smile, the nudged ribs, the parody of gifted ironists, the ‘Oh how *banal*” (Wallace 193, original emphasis).

Wallace’s ‘single entendre principles’ are meant to be a return to a clear one to one relationship between the intention and the reception, but not in a retreat but a reassertive method, well aware of the eye-rolling that will come from such an outlined stance by those purveyors of postmodernism. Wallace’s stance is specifically criticized in John Barth’s later work, for examples, as Barth reinscribes Wallace’s sincerity into a postmodern novel. “Alternatively, did my maybe-imitation penchant for imitation lead me down the path of a certain Hollywood waitress-friend who assured me, one smoggy night on the beach in Malibu, that ‘in acting, the crucial thing is Sincerity. Once you’ve learned to fake *that*, you’ve got it made’? (Barth, *Coming Soon!*, 21, original emphasis).

Danish scholar Tore Rye Andersen picks up on this position and labels it the post-ironic, identifying this as the postpostmodern position.[92] He argues ‘det postironiske er ikke – som vist i læsningen af *Infinite Jest* – et rent brud mod postmodernismen, men repræsenterer snarere en revideret videreførelse, der på en gang er et brud og en forlængelse. Det postironiske forholder sig derved i det store og hele til postmodernismen, som postmodernismen forholder sig til modernismen” (Andersen 21) [The postironic is not – as shown in reading *Infinite Jest* – a pure break with postmodernism, but more closely represents a revised continuation, which is at once a break and a continuation. Therefore the

[92] For clarity, Andersen identifies and labels the term postironic as a philosophical position pushed by Wallace and a few others. He does recognize, as he discusses later in the same article, that such a position is not against postmodernism per se, but against a version of that assimilated by television and the mainstream that Wallace discusses in ‘E Unibus Pluram’ (Andersen 22).

postironic relates to postmodernism, for the most part, in the same way postmodernism relates to modernism] (translation mine). This position perpetuates one line of postmodernism, which suggests that postmodernism both shares affinities with previous literary movements, even while reacting to them, as a defining characteristic. While it is true, in bricolage fashion, that all literary movements both continue and break with their predecessors, highlighting the double bind does less to define the novelty of the post-position. What the postironic seems to highlight is a reversal of the use of irony in the succeeding period to postmodernism, rather than irony serving as a foundation of a critique, it stops the discussion. The postironic positions itself as an articulation of the New Sincerity position, which is actually anti-ironic in the sense that irony is to be eschewed. This is meant to be done openly.

The question becomes how does one find, or identify, the sincere in postironic literature. Wallace seems to argue that author intention is critical, using the concept of single entendre principles to suggest the reader's affinities with the author's ideas. At the same time, Wallace is aware of the text being read ironically, by reference to the eye-rolling that would accompany someone attempting to write in a 'banal' fashion. Which reading is sincere? This returns us to the problem of postmodern irony in the first place, as given a postmodern structure of consciousness, we have no way of determining the 'correct' reading of a text. A postmodern context removes the underlying assumptions of common ground on which irony is based, and without common understandings, the case for irony is moot. What would a 'correct' reading be? Would it be a 'straightforward' reading – the non-ironic? Would it be the ironic reading, which Wallace is also aware of (and thus also seems to intend, even to eschew)? On which ground, given the postmodern structure of consciousness, would one make that determination? Furthermore, even if one were to search for sincerity in literature, in contrast to irony, this implies a level of homogeneity of responses. If irony is based, as

Booth argues, on some people 'missing the point' (or you cannot have the double reading of the 'meant but not said' behind the 'said but not meant' position), then sincerity, especially once irony has been understood as not just a possibility but a common trope, also has the tinge of the same double bind. A 'sincere' or banal utterance would also be taken, by some, ironically, which would be 'missing the point' and only the identities of those 'out of the loop' would be reversed.

What Wallace wants to assert is fixity within a postmodern structure of consciousness. I argue that such an inscription is possible, but represents an assertion of a modernist frame within a postmodern field, a determination. He can, like Mark Twain did famously in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, tell the reader how to read and interpret the text, but the risk becomes that the reader will simply not oblige. Thus Wallace, in his call for sincerity, is hoping for the return of a simpler interpretative strategy, and the convenience of common understandings of literature and even its role in society. This position cannot be asserted without accounting for the postmodern, as even Wallace agrees, and from the position of the postmodern structure of consciousness, it does not seem possible to identify a clear position of sincerity, other than asserting one without specific epistemological basis. The common sense or banal cannot be interrogated to provide the grounding Wallace is nostalgically looking for.

Neo-Victorianism

Each of the scenarios for 'after Postmodernism' seems to have two trends. One trend is a neo-modernist trend, which seeks out a nostalgic return to a modernist idealized past, a reconnection with the perceived real, often viewed through common sense. This is a prominent trend at the outset of the next movement discussed, that of the Neo-Victorian. This movement, consolidated as a distinct academic field with the foundation of the *Journal of*

Neo-Victorian Studies in 2008, studies texts which were written in this millennium but which deal with, discuss, and are primarily set in the Victorian period.[93] Since the publication of A.S. Byatt's Booker award winning *Possession*, in 1990, there has been increased interest, both by writers and scholars, in this period, and a proliferation of texts which fit into the category. In seeking a definition of the movement, various scholars have tried to define its relationship with the past, as well as its conceptual frame.

One prominent early scholar of the movement, Christian Gutelben, proposed the following: "Apparently unable to propose a new model for the present, today's novel is turning back towards canonical tradition. Postmodernism returns to a period *before* modernism as if it were not able to progress and had to turn around and step back: this is the fundamental aporia of nostalgic postmodernism" (Gutelben 10, original emphasis). Taking this stand, in which Gutelben tries to come to terms with the turn towards texts set in the Nineteenth Century, yet were written from, or with full knowledge of, the postmodern condition. In his text, *Nostalgic Postmodernism*, he takes the position that literature is in some ways teleological, and thus we can 'return' along the path we have travelled to a previous age, for which we are nostalgic. That includes the reconnection with the historical truth afforded in the area 'before' postmodernism.

Similarly, in Dana Schiller's concept of the Neo-Victorian, she frames the recuperation of the Victorian period in a similar inside and outside frame.

> Neo-Victorian fiction addresses many of Jameson's concerns by presenting a historicity that is indeed concerned with recuperating the substance of bygone eras, and not merely their styles. These historical novels take a revisionist approach to the past, borrowing from postmodern historiography to explore how present circumstances shape historical narrative, and yet they are also indebted to earlier cultural attitudes towards history. … [Peter] Ackroyd also manages to create a postmodern novel that plays on (and with) our certainties about history while

[93] The exact definition, and time period, is still in flux. As Lea Madsen argues, 'a neo-Victorian novel can indeed have a non-Victorian timeframe and that a new label, for this novel, is unnecessary' (Heiberg Madsen, 'Revision' 74) as she specifically considers Sarah Waters *The Little Stranger*, but makes a claim which renders the neo-Victorian novel thematic rather than chronological in scope.

> simultaneously delighting in what *can* be retrieved from the past (Schiller 539-540, original emphasis).

In this argument, she wants to provide a type of synthesis between the postmodern aspects she sees descended from Jameson, and the tangible 'known' past. This position argues, in essence, that there is a framework outside of postmodernism, a real that can be reached or accessed, and truths (specifically historical truths) that can be known. It is a mesh of two structures of consciousness, in my reading, with her reading of postmodernism inscribed into a modernist structural framework.

What I would argue, however, is that the limits that she sees placed upon the frame, and the need to reach 'beyond' to get to something more real, demonstrates that the boundaries of her framework simply need to be altered. The 'knowledge' that she seeks remains tentative, but the new perspectives should just become incorporated into a now larger, altered, arbitrary framework that produces enhanced understanding of the underlying conditions. While we remain within a postmodernist frame, those boundaries that we create and by which we define our localized knowledge, once reified, need to be called into question and reassessed with each new set of information or changed approach, like that of the Neo-Victorian. This approach can be contrasted with more contemporary definitions of the Neo-Victorian, which render the tensions that Marie-Louise Kohlke identifies in her introductory article in the *Journal of Neo-Victorian Studies* differently. She declares that "We need to question the assumptions we bring to the neoVictorian – as postmodern, as nostalgic, as traumatic, as commemorative, as cathartic, as liberatory, and so forth – and the implicit pedagogic protocols and strategic aims we employ/deploy neo-Victorianism for" (Kohlke 14). Both Gutleman's (*Nostalgic Postmodernism*) and Schiller's ('The Redemptive Past in the Neo-Victorian Novel') understandings, both early in Neo-Victorian thinking, show how postmodern is a term that is still invoked, but not in following with my structure of consciousness framework. Using my framework, those approaches can be split off as either

modernist or neo-modernist – depending on whether they are rejecting the notion out right, or looking back to a modernist frame, which seems to be the case here.

Representing the other trend, Anne Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn, in their introduction to *Neo-Victorianism: The Victorians in the Twenty-First Century, 1999-2009*, argue clearly that neo-Victorian literature is not just a nostalgic return to a fixed historical timeframe. They rather argue that 'the 'neo-Victorian' is *more than* historical fiction set in the nineteenth century. To be part of the neo-Victorianism [Heilmann and Llewellan] discuss in this book, texts (literary, filmic, audio/visual) must in some respect be *self-consciously engaged with the act of (re)interpretation, (re)discovery and (re)vision concerning the Victorians*" (Heilmann 4, original emphasis). Thus, what is required is the double bind of a historical period, whose interpretation is up for debate, coupled with an ever-changing present, the interstice of which is the space in which the neo-Victorian novel is created and interpreted. This allows the interpretation to be the malleable form that I argue remains possible within a postmodern context, rather than harkening back to a supposedly fixed past era, as early neo-Victorian scholars seemed to argue for. This is also the approach of Lea Heiberg Madsen as she defines the Neo-Victorian. She claims that, "The neo-Victorian text, thus, goes beyond its historical setting and plots. It deconstructs and subverts the Victorian novel, explores and re-works the nineteenth century's preoccupations with, for example, race, gender and sexuality while, simultaneously, working as an approach to our own age's anxieties" (Heiberg Madsen, 'Lesbian' 106). As Lea Madsen presents it, the neo-Victorian has a postmodern conception of the ever-changing relationship between the present and what is known of our Victorian past which can allow a constant reconception of both time periods, as well as their interaction, allowing excavation of concepts as our motivations and interests change through time. This framework represents a reworking of the assumed or supposed

boundaries, but with recognition of the postmodern nature of reality which allows one to see those boundaries, non-ironically, as open to change.

The 'Outs' of Postmodernism

Theoretically, using the premise of the postmodern structure of consciousness, there are a limited set of reactions that can be contemplated to the revelation, or understanding, of the underlying structural consequences. We can draw on literary and media examples to underscore these dilemmas. The recognition of the postmodern condition, as we have seen historically, and throughout the dissertation, is not always acceptable, and requires a reconception not only of one's role in the world, but of one's understanding of its metaphysics, its existences, and one's own subjectivity. Essentially, I argue, there are three possible reactions when faced with the postmodern condition, which I term Denial, Dissolution and Determination. Each of these three 'solutions' to postmodernism can be found in the cases presented in the course of the dissertation.

The first reaction, denial, is best represented by Oedipa Maas in *The Crying of Lot 49*. As noted, Oedipa finds both the classical and modernist structures lacking, in attempting to come to an understanding of Trystero. Her reaction, when faced with such uncertainty, with an abundance of supposed clues and no way to reconcile them into a consistent narrative, is to simply deny that she was faced with a new reality. She steadfastly refuses to believe the facts presented, and holds out hope (seemingly false hope) of a future change, a next piece of evidence that will change the picture. This is tantamount to rejecting an objectively scientific presentation for an article of faith. Once the grounding of the theory is removed, it is simply a matter of faith that there is an underlying cause, or abstract notion of (unsubstantiated) truth backing up one's theory. Oedipa's solution is a denial, an intractable modernist stance despite 'knowledge' that the enterprise is doomed to failure. Oedipa, of course, doesn't 'know' that

there is not a correct solution. Basically there is no position from which to tell if there is a solution, and any postulation of such a position (the position of God in many philosophies of religion, for example) has no substantiation. What is 'known' is that the answer cannot be known.

There are parallels to this solution in other genres as well. Several characters in *Battlestar Galactica*, such as Samuel Anders and Saul Tigh, express such initial denial of their newly revealed identities as members of the Final Five revealed humanoid cylons. That reaction parallels the Kübler-Ross model for grief, which is used in contemporary society for life losses on a larger scale than grief. Denial is often seen as the first step in a process – through anger, bargaining and depression – that leads to ultimate acceptance, reinscribing the new narrative of subjectivity in confrontation with a changed reality. Stephen Joyce argues that Gaius Balter's character is problematized by his lack of ability to understand his personal narrative.

> Either way he would have a narrative that defined his identity but in the postmodern apocalyptic scenario it is the not knowing that destabilizes Baltar's sense of self. Whereas classical apocalypticism defines exactly who we are and what roles we must play, in the postmodern apocalypse the absence of meaning destabilizes not only narratives of history but the identity of its agents, leaving us only the twin demons of doubt and dread (Joyce 8).

Baltar, like Anders and Tigh, initially denies his own role (for nearly four seasons) before finally coming to acceptance at the end of the series.

The other parallel scenario is presented in the film *The Matrix*. Newly freed individuals, as we are shown in the encounter between Morpheus and Neo, are given a choice to accept their status in the artificial construct we know as the Matrix, or to accept the knowledge of the new reality. "This is your last chance. After this, there is no turning back. You take the blue pill—the story ends, you wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill—you stay in Wonderland, and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes. Remember: all I'm offering is the truth. Nothing more" (Wachowski).

The story presents a choice, and one of the choices available is denial, choosing the illusion known over the uncertainty of the reality offered by Morpheus (though we come to understand throughout the trilogy, that the certainties that Morpheus presents here are not certain at all).

The critical corollary to this position is to reject postmodernism because of the undesirability of a full exploration of its tenets. This is what, arguably, bell hooks is calling for in her article 'Postmodern Blackness.' "Any critic exploring the radical potential of postmodernism as it relates to racial difference and racial domination would need to consider the implications of a critique of identity for oppressed groups" (hooks 627). Her argument implies that the political implications of the theory need to be considered before (or at least simultaneous with) an exploration of the theory itself. Essentially, this position argues that postmodernism must be denied if the consequences of entertaining the theory would be unpalatable. Thus, it is rejected not on its own merits, but on its inability to be inscribed within an existing discourse. Taken to an extreme, this attitude could hinder the very exploration of potentially radical theories, like postmodernism, if they do not first conform to a given political agenda, as Patricia Waugh discusses in "Postmodernism and Feminism."

The second conceivable reaction is that of dissolution. In this scenario, characters are faced with a challenge to their worldview, especially by a postmodern structure of consciousness which represents a large break from the continuity between the classical and modernist paradigms in terms of potential certainty and clarity of purpose. When confronted of the lack of such teleological possibilities, of narrative closure and absolute truth, some characters simply cannot cope, and turn to self-destruction or dissolution. This is the case of solipsism, retreating into one's own self in a self-destructive way, as Quinn does in Auster's text, and Ludvig Alster does at the end of *Tugt og utugt i mellemtiden.* This solution is often posed by those critical of postmodernism as the only possible outcome if one accepts the

tenents of postmodernism, and it becomes the reason to reject its findings (without confronting them). In this proposed nightmare scenario the stability of a grand narrative is required, regardless of its grounding. The uncertainty of not having absolutes, supported by some foundation of truth, is terrifying, so many cannot accept this as a possibility.

In *City of Glass*, this is posed as a slow descent into seeming madness, reflecting to a degree the descent in *King Lear*. After using all of the available tools he has to discover order, or even create order out of the seemingly random wanderings of a character that may or may not be the person he is meant to follow, Quinn eventually disappears, seemingly into the text itself, the character not making to the end of the narrative. This can be paired with characters from science fiction, whose dissolution is presented as an attempt to restore order, but in a larger scope only serves to emphasize the seeming purposelessness of any human action. Neo, at the end of the trilogy in *Matrix Revolutions*, is returned to the computer collective as a solution to the break in the pattern. This is despite the scene laid out by the Architect identifyin the numerous iterations of the resolution of the rise of a 'Neo' within the framework of the narrative, thus it could be interpreted that confronted with the seeming meaninglessness of his break, Neo's solution amounts to dissolution in a return to the world of the computer.[94]

Neither denial nor dissolution can be seen as a positive development of postmodernism. Denial is similar to the return to the modernist frame discussed above in relation to New Sincerity and some versions of Neo-Victorian thought. Even when framed as having gone 'through' postmodernism, such positions presuppose an exterior upon which the neo-modernist stance can be grounded, thus denying basic tenets of postmodernism. However, the final possibility, determination, is what I see as the most positive and productive outcome of the postmodern stance, so rather than decry the position (as Gerald

[94] This reading would presuppose that the celebrations of those in Zion, at the end of the film, are an already accounted for possibility within the larger Matrix frame.

Graff and others did, as mentioned in the introduction), I view postmodernism as a liberating understanding of reality, which allows for change and is arguably the most democratic position.

This is the position of Leonard Shelby in *Memento*, who when faced with the postmodern condition, chooses to act, rather than wait. In this film, as discussed in a previous chapter, Shelby has a form of temporary amnesia by which he cannot create new memories. The film's narrative, and unique chronological style, forces a constant reevaluation and skepticism of any facts within the narrative, leaving nothing 'true' remaining in the film at the end, for either the protagonist or the viewer. Shelby, at this point, creates his own new reality, forcing a new epistemological certainty onto the situation, knowing full well (although also knowing he will soon forget) that it has no justification but creating this reality regardless. This, I argue is the most positive possible outcome (although hopefully done with much more thought and less violence than Leonard's choice) from the lessons of postmodernism. Recognizing the need for answers, but with structurally no answers possible, determination is the only possible productive path. Thus, when confronted with the infinite possibilities of a rhizomatic labyrinth, one could also choose, consciously, a particular frame in which to understand reality. By viewing this as a free choice, rather than an imposed grande narrative, with its implications of fixity and authority (or sincerity), such a position recognizes those boundaries created as mutable and tentative.

This position is also shown in some of the science fiction examples, again including *Battlestar Galactica* with determinations made as to what constitutes Earth, and even by individual crew members to determine, despite ontological uncertainty, their own identity and loyalties – Boomer/Athena in particular. This is the flip side of the choice originally offered in *The Matrix*, the choice of the 'new reality', but with the recognition that that reality is not fixed but ever changeable, placing the individual closer to the side of Neo than that of pre-pill

Andersen. The difference would be that the larger social and structural changes involve many people, and thus any individual choices would be tempered by the collective mindset. This reading of the postmodern condition explains the possibility of change over time, but leaves no promise of a quick fix to social ills, which would still take hard work and the changing of many minds to make a larger collective difference in understanding. What this framework allows for is an explanation of how change is possible, specifically change that does not require rejection of a previous paradigm as an error, and furthermore the removing of inhibitions as to the implementation of such possibilities. One could theoretically call this tack neo-modernism, to return it to Lyotard's framework in the *Postmodern Condition*, but it would have to be a modernism that is conscious of its lack of foundation.

So, I argue, that given the postmodern structure of consciousness, the only viable 'out' is one in which, not ironically, a temporary framework is constructed. This allows both for the security of a framework, but for the possibility of change necessary due to the 'made from within' nature of any understanding. It also allows for meaning to be self-determined, and also understood collectively, which includes not only the realm of metaphysics, but ethics and aesthetics as well. It follows the understanding of Umberto Eco, in which he makes his case for moving beyond irony.

> The postmodern reply to the modern consists of recognizing that the past … but with irony, not innocently. I think of the postmodern attitude as that of a man who loves a very cultivated woman and knows he cannot say to her, 'I love you madly,' because he knows that she knows (and that she knows that he knows) that these words have already been written by Barbara Cartland. Still, there is a solution. He can say, 'As Barbara Cartland would put it, I love you madly.' At this point, having avoided false innocence, having said clearly that it is no longer possible to speak innocently, he will nevertheless have said what he wanted to say to the woman: that he loves her, but he loves her in an age of lost innocence. If the woman goes along with this, she will have received a declaration of love all the same. Neither of the two speakers will feel innocent, both will have accepted the challenge of the past, of the already said, which cannot be eliminated; both will consciously and with pleasure play the game of irony … But both will have succeeded, once again, in speaking of love. (Eco, *Postscript* 67-8)

This is essentially the game that needs to be played, once one is operating with a postmodern structure of consciousness. Fully aware of the limitless nature of reality, we need to, collectively, agree on boundaries under which life can operate, and a sense of normality can develop, but always remain aware that such a construction is artificial. It is the recognition of the arbitrary nature of the boundaries, which authors whom Wallace called the 'early postmodernists' spent much time exposing, which allows for the positive nature of living within the postmodern condition. And it is through the structural nature of this understanding that I see this as reflective of a postmodern understanding of society, allowing for the change sought after within society as currently constructed, and this project as identifying the structural means by which such change can come about.

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