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The Authorship Question and the Rise of Postmodernist Fiction: From Madness to Agency

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Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English Studies

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The Authorship Question and the Rise of Postmodernist Fiction: From Madness to Agency

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Questions of authorship in fiction and theory merit special research treatment because, as Andrew Bennett argues, "[l]iterary theory . . . is largely a question of author theory" (Bennett *The Author* 4). Not only does this study disclose and examine different functions and concepts of authorship in fiction and theory from the 1950s and 1960s to the present, but it also reveals, at least implicitly, a trajectory of some of the modes and functions of the novel as a genre in the last few decades. My contention is that the explicit terms of much of the theoretical and philosophical debate surrounding the concept of authorship in the moment of High Theory in the 1980s, had already been engaged, albeit often more implicitly, in literary fictions, by writers themselves, including Jorge Luis Borges, Samuel Beckett, John Fowles, Vladimir Nabokov, Muriel Spark, Doris Lessing, and Sylvia Plath. This thesis examines the fortunes of the authorship debate and the conceptualisations and functions of authorship both before, during, and after the Death of the Author came to prominence as one of the key foci for the moment of High Theory in the 1980s. The thesis examines how, rather than postmodern fiction being driven by the theoretical turn, such debate has been intrinsic to fiction and in particular to the fiction of the post-war years. Writers such as Borges, Beckett and Fowles began to problematise the concept of authorship; later novelists such as Rushdie, Coetzee, Mantel, in turn fought back against the killing-off of the author by critics and theoreticians, finding their own agency and a reconceptualisation of authorship in the age of the supposed demise of the author.

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Chapter 1: The Rise and Pathology of the Death of the Author as a Critical Debate

Introduction

> When we consider that the war on totalities must be a war waged on the transcendental/impersonal subject through whose putative construction totalities emerge, it becomes clear that the great crises of postmodernism are crises of authorship even if they still disdain to announce themselves as such. (Burke *Authorship: From Plato to the Postmodern* xxix)

The 1960s, or more specifically 1967, could be regarded as the moment of the rise of the phrase "death of the author" which, as a critical concept, was associated predominantly with three key players – Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida and Michael Foucault. These three key figures of the French intellectual scene challenged the foundation, as they saw it, on which modern intellectual Western history, at least since Descartes, had been built, including its assumptions concerning the subjective origins of the work of art in the mind of the artist or author. This Copernican revolution or the upsurge of "literary theory" as opposed to "literary criticism," to use Patricia Waugh's terminology in an introduction to *Literary Theory and Criticism: An Oxford Guide* (2006), coincided with the moment which David Lodge has argued also saw the emergence of critics as creators, in his mapping of the historical relation between criticism and literature in "Literary Criticism and Literary Creation" (2002). In this essay, Lodge relates the historical moment of the emergence of the concept of the death of the author, in criticism, as coinciding with a moment where literary critics no longer see themselves as handmaids or explicators of the text, but instead had come to regard their relation to the text as one of a creative rewriting, a move that in effect meant positioning

themselves as rivals of creative writers. It is the kind of writing that Vladimir Nabokov, for instance, is satirising in *Pale Fire* (1962), where the critic takes over, quite literally, in a bid to kill the author as literary creator or poet. In contextualising the preoccupation in fiction of this period with questions around and challenges to the concept of authorship and creativity, understanding the historical trajectory and pressure of this critical moment in the rise of theory is of cardinal significance in recognising the specific conceptual frameworks of authorship provided by critics and theorists such as Barthes, Foucault and Derrida. Even before the critical debate emerged explicitly with questions of authorship at its centre, fictional writers had already begun to foreground a sense of threat to formerly secure conceptualisations grounded in liberal and Romantic concepts of subjectivity. This "revolution" in critical thinking engaged not only fundamental philosophical assumptions, but also equally crucial political questions around gender, ownership and identities that pointed towards what would become "postmodernism."[1]

The so-called "theory revolution" that began to take shape in the 1960s with the writing of Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida and Michael Foucault questioned the foundation upon which the specifically Anglo-American literary and critical tradition rested, including the assumption that literature is an "objective medium" through which truth – the reflection of either an internal or an external real – is delivered. The ensuing decade saw an increasingly divisive terrain marked on the one hand by the claims of traditional criticism mostly concerned with either the understanding and knowledge of a text through the intrinsic mode of textual explication as practised by the New Critics as "objective formalists" or by historicist scholars wedded to a positivist relation to the text as knowable through historical

---

[1] "The history of literary criticism from the earliest times may in fact be said to be organized around conceptions of authorship: as the theorist of authorship Séan Burke comments, 'there is no theory of literature or the text which does not imply a certain stance' towards the author (Burke 1995: ix). Debates over authorship have been particularly intense in criticism and theory during the last two centuries, and especially over the last fifty years. Literary theory, we might say, is largely a question of author theory" (Bennett *The Author* 4).

reconstruction, and on the other hand by the newer sceptical forces deriving mostly from the French intellectual scene that asserted a new hermeneutics of suspicion, questioning the very possibility of arriving at any degree of stable knowledge. To be more precise, 1967 marked the moment of this radical change that might be grasped by two opposed but equally significant texts that seemed to exemplify this widening abyss. Jacques Derrida's famous essay "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences" challenged long-held, supposedly solid beliefs upon which were grounded assumptions about the nature and modes of access to knowledge. His argument made clear that, for him, determinacy of meaning is an illusion due to the perpetual deferral of meaning intrinsic to the linguistic system and therefore any degree of stability or fixity of knowledge is always at best an illusion. His famous dictum is that there is nothing outside the text "*Il n'ya pas de hors texte*" (158) in *Of Grammatology* (1967), by which is meant, because language as a system is self-referring and always therefore focused on itself before anything outside of itself, there can be no way of directly knowing the world outside it. Implicit in this is a declaration of the end of any kind of intentionalism which seeks to validate the possibility of the primacy of a known object in the world or that of a knowing vehicle (the subjective contents of mind). Derrida provided not only a critique of intentionality, but also the very existence of the intending subject as an autonomous, self-knowing and consciously self-sufficient being. In contrast, E. D. Hirsch defended intentionalism and a version of determinacy in *Validity in Interpretation*, published the same year. Hirsch's main argument is that although we are unable to see into the mind of the author, we can reconstruct an intentionality by repositioning the works in their original context, reading all of the author's writing in this context and reconstructing a prior intention. But this supposed "meaning," as Hirsch calls it, is always itself a reconstruction from a reader's present position and therefore simply another fiction and what he calls "significance," in other words, what something means for us (8).

The significance of this theory revolution and its impact on later humanistic understandings of the literary work becomes fully apparent if we compare the two dominant views of literary interpretation before and after the 60s. One of the most significant distinguishing characteristics of literary criticism before the emergence of theory in the late 1960s is the dominance of the idea of literature as an autonomous aesthetic artefact: it is a position most obviously manifest in Russian Formalism and the New Criticism. In the early twentieth century positivist movement that became known as the Unity of Science, an epistemological hierarchy was assumed according to which the sciences constitute a unified whole but set up as a hierarchy of knowledge from physics on the top through to less scientific disciplines such as sociology and history (Norris 451-52). The key identifier of scientific and therefore epistemological status was assumed to be compatibility of the methods and laws of a discipline with the fundamentals of the physical sciences. Literary criticism and hermeneutics, together with aesthetics and ethics, were thus relegated from the scale as "less scientific" and were therefore disallowed disciplinary status.[2] Although the responses to the criteria were not unanimous, founding a science of literature became a dominant concern amongst literary critics such as I. A. Richards, Russian Formalists such as Boris Eichenbaum as well as in the New Critical conception of the autonomy of the poem and the methodologies of its practical criticism. Despite evident difference, the aim of these early formalists was to define a disciplinary basis for art and literature – together with their aesthetic qualities – conferring on literary practice its own disciplinary rigour so that it might achieve disciplinary status whilst resisting dissolution into the practices of science itself.

I. A. Richards' practical criticism set up a "method" for criticism to counter the scientific claim to knowledge as exclusive, but the idea of the autonomy of the text – an idea derived from French symbolism – was driven by the fear of mass culture destroying the

[2] The grounds to disregard literary criticism as a discipline by Unity of Science was that it lacks scientific or methodological rigour and that concepts such "as meaning, intention, or value" are "unverifiable" (Norris 452).

domain of high art; as Richards' 1924 text argued, disciplinary method might reclaim and safeguard the territory here too.[3] The aim of Richards and New Critics such as Cleanth Brooks was to develop a methodology for and an account of literary criticism that enabled the retention of literariness whilst the practice could take on some of the rigour associated with science as the privileged mode of knowledge.[4] This moment of disciplinary hygiene, of the attempt to formulate the principles and foundations of disciplines, was also a moment of fundamentalisms: scientific reductionism has its roots in the rise of Logical Positivism in philosophy from which the Unity of Science movement developed. This developed out of the work of the Vienna Circle led by the German philosopher, also a physicist, Moritz Schlick, who was also the author of the bible of the Circle, *The Logical Structure of the World* (1928), with its emphasis upon empiricism, observation and logical deduction. The New Critics attempted to reconcile the scientific challenge of positivism with their commitment to the singularity of the literary by adapting the scientific method of searching for observable evidence within the text, rather than by relying upon external references like a subject's intentions. They believed only this kind of approach might safeguard the text as an autonomous creation and preserve the literary artefact from subsumption into the reductionist machine of a pervasive scientism. As Brooks' major argument in *The Well Wrought Urn*

[3] Richards' books established a literary methodology based on experimental pedagogy; he would give his students poems whose title and authorial information had been removed so that they could only focus on the close reading of the texts. He articulated his theoretical principles that, more than a pastime and entertainment, literature has a serious value, a significant observation, which to him, had been "left almost untouched" (Richards 3). Richards' conviction was to set up a method for criticism and safeguard poetry. He noticed a gap between the mass's taste and "the most qualified opinion" of art, that was becoming wider and would become "threatening in the near future" and saw "a collapse of values, a transvaluation by which popular taste replaces trained discrimination" (31). Also, as Stephen Matterson puts it, for the New Critics "[t]he literary text is a free-standing, autonomous object, containing meanings that are specific to the context provided by the text" (171).

[4] "The New Critics," Patricia Waugh observes, "sought to define the language of literature – whether paradox or irony or ambiguity – in order, similarly, to safeguard literature from the incursions of other disciplinary discourses: dissolution through discursive 'paraphrase', for example, or subsumption by a philosophical 'Platonic censor'" (*Literary Theory and Criticism: An Oxford Guide* 26).

(1947) has it, poetry should be treated, similar to John Donne's urn, "as a formed thing, as an autonomous world" (149).[5]

Moreover, this autonomous artefact was seen to have the capacity to "embody a moral and symbolic knowledge that was fundamentally human: it is this understanding of literature as a mode of embodied, concrete experience which becomes central to twentieth-century criticism" (Waugh *Literary Theory and Criticism: An Oxford Guide* 28). Therefore, The New Critics' consideration of the literary text as occupying a different ontological plane was regarded by them as helping to protect it against other discourses. This preoccupation is manifested, for example, in René Wellek's later *Concepts of Criticism* in 1963 which expresses a wish "that criticism may preserve its original concern: the interpretation of literature as distinct from other activities of man" (343). Consequently, literature was considered to be a unique kind of experience and the task of literary criticism was to explain this concrete human experience through the "objective" reading of the literary text.[6]

The most influential statement of the anti-intentionalists view was made in W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley's widely read essay, "The Intentional Fallacy" (1946), which implies that if we are unable to read intentions – i.e. see into the human mind – then the idea of art as expression, central to Romantic ideas of authorship is challenged, as it can never be proved that the meaning we read in the text was somehow there as a vision in the writer's mind before the text was created. As they go on to say, the author's "design or intention . . . is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art" (468). The philosopher Peter Lamarque states that the article "was an assault on much more than just intention. Its target was a certain kind of Romanticism" and considers the essay as "a clash not only between styles of criticism but between fundamentally different conceptions

[5] Brooks makes it clear that "the net effect of his criticism has been . . . to regard the poem as an organic thing" (69-70).
[6] As Stephen Matterson notes, for the New Critics, "literary language is non-functional . . . because the language is doing more than giving us straightforward information" (170).

of literature: the Romantic conception which sees literature as a vehicle of personal expression and the Modernist conception which sees literature as a pure linguistic artefact, in Wimsatt's terms, a 'verbal icon'" (177). Thus, Beardsley and Wimsatt advocated close reading of the words on the page as an objective account that is purely formalist, although they accept that "[a] poem does not come into existence by accident. . . Yet to insist on the designing intellect as a *cause* of a poem is not to grant the design or intention as a *standard*." (469). Thus, they postulate the presence of an author and a designing intellect and therefore "his" precedence over the work, but exclude it as a factor in critical evaluation on the grounds that intention is not a relevant criterion with which to judge and evaluate a literary work. The text, as they argue, might express the intention and reflect it if it is a successful work in its own right or may fail to do so if it is not successful: "It is only because an artifact works that we infer the intention of an artificer" (469). Nevertheless, as the literary text is not capable of embodying and demonstrating the intention through the internal mechanics of its own textuality, then that "intention" is irrelevant to the analysis of the text itself.

Consequently, both the author's intention and Romantic and/or Expressionist ideas of authorship are challenged. But the scientific and empiricist orientation towards the concept of truth and knowledge is sustained by the activity of searching for verifiable "internal" evidence which is upheld by Richards and New Critics such as Wimsatt and Beardsley in the form of objective close reading. It is this assumption that was to influence criticism for half a century to come. Similarly, in effectively internalising intentionality as a formal challenge, Wimsatt and Beardsley both protected a humanist orientation toward the literary artefact but at the same time evinced and made possible a curiously anti-humanist defence of authorship.

The anti-intentionalist tendencies of modernist "impersonality" and New Critical "objectivity" were therefore given further support in Beardsley and Wimsatt's more philosophical approach but, as Lamarque observes, "whenever the theoretical issue arose in

the immediately ensuing years, defences of intentionalism would outnumber those of anti-intentionalism, as is evident from the two prominent anthologies on the topic, that of Newton-de Molina (1976) and Gary Iseminger's *Intentions and Interpretation* (1992)" (183-84). Often intentionality is preserved but transferred elsewhere – to language, the speech community, or the unconscious, but without it there is a feeling that one cannot account for agency. As Steven Knapp and Walter Benn Michaels in "Against Theory" (1982) point out, the problem with theory which comes in two forms (intentional and anti-intentional tendencies), is a separation between authorial intention and the meaning of the text. This rests upon a wrong assumption, simply because intention and meaning are indeed identical (723-24).[7] Knapp and Michaels go on to argue that both intentionalism and anti-intentionalism give credit to the existence and validity of Theory but are based on a mistake. However, to use their own terms, "as soon as we recognize that there are no theoretical choices to be made, then the point of theory vanishes" (730) and conclude that, in the same vein, "theory and practice too are inseparable" (741).

However, with the rise of theory or what has been called the "linguistic turn" by Richard Rorty (in *The Linguistic Turn*, a collection of essays edited by him in 1967), the shift from the humanist view that man is the source of knowledge and understanding and that literature reflects the world (i.e. language as a medium to express anything, be it knowledge or personal emotions) to that where language constitutes the "real" rather than simply expressing it, provides the underpinning for the most contentious mode of "the death of the author" debate. Postmodernism maintains that since we are embedded in and limited by the very means that we utilise to try to understand the world, "then our knowledge of the world is

[7] The two forms Knapp and Michaels speak about are – "methods designed to guarantee the objectivity and validity of interpretations" and recognition of "an alternative mode of theory that denies the possibility of correct interpretation" (723). A representative of the intentional tendency is E. D. Hirsch (1960) for whom the "permanent meaning is, and can be, nothing other than the author's meaning" ("Objective Interpretation" 466). Although the writers criticise the wrong assumption underlying such tendencies, they assert that it would be difficult "to imagine a case of intentionless meaning" (Knapp and Michaels 727).

limited to the scope of the conceptual reference of the particular language game in which we find ourselves" (Waugh *Literary Theory and Criticism: An Oxford Guide* 20). Thus, arriving at any degree of certain knowledge becomes impossible. Hirsch's *Validity in Interpretation* (1967) became the privileged account of the defence of intentionalism in favour of some sort of determinacy of meaning (and in opposition to "The Intentional Fallacy"), but it can be argued that Hirsch's move is precisely also to decentre the source of intentionality in order to make it accessible within the terms of positivism. As Hirsch asserts, "[a] word sequence means nothing in particular until somebody means something by it" (*Validity in Interpretation* 4). Moreover, he is in search of a determinate meaning and maintains that it "requires a determining will" and that "[d]eterminacy of verbal meaning requires an act of *will*" (46-7 emphasis added).

He goes on to distinguish between "meaning" as opposed to "significance," arguing that it "is not the meaning of the text which changes, but its significance to the author" (8). "Meaning," as he contends, is what the author intended the text to mean and never changes whereas "significance" is what the text means for the reader within the terms of his or her context. As he explicates:

> *Meaning* is that which is represented by a text; it is what the author meant by his [*sic*] use of a particular sign sequence; it is what the signs represent. *Significance*, on the other hand, names a relationship between that meaning and a person, or a conception, or a situation, or indeed anything imaginable. Authors, who like everyone else change their attitudes, feelings, opinions, and value criteria in the course of time, will obviously in the course of time tend to view their work in different contexts. Clearly what changes for them is not the meaning of the work, but rather their relationship to that meaning.

> Significance always implies a relationship, and one constant, unchanging pole of that relationship is what the text means. (8)

Thus, even if an author's mind changes towards the meaning "he" [*sic*] intended to express, he cannot change its first intentional meaning. What is happening here is that history and the historical method – another version of positivism – is given priority. If we can recover the historical moment of production of a text and the relations between the individual items in the oeuvre and greater archive of a writer, we have enough hard "evidence" to reconstruct the intention. Once again, a positivist model of knowledge is used to underpin a humanist defence of the text.

In traditional criticism preceding the rise of theory, the literary work was given priority and significance as a self-sufficient entity by criticism or is protected by history in the case of positivist scholarship. The new theory, however, best epitomised in poststructuralism, provided a systematic critique of the deceptively rational ways of interpreting literary works that are in fact grounded in naturalised assumptions that rest on a positivistic understanding of knowledge. What is seen to be shared amongst the various modes of traditional criticism – from biographical criticism to psychoanalytic through to New Criticism – is that they mostly assume or postulate either a mimetic view of literature as a representation of "truth" about life and human nature or an expressionist view that sees the text as a reflection or projection of something in the author's mind. This expressionist view comes to be regarded by post-structuralists as one of the powerful legacies of Romanticism and becomes the focus for perhaps the most austere anti-humanist onslaught on the idea of authorial presence in the work of Paul De Man. As Andrew Bennett argues:

> In its ideal form, then, poetry is, for Schlegel, Mill, Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley, and others, the unmediated expression of the poet's private feelings: it directly represents the poet's mind and constitutes a confession, but a

> confession in the first place of the self to self. The words of a poem are in direct contact with the thoughts that they embody – they *are* those thoughts. There is, ideally, no distinction in this theory of authorship between the experience, feelings, or thoughts that generate a poem and that poem. ("Expressivity: The Romantic Theory of Authorship" 51)

Hence, the Romantic poet might be conceived as an outstandingly gifted superhuman, a chosen one with specific talents or genius that enable "him" to go beyond other humans and capture moments of inspiration. As Bennett goes on to explicate, this view "is opposed to the idea of the writer, the scribbler, the journalist or literary drudge and is conceived as a subject inspired by forces outside himself, forces that allow him to produce work of originality and genius" (*The Author* 60). Put differently, the traditional view holds that either literature is a medium through which one can access the author's personal life experience, psyche or feelings or that the poet is a more impersonal reflector or mirror for the reality of life in general. These mimetic views of literature as "self-contained and coherent," which "transcends its formulation in words" (2-3) in its turn owe everything to the grounding assumptions of humanism that put man at the centre of meaningfulness and knowledge.

The Rise of Theory: Roland Barthes and the Death of the Author

Barthes' highly influential and acclaimed essay "The Death of the Author" (1967) is in effect also a proclamation of the death of the humanist subject that was seen to have underpinned this liberal humanist tradition of critical thinking and literary writing and would be challenged by the emergence of the so-called postmodern. Barthes opens the essay by quoting from Honoré de Balzac and posing the question, "Who is speaking thus?", by replying "we shall never know" who speaks because "writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin" ("The Death of the Author" 146). As he continues, "writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing" (146-47). By implication, his polemic is directed towards the humanist concept of identity as an irreducible coherent unit and the humanist view of both authorship and literature in general. The import of the essay is that the grounding assumptions of humanism have it that humans "possess" an autonomous coherent self who is able to employ rationality and empirical testing in order to verify what is true and false and to eliminate error; in the Kantian sense, therefore, this constitutes a transcendental ego that gives truth to the world through a rational mind that constitutes reality in its grasp of time, space and causality. In other words, rational thinking and human experience are exclusive sources of authenticity. The view presupposes the universalisation and the naturalisation of human traits irrespective of locality as it postulates universal shared values because "human beings are a biological species and . . . their shared biological nature brings with it a whole range of shared behavioural traits and shared needs" (Norman 92). According to humanist ideology, primacy is given to the autonomy and unity of the individual; human being is put at the centre; mind gives meaning to a world it also names and which revolves around mind. Therefore, in this view what is posited is the combination of unique subjectivity and a shared human nature:

> Each individual is different; each possesses a unique subjectivity; yet also, paradoxically, each shares a common human nature. The combination of unique individuality and common human essence cohere around the idea of a sovereign self, whose essential core of being transcends the outward signs of environmental and social conditioning. (Waugh and Rice 119)

The great poet or novelist, according to the humanist perspective, accesses shared but sometimes obscured human truths and values and is able to express this authentic experience through the mastery of words. The Romantic concept of authorship is the brainchild of humanism and its grounding assumptions.[8] In humanism, according to Catherine Belsey (1980), summarising the philosophical orientation of the post-structuralist moment, "experience is preceded and interpreted by the mind, reason or thought, the property of a transcendent human nature whose essence is the attribute of each individual (*idealism*)" (5-6).[9] M. H. Abrams points to the Romantic theory of literature by comparing the Romantic author to a lamp or a source that emits light as opposed to the eighteenth-century dominant theory of authorship which assumes the author holds up a mirror to the world and human nature, in his *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and Critical Tradition* (1953). As he argues, this eighteenth-century model of the mirror gradually gives way:

> [M]ore and more to the poet's natural genius, creative imagination, and emotional spontaneity, at the expense of the opposing attributes of judgement, learning, and artful restraint. As a result the audience gradually receded into the background, giving place to the poet himself, and his own mental powers and emotional needs, as the predominant cause and even the end and test of

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[8] As Catherine Belsey explains, "[t]he ideology of liberal humanism assumes a world of non-contradictory . . . individuals whose unfettered consciousness is the origin of meaning, knowledge and action" (56).

[9] Waugh expands on Belsey that "[h]umanism . . . assumes that experience is prior to language, and language is conceived merely as a tool to express the way that experience is felt and interpreted by the particular individual experiencing the 'raw feel'" (*Literary Theory and Criticism: An Oxford Guide* 19).

> art. (*The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* 21)

In other words, the eighteenth-century focus upon the gift of the poet as able to reflect the truth of nature is replaced by a focus on the expression of personal feelings and emotions. William Wordsworth's famous definition of poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" in *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) is in fact "the overflow, utterance, or projection of the thought and feelings of the poet" making him [*sic*] "the major element generating the artistic product and the criteria by which it is to be judged" that Abrams calls "the expressive theory of art" (*The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* 21-2). Accordingly, literature no longer simply reflects nature: "the mirror held up to nature becomes transparent and yields the reader insights into the mind and heart of the poet himself [*sic*]" (*The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* 23). Bennett agrees with Abrams that "[t]he idea that the literary work is fundamentally – indeed, exclusively – expressive of the author may be said to have reached its apotheosis in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries – in the period now commonly characterized by the term 'Romanticism'" ("Expressivity: The Romantic Theory of Authorship" 48). According to the expressive view, "[t]he paramount cause of poetry is . . . an efficient cause – the impulse within the poet of feelings and desires seeking expression, or the compulsion of the 'creative' imagination which, like God the creator, has its internal source of motion" (22). Both the eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century Romantic views, however, still adhere to the humanist conception that puts the human mind – whether reason or imagination – at the centre of understanding, knowledge and meaning.

What Barthes aims at criticising as the predominant concept of authorship is, by implication, this Romantic model of God-like authority and "the 'message' of the Author-God" ("The Death of the Author" 149) that the text is therefore traditionally deemed to be

emitting when asserting, "[t]he image of literature to be found in ordinary culture is tyrannically centred on the author, his person, his life, his tastes, his passions" (147). In Romanticism, as Seán Burke maintains, "[t]he ancient association of human and divine creativity is maintained but has been subjected to an unprecedented reversal. The author is no longer a privileged reader of the Divine script in nature, nor an elect who inspirationally mimes the Divine discourse, but is now seen as imitating the act of creation itself" (*Authorship: From Plato to the Postmodern* xxi-xxii).[10]

According to these grounding assumptions, then, the author's relation to the text is analogous to God's relation to His creation, an ideology that Barthes is rebelling against: as Burke puts it, the author in this light is "the unitary cause, source and master to whom the chain of textual effects must be traced, and in whom they find their genesis, meaning, goal and justification" (*The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida* 23). Accordingly, the literary work "is read as natural theologians read nature for marks of design, signs of purpose. Where there is design there must be a designer, where there is the appearance of meaning there must be intention" (23). Both Bennett and Burke point out the God-like author of Romantic theory as being held to reside within the work and at the same time outside of it, hence, remaining invisible. "Both there and not there" within the work, as Bennett puts it, "the poet has a seemingly supernatural, an apparitional or phantasmatic, quality" (*The Author* 62). Like God, "he" is "both transcendent of, and omnipresent within, creation" or in other words "he" "can be identified with the

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[10] "The oldest conceptions of authorship view literature as either imitative or an inspirational discourse. The inspirational tradition can be retraced at least as far back as the practice of the South American shamans whose psychic voyages mediated between the spiritual and material worlds. In similar vein, Hellenic culture saw the origins of poetry in the Muse to whom the poet was merely messenger, avatar or mouthpiece. The inspirational source of literature has maintained a strong hold upon thought partly because it accords with the stated experience of writers themselves who have felt moved by a remote or otherworldly power to compose discourses at once elevates the poet or author as an elect figure – set apart from the rest of humanity via the gift of a divine afflatus – but deprives the author of the role of originating force. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this notion of alterity or 'otherness' has persisted but in a manner often transplanted from its sacred or idealist sources. While aspects of romantic and symbolist thought have attempted to preserve this hieratic [sacred] view of poetic origins, twentieth-century theory has relocated the source of otherness in the unconscious or language itself" (Burke *Authorship: From Plato to the Postmodern* 5).

entirety of the work while being nowhere visible within the work" (Burke *Authorship: From Plato to the Postmodern* xxii).

And what Barthes attacks, by implication, is also this Romantic expressive theory of authorship. This Romantic view of authorship as the ineffability of "mind" is consequently replaced by language:

> Succeeding the Author, the scriptor no longer bears within him passions, humours, feelings, impressions, but rather this immense dictionary from which he draws a writing that can know no halt: life never does more than imitate the book, and the book itself is only a tissue of signs, an imitation that is lost, infinitely deferred. ("The Death of the Author" 149)

Humanism presupposes that human experience precedes language; language is therefore the medium for expressing this experience. In emphasising human agency, however, it asserts human agency or the capacity of the individual to think and act independently of his or her own volition. In the traditional or humanist view of authorship:

> The Author, when believed in, is always conceived of as the past of his own book: book and author stand automatically on a single line divided into *before* and *after*. The Author is thought to *nourish* the book, which is to say that he exists before it, thinks, suffers, lives for it, is in the same relation of antecedence to his work as a father to his child. (148)

Barthes takes humanism, with its emphasis upon human empirical and rational approaches in arriving at truth, to be accountable for the birth of this notion of the author by insisting, "[t]he author is a modern figure, a product of our society insofar as, emerging from the Middle Ages with English empiricism, French rationalism and the personal faith of Reformation" (147).

The oral tradition, before modernity, knew no author or originator, but only a relator.[11] As opposed to humanism that gives precedence to a consciousness over language/writing "the modern scriptor is born simultaneously with the text, is in no way equipped with a being preceding or exceeding the writing" (148). In fact, in the man-centred mimetic view of authorship, the author is a transcendent subjectivity that is behind the work, as God is behind His creation, but yet transcends the work and is not therefore visible in it, also like God.

From the perspective of post-structuralism, however, language cannot express subjectivity, nor any definite concept, for its signified is perpetually deferred. The differential nature of language means that "language knows a 'subject' not a 'person'" (148). And yet this linguistic subject is the product of differentiality and supplementation. Ferdinand de Saussure, in *Course in General Linguistics* (1916), had already split apart the subject in showing that there is no positive relation between the signifier and the signified and that signification is therefore the result of differential play. According to his model, language is not a tool to reflect an outside reality but is viewed as a system of difference participating in the construction of reality. The implication is that our world is constructed for us by language; there are no essences preceding linguistic representation. Moreover, as signs do not carry a natural meaning, they are always subject to change and in order to have meaning the sign must exist within a system. Post-structuralists like Derrida and Barthes developed this argument, asserting that such a condition of differentiality in language and meaning is always ongoing and therefore never ending, each signified therefore becoming another signifier for a

[11] "In the oral tradition," as Burke has it, "subject and object were not differentiated; performers and audience alike simply immersed themselves in the tale and its telling – a species of identification quite the reverse of literary criticism, which involves standing back from the work, assessing it as an object of study rather than direct experience. Only with the cultural assimilation of writing does the notion for subjective autonomy come into being and, correlatively, that of authorial responsibility" ("The Responsibilities of the Writer" 492).

set of further signifieds: there is no possibility of reaching a position outside the system – language – that constructs the world.[12]

Viewed in this light, everything, including identity and self, becomes textual, the product of the system of deferrals and differences. The text is no longer seen to reflect or represent an authorial voice but is a "[a] site of words and sentences shadowed by multiple potentialities of meaning" so "the literary work can now only be understood in a comparative way, the reader moving outwards from the work's apparent structure into the relations it possesses with other works and other linguistic structures" (Allen *Intertextuality* 12). Thus, nothing, neither experience nor thought, precedes language since "every text is eternally written *here* and now" (Barthes "The Death of the Author" 149). Likewise, identity and subjectivity is constructed in this language system, so becoming fragmented, split and underdetermined and is therefore no longer understood as an inner core identity finding direct expression through a language which is simply its verbal reflection. The linguistic "subject" replaces the humanist self and its concept of identity so avoiding the implication that the self or subject is in any way given and pre-formed before its entry into the symbolic order of language or discourse.

The humanist concepts of agency and will and intention are also therefore brought into question in this conceptualisation of the freeplay of language. Identity and individuality are the products of this process of differentiality and substitution in the game of language that is ever unfolding. Barthes mentions Mallarmé as an example of a writer who foresaw this replacement of the humanist view of the author (or modern man) by the post-structuralist idea of the play of language. Now "it is language which speaks not the author" (147), that is, not the humanist or modern man. Man is no longer viewed as being capable of directly

[12] As Allen clarifies, "almost all discourses attempt to stabilize the system of language by erasing the fact that language is always differential and cannot be stabilized or viewed as a coherent and ordered system" (*Intertextuality* 33).

expressing personal experience through the medium and mastery of language/words. As Burke has it:

> The death of the author might be said to fulfil much the same function in our day as did the death of God for late nineteenth-century thought. Both deaths attest to a departure of belief in authority, presence, intention, omniscience and creativity. For a culture which thinks itself to have come too late for the Gods or for their extermination, the figures of the author and the human subject are said to fill the theological void[13], to take up the role of ensuring meaning in the absence of metaphysical certainties. The author has thus become the object of a residual antitheology, as though the Satan of Paradise Lost had suddenly redirected his rebellion against the unsuspecting figure of Milton himself. (*The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida* 13)

Consequently, in the absence of an autonomous, unified, coherent subjectivity/self, what underpin the text are voices arising from economic, political, psychological and social structures and discourses. For Barthes' essay is influenced by Mikhail Bakhtin whose work was first introduced into French literary theory by Julia Kristeva.[14] Drawing upon Bakhtin's dialogic criticism, Barthes asserts that language constructs and simultaneously deconstructs its own construction including the author, the one that is the space where multiple voices are taken from different discourses – political, social, cultural and economic. But this is in direct

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[13] Bennett too points to the analogy made between the Romantic concept of authorship and that of theology, in that in Romanticism "[p]oetry ('poetic numbers') arrives 'spontaneously': there is no work of writing, no effort of composition. The experience that the poem describes and the poem itself are identical: the poem is the experience of writing a poem. And the inspired poet is like a priest, 'singled out' as he is for a 'holy' function: poetry is a substitute for – is, indeed – a kind of religion" (Bennett "Expressivity: The Romantic Theory of Authorship" 55).

[14] Julia Kristeva introduced Bakhtin into French theory in "Word, Dialogue and Novel" (published in English in *The Kristeva Reader* in 1986). As she puts it, "what appears as a lack of rigour is in fact an insight first introduced into literary theory by Bakhtin: any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least *double*" (37). Barthes, in a way, reverberates and draws on Bakhtin's view of a text as "a mosaic of quotations" and extends it to "a tissue of quotations" ("The Death of the Author" 149).

opposition to the critically enshrined Romantic view of authorship that the author is implicitly an independent figure who transcends external forces of society:

> [T]he author of a work is in control of that work, knows what it means and intends something by it, that she delimits and defines its interpretations. Indeed, in this sense of authorship the author *guarantees* the meaning(s) of the text since she was present to herself as she wrote or composed it and was fully conscious of and knowledgeable about her words, meanings and intentions. Such an idea of the author presupposes that the author is not subject to the "external" forces of history, society, the law, and politics that after Marx we call "ideology"; and not subject to the kinds of "internal" forces, drives, desires, impulses, that, after Freud, we know as the "unconscious." (Bennett *The Author* 7-8)

In contrast, for Barthes the text is a site of conflict and contestation of different cultural discourses. In the absence of the Romantic author, the literary work becomes, to use Barthes' own words, "a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture" ("The Death of the Author" 149). The subject, consequently, cannot but be a slippery and split being constantly constructed and de-constructed in discourse. Barthes de-naturalises the universalisation and naturalisation of the subject in humanism as well as the economic system of capitalism with its basis in liberal political theory's concept of possessive individualism. This new post-structuralist concept of language as a dynamic self-creator of uncertain, slippery, differential concepts replaces man as the origin and centre of meaning and de-constructs the notion of "his" autonomous identity and subjectivity. Thus, "if literature, the author and the text no longer have an identity outside of difference, neither do

they have *a* single, fixed and determinate meaning; they are relativized and unstable" due to the perpetual delay of meaning: *difference*" (Waugh and Rice 112).

After the Romantic author – together with "his" assumptions and associations including the idea of autonomy, identity, subjectivity, agency and control – is declared dead, the dynamics of intertextuality become significant and authorship begins to be reconstructed anew. In other words, the text becomes a space – or "only a tissue of signs, an imitation that is lost, infinitely deferred" (Barthes "The Death of the Author" 149) – where multiple signifiers provide an endless play of signification and refer to other texts and discourses at the moment of reading rather than to the author or the outside reality which ostensibly precede the text. Thus, the text as a web of endless and multiple significations is born together with the modern reader. Textuality demands a simultaneous delivery and existence of what Barthes calls "the modern scriptor" (149), with the birth of the text, one whose function and "only power is to mix writings, to counter ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any of them" (149). The author becomes a mere compiler[15] of multiple textualities and the meaning in the text does not spring from the author's consciousness or genius but is rather constructed and de-constructed by the freeplay of intertextuality. Besides, the reader is born but is not able to fixate on an ultimate meaning in the text "since the literary work's intertextual nature always leads readers on to new textual relations" (Allen *Intertextuality* 3). Consequently, a text becomes perceptible as a web of signifiers taken from myriads of ideologies and discourses.

[15] Barthes is influenced by Kristeva's notion of intertextuality: "In 'The Bounded Text' Kristeva is concerned with establishing the manner in which a text is constructed out of already existent discourse. Authors do not create their texts from their own original minds, but rather compile them from pre-existent texts, so that, as Kristeva writes, a text is 'a permutation of texts, an intertextuality in the space of a given text', in which 'several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another' (ibid: 36). Texts are made up of what is at times styled 'the cultural (or social) text', all the different discourses, ways of speaking and saying, institutionally sanctioned structures and systems which make up what we call culture. In this sense, the text is not an individual, isolated object but, rather, a compilation of cultural textuality. Individual text and the cultural text are made from the same textual material and cannot be separated from each other. We see here how the Bakhtinian notion of the dialogic has been rephrased within Kristeva's semiotic attention to text, textuality and their relation to ideological structures" (Allen *Intertextuality* 35-6).

Barthes' polemic is also directed at Capitalist ideology as an accomplice in the invention of the humanist concept of the author. As Barthes holds, it is capitalism that first resolutely puts the individual into a new centre; it is "the epitome and culmination of capitalist ideology, which has attached the greatest importance to the 'person' of the author" (147). Capitalism developed the concept of ownership in the relation between the work and the author: man became the owner of his work and therefore had a monopoly and control over it. Consumerism necessitates the work of art to be a consumable and exchangeable product to be exhausted and consumed by attaching an ultimate "meaning" or the message of the author to be deciphered by the reader. Commodification and naturalisation of a fixed meaning is the upshot of capitalist ideology. In similar fashion, "when the Author has been found, the text is 'explained' – victory to the critic" (150); in other words, the secret code hidden in the text by the author is deciphered, communicated and grasped and the work is exhausted and consumed as the reader or spectator search for the new. Literary works are associated with "chocolate bars, soap-powders, compact discs and items of clothing" (Allen *Roland Barthes* 76). The belief that knowledge can be bought, possessed, sold and exchanged (communicated) through books and that "the clear communication of ideas plugs intellectual work into a capitalist market system in which things are only of value if they can be bought and sold" (33) is a capitalist doxa.[16] "In such a system," as Allen continues, "ideas are only valuable if they are consumable" (33). Nonetheless, due to the spontaneity of writing, its nature in constructing an endless system of differences and deferral of meaning, "writing ceaselessly posits meaning ceaselessly to evaporate it, carrying out a systematic exemption of

[16] Bennett traces the emergence of the Romantic concept of authorship – "the author as original, autonomous, and fundamentally expressive of a unique individuality" – back to challenging the aristocratic ideology by the possibility of printing that took the monopoly away from the court and made the circulation of books possible and more available to the mass: "the new authorial and literary regime that emerged in the eighteenth century involved a logic and economics that foregrounded authorship, increasingly insisting on the publication of the person of the author, the originator and owner of the work; and it also increasingly disavowed both an aristocratic ideology that presented the author as a gentleman scornful of print, and the mercenary, mercantile arrangements of print publication. It is this formulation of authorship that will be fully expressed in the Romantic period and that will become the conception of authorship that will be accepted and challenged over the next two centuries" (*The Author* 54).

meaning" (Barthes "The Death of the Author" 150) and in so doing, unleashes the work of art from the tyranny of capitalist ideology and the tyrannical author that had been attached to it.

Barthes praises Julia Kristeva[17] for being in the vanguard in criticising the consumer ideology of the communicability and exchangeability of knowledge and in *The Rustle of Language* (1984) he argues that according to this view, "communication is *merchandise*" (170). Here too, he poses the rhetorical question, "[a]re we not constantly told that a 'clear' book sells better, that a communicative temperament more easily finds a job?" (170). Moreover, the belief in the omnipresence of the author magisterially puts an end to the recognition of a multiplicity of voices and meanings. "Writing, when freed from its fictional basis in the author, works to disrupt notions of consumption" (Allen *Roland Barthes* 76). Now that the Romantic author is dismissed or displaced, "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, to close the writing" (Barthes "The Death of the Author" 149). Thus, Barthes' essay is also a critique of the commodification of writing.

[17] Julia Kristeva admires some texts of the end of the nineteenth century and early modernism such as those written by Joyce, Mallarmé, Lautréamont and Roussel, as works which "perceive themselves as a production that cannot be reduced to representation" (*The Kristeva Reader* 86). "In such work," as Allen clarifies, "Kristeva implies, ideas are not presented as finished, consumable products, but are presented in such a way as to encourage readers themselves to step into the production of meaning" (*Intertextuality* 34).

Jacques Derrida and the Critique of Authorship

Another equally influential essay in forming the revolution of theory[18] was Jacques Derrida's "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences" delivered at Johns Hopkins University in 1966 and constituting Derrida's first thoroughgoing public deconstruction of the then dominant modes of structuralism as well as attacking the very concept of structurality itself. The appearance of this essay alongside Barthes' served to co-fashion the emergence of the death of the author as a specific critical debate, as well as launch a new epoch in criticism. As Nicholas Royle writes of Derrida, "[m]ore than any other contemporary writer or thinker, Jacques Derrida has defined our time" (8). Derrida went on to dismantle and demystify our long-held perception of, and reliance upon, the idea of the pre-existence or prior existence of thought before language, and consequently the (omni-)presence of an intending person, and their pre-intentional relation to language. Derrida approached this argument in this essay by challenging the foundations of philosophical thinking that assumes the existence of a first cause or genesis – be it God, Man or Author – by re-locating and displacing the centre, rather than erasing it. What he proposes is the deconstruction of the fixed and stable grounds upon which human knowledge and thinking are derived.

Derrida criticises the history of Western thought for its "substitutions of centre for centre" ("Structure Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" 90).[19] Western philosophy and science has always functioned structurally, that is, they have always relied upon the concept of structure and structurality together with their implications: centre, order, stability and closure. As Derrida argues, "the concept of structure and even the word

[18] "The most significant and specific date which might be marked as pinpointing the start of the 'theory' revolution is 1967. Two key texts were published that year which, between them, seem to illustrate perfectly the nature of the gap between the assumptions of traditional literary studies and those which came to be referred to as post-structuralism. Jacques Derrida's lecture entitled 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Human Sciences', given at a conference held in 1966 at Johns Hopkins University, was published the following year in a book entitled *The Structuralist Controversy: The Language of Criticism and the Sciences of Man*" (Waugh *Literary Theory and Criticism: An Oxford Guide* 20).

[19] Derrida gives a list of the substitutions all of which would imply "an invariable presence" including "*eidos*, *arché*, *telos*, *energeia*, *ousia*, (essence, existence, substance, subject), *alētheia*, transcendentality, consciousness, God, man, and so forth" ("Structure Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" 91).

'structure' itself are as old as . . . Western science and Western philosophy" (89-90). As he goes on to assert, "the entire history of the concept of structure . . . must be thought of as a series of substitutions of center for center, as a linked chain of determinations of the center" (90). Accordingly, from the Middle Ages through to the early modern period, the dominant worldview is theocentric, that is, a worldview that relies upon God as the transcendental signified from whose creativity man is a product. With the rise of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, this centre then shifted to man as the creator of the world in the sense that "man" became a figure that was glorified to divine level (apotheosis), a transcendental signified from whose consciousness everything derived and could be understood.[20] With the rise of structuralism, the shift is to language as the new transcendental signified and "the world is no longer anthropocentric, it's *linguistic*," to use Fry's terms (133).

Up to a certain point that he calls "an event" or "*rupture*" (89), the concept of structure had benefitted from a centre that keeps the system in place and simultaneously delimits the freeplay (of meaning for instance) within the structure, an enabling force or principle whose function "was not only to orient, balance, and organize the structure – one cannot in fact conceive of an unorganized structure – but above all to make sure that the organizing principle of the structure would limit that we might call the *play* of structure" (90). Thus, this enabling and organising principle or a governing force (centre) also enables a closure of the system, be it linguistic or any other system. Accordingly, inductively, the Western tradition has always had a penchant for the immediacy of meaning in the world, for arriving at a point of reference, a haven where all contradictions are solved (synthesised). In this light, the text has an "intentional structure," to borrow Husserlian terminology.

[20] As Fry puts it, "God creates the world and then, as Milton says, 'uncircumscrib'd withdraw[s]'. God is not there, becomes the *Dieu caché*, absent from the world yet also the structure of the world. The same thing can be said of man. Human thought brings the sense of what the world is into being, then stands aside as an observer" (134).

Allegedly, the centre keeps all the elements in their places; it fixates them. As it limits and closes the play, the centre makes impossible any substitution of "contents, elements, or terms" (90). The Saussurian model of a sign system implies firstly that the signified (or the concept) pre-exists and generates the signifier and therefore pre-exists it. Secondly, it entails that the relation between the signifier and the signified, although arbitrary, is fixed. In structuralism this centre or transcendental signified is played by the sign itself. As Graham Allen puts it, "[s]tructuralism . . . like all previous intellectual discourses, erected its method on the basis of a centre, a transcendental signified. This centre, for structuralism, is the idea of the sign itself" (*Roland Barthes* 70). Sign systems of which language is one, as both terms system and structure imply, provide underlying principles, order and stability that guarantee, and connote, linguistic closure, coherence and intelligibility.

The concept of a centred structure has always been perceived, as Derrida has it, "on the basis of a full presence which is beyond play" (Derrida "Structure Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" 90). In other words, it has always necessitated there be a presence which delimits the boundary of the game and sets out its rules. Nonetheless, since this concept of structure and structurality postulates that there is an extraneous force (that we may call centre and could be anything from genesis, cause, anything that comes prior to the structure) which imposes order upon the structure, the structure has its centre outside of it. Thus, this view has it that when there is a creature, there must be a creator or put differently, to recall the theological view of Deism that took prominence in the eighteenth century, a creature presupposes a Creator, a non-interventionist creator who created the universe and set the laws of it, which are orderly and organised as Alexander Pope put it so memorably in his "Essay on Man" (1710): "Observe how system into system runs, / What other planets circle other suns" (2244 line 25) which is act of no one but "the Eternal Cause" (2246 line 130); hence, His full presence but invisible: an invisible omnipresence. This idea reverberates

through the work of many eighteenth-century Deists including Thomas Paine who concludes his essay "A Discourse of the Society of Theophilanthropists" (1797): "God is the power of first cause, nature is the law, and matter is the subject acted upon" (123). Seán Burke points to the shift of centre from God to man with which Derrida is preoccupied and to which he refers in his essay:

> The author is to his text as God, the *auctor vitae*, is to his world: the unitary cause, source and master to whom the chain of textual effects must be traced, and in whom they find their genesis, meaning, goal and justification. The author thus becomes, in Derrida's words, the "transcendental signified" and attains the supernal privilege of being at once the beginning and end of his text. Accordingly, criticism accepts the role of passive exegete to the author's intentions. The text is read as natural theologians read nature for marks of design, signs of purpose. Where there is design there must be a designer, where there is the appearance of meaning there must be intention. Post hoc, ergo propter hoc; the old fallacy is enshrined as the universal law of literary causality. (*The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida* 13)

Thus, by extension, the author must be the transcendental signified, taking the role that God had played as a transcendental signified.

The concept of an intending structure presupposes and necessitates the existence of an intending person behind, the one referred to as a prior cause, the genesis of the text. The intending person (or author in the case of a text) is standing outside, whereas the intentional structure itself is inside the structure. Here the problem that arises is how to get from an intending author to an intentional structure and back. By the same token, Derrida dislocates the centre: "[t]he center is at the center of the totality, and yet, since the center does not

belong to the totality (is not part of the totality), the totality has its center elsewhere. The center is not the center" ("Structure Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" 90). Bringing the structuralist model of signification into consideration, the idea that signification is the result of the relational meaning, the idea that there must be an origin, a centre, in order to fixate the meaning seems to be natural and understandable. "This centre," as Allen explicates, "would act as a transcendental signified, in that allowing for the structure itself it would not partake of the structure (play of meanings) but would be its foundation" (*Roland Barthes* 69). In fact, the centre both organises the structure and yet is not really competent to do that because it is not in the structure. A centre that brings the notion of structure and its laws into existence but it is not subject to the laws governing the structure. A conspicuous example is God, the creator of the structure of the universe and its laws but He [*sic*] is not subject to the laws of physics for example and is therefore absent from it. In structuralism, signifier and signified as a totality cannot be separated which leads to the illusion that the world image and its signification (meaning) are identical. Derrida questions this postulation by contending that meaning is not present and that signifiers do not contain any concept within themselves but that meaning is the outcome of a relation within a context. As a case in point, the meaning of the term "meaning" may lead us to the idea of "significance" and to being "inferior" and "poor" as well as "mathematical mean," all depending upon the context in which the signifier "mean" is used; hence, lack of presence of meaning.

Derrida is very well aware that even the history of the critique of metaphysics – like those of Nietzsche, Freud and Heidegger, to name just a few – is grounded upon metaphysical discourse:

> But all these destructive discourses and all their analogues are trapped in a kind of circle. This circle is unique. It describes the form of the relation

> between the history of metaphysics and the destruction of the history of metaphysics. There is no sense in doing without the concepts of metaphysics in order to shake metaphysics. We have no language – no syntax and no lexicon – which is foreign to this history; we can pronounce not a single destructive proposition which has not already had to slip into the form, the logic, and the implicit postulations of precisely what it seeks to contest. ("Structure Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" 91-2)

In other words, what this entails is that we are always trapped in language (discourse) and that there could be no metalanguage (as a function of language Roman Jakobson defines as explaining or describing language itself and that can stand outside the metaphysical or other kind of system and provide a critique of, or explain, it).[21] Rather than using some sort of metalanguage in order to shake and criticise the discourse of metaphysics, he shakes what are ostensibly the fixed and grounding assumptions of language as well as language itself whilst being fully aware that he is always trapped within the infinite language game. For this matter, Derrida gives the example of the metaphysics of presence which is put into question by the very notion of sign. By pointing out the problem of the concept of sign, as Derrida continues,

> [A]s soon as one seeks to demonstrate in this way that there is no transcendental or privileged signified and that the domain or play of signification henceforth has no limit, one must reject even the concept and word "sign" itself – which is precisely what cannot be done. For the signification "sign" has always been understood and determined, in its meaning, as sign-of, a signifier referring to a signified, a signifier different

[21] In *Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics* (1960), the structuralist Roman Jakobson offers six functions for language as referential or "denotative," poetic, emotive or "expressive" which "aims a direct expression of the speaker's attitude toward what he [*sic*] is speaking about" (354), conative which is in the form of "vocative and imperative," phatic which contains "messages primarily serving to establish, or prolong, or to discontinue communication, to check whether the channel works ('Hello, do you hear me?'), to attract the attention of the interlocutor or to confirm his continued attention" (355) and finally metalingual which "is not only a necessary scientific tool utilized by logicians and linguists; it plays also an important role in our everyday language" (356).

> from its signified. If one erases the radical difference between signifier and signified, it is the word "signifier" itself which must be abandoned as a metaphysical concept. (92)[22]

In writing about the nature of the sign, he provides a critique of structuralism in that structuralism grounds its assumptions upon a transcendental signified which is the sign. He questions Saussure's clarification of the relation between the signifier and signified and casts doubt upon such difference/relation as expounded by Saussure. The same critique applies to Lévi-Strauss' concepts of "the sensible" and "the intelligible" in *The Raw and the Cooked* (1964) where the sensible equates to the signifier and the latter the signified; this is the traditional view of "*submitting* the sign to thought" (92) that the thought generates the signifier as proposed by Saussure's model of a sign system. Yet, he uses another perspective against this traditional view by laying bare the infinity of the play of signification in the absence of a transcendental signified and centre. Put differently, when thinking a signifier, this triggers another signifier which in turn elicits another and so on *ad infinitum*. In effect, the activity creates a chain of signifiers, each signifier leading to the next. It is, to use Fry's terms, "the signifying chain: not an organizational pattern but an ever self-replicating and self-extending movement, irreducibly linear and pushing ahead through a sequence of temporally spaced associations" (130).

Structuralism aims at knowing the underlying patterns of human behaviour and thought through the employment of a scientific methodology and a metalanguage (a language which can objectively be used as a means of explanation). As Allen puts it, "Saussure and

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[22] Paul Fry gives an example of the term "tree" and "arbor" in order to elucidate Derrida's breaking the opposition between the signifier and the signified: "Suppose I think of the relationship between 'signified' and 'signifier' not as the relationship between a represented thing and a word but as the relationship between two *terms* – because, after all, one way of indicating the concept 'tree' is to write the word 'tree' and put quotation marks around it. If I take away the quotation marks, all I have is the word with no indication that it's a concept. Notice that this is now a relationship that Jakobson would call 'metalingual'. What it suggests is that 'tree' is another *word* for 'arbor'. In other words, it's a relationship not between a signified and a signifier but between a *signifier* and a signifier, so that the binarism of the relationship is broken down and we begin to understand the combinatory structure of speech or writing as just one signifier leading to another signifier" (130).

those who developed his ideas in France and elsewhere, imagined a science of semiology which would be capable of reading all cultural sign systems. Such a method, or general science, relies ultimately on the idea of the sign and its ability to centre (order and scientifically stabilize) such a method" (*Roland Barthes* 70). Nonetheless, as poststructuralists like Derrida have demonstrated, such language cannot but be subject to *différance* and therefore the structuralist claim of such knowledge is questioned. In other words, Derrida, like many other poststructuralists, is aware that the new centre is now language but that language has always already delayed its signification. The meaning of a sign cannot be grasped. As an example of the impossibility of totalising categories and generalisation – an underlying system – Derrida focuses upon the opposition between nature and culture or culture/nature binary opposition with the superiority of the first over the latter that has been a preoccupation since very old times, "at least, as old as the Sophists" ("Structure Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" 93). Since then, nature has been treated as opposed "to law, to education, to art, to technics – but also to liberty, to the arbitrary, to history, to society, to the mind, and so on" (93). Derrida points to *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (1949) as evidencing the opposition Lévi-Strauss has referred to and relied upon from the beginning of his book whilst indicating the impossibility of accepting such opposition. From the beginning, as Derrida puts it, Lévi-Strauss relies upon the traditional definition of nature and culture defining the former as "*universal* and spontaneous" whereas the latter is "a system of *norms* regulating society and therefore is capable of *varying* from one social structure to another" (94). Nevertheless, the problem arises when Lévis-Strauss refers to "*scandal*, that is to say, something that no longer tolerates the nature/culture opposition . . . something which *simultaneously* seems to require the predicates of nature and culture. This scandal is the incest *prohibition*" (94). Here the universal/provisional category ceases to function since the incest prohibition is both universal

(as it is all human beings try to avoid it) and therefore natural as well as simultaneously cultural for, as the term prohibition indicates, it is a social taboo not to be violated.

However, Derrida demystifies the relationship between nature and culture by pointing out that there is nothing scandalous about it unless we think within the realm of finding an underlying rule which relies upon such a difference. When we start to change our perception and do not comprehend the incest prohibition in terms of nature/culture binary opposition, "it can no longer be said to be a scandalous fact, a nucleus of opacity within a network of transparent signification" (94). In fact, the very concept of nature came into existence simultaneously with the emergence (construction) of the concept of culture itself, a phenomenon that Derrida calls supplementarity.[23] Derrida's proposed concept of supplementarity puts into question the concept of sign (be it nature or speech) as self-sufficient and self-contained. How can we think of nature if there is no culture, as one might wonder? As Derrida explicates, "[t]his example [incest prohibition], too curiously examined, is only one among others, but nevertheless it already shows that language bears within itself the necessity of its own critique" and adds "[o]nce the limit of the nature/culture opposition

[23] In *Of Grammatology* (1967), Derrida puts forward the notion of supplement as both something that adds up and completes an original (a kind of accretion) and something that replaces or substitutes for lack. To uses his own words, it "adds itself, it is a surplus, a plenitude enriching another plenitude, the *fullest measure* of presence. It cumulates and accumulates presence" (*Of Grammatology* 144). Yet, it also "adds only to replace. It intervenes or insinuates *itself in-the-place-of*; if it fills, it is as if one fills a void. If it represents and makes an image, it is by the anterior default of a presence . . . The sign is always the supplement of the thing itself" (145). The supplement always contradictorily fluctuates between the two, which makes it undecidable as to which one is the exact function of a supplement. It is both "substitution and accretion" (200). On the one hand, it strengthens and emphasises presence and on the other it lays bare the insufficiency or lack of full presence; hence, it needs to be supplemented, substituted). Thus, by implication, there is no such a thing as a unified presence. The same logic could apply to writing. Writing, as a supplement to speech, cannot make up for the loss/lack of presence of speech. As he continues, "if supplementarity is a necessarily indefinite process, writing is the supplement par excellence since it proposes itself as the supplement of the supplement, sign of a sign, *taking the place of* a speech already significant" (281). He gives a couple of examples, including some from Jean-Jacques Rousseau, to demonstrate how both concepts of the supplement function simultaneously. Derrida deconstructs the notion of Nature employed by Rousseau. For Rousseau, nature is self-sufficient and therefore is the one that cannot be replaced. If anything replaced nature, it could "not equal it, would be only a mediocre makeshift" (145). In other words, Nature's supplement "is not only inferior to but other than Nature" (154). For Rousseau, mother is Nature and a nurse who feeds a child is a bad substitution whilst sometimes necessary or inevitable. Nevertheless, this original Nature, therefore, is insufficient, "is the first manifestation of the deficiency which, in Nature, calls for substitution [*suppliance*]" (146). As Derrida posits, "How is a natural weakness possible? How can Nature ask for forces that it does not furnish? How is a child possible in general?" (146).

makes itself felt, one might want to question systematically and rigorously the history of these concepts" (94). By the same token, the incest prohibition is an example of how this system of nature/culture does not work adequately.

What Lévi-Strauss, in the fashion of other structuralists who seek for an underlying system, aimed at, was to provide a comprehensive structural analysis which could illuminate the structure of all myths by searching for shared and common features amongst myths and how they transformed. To question the efficiency of such a systematic analysis, Derrida focuses upon two concepts of "engineer" and "*bricoleur*" as discussed in Lévi-Strauss's *The Savage Mind* (1966). The *bricoleur* is the person who uses and, whenever necessary, appropriates tools already available at his or her disposal. In contrast, the engineer is the one who invents their own instruments and is therefore original. This implies that, having a deconstructist reading strategy in mind, the idea of engineer was invented in order to show that what they were doing was better and superior to *bricoleurs* who must perhaps be less intelligent or original. Applying the notions to language, Derrida proposes that no one has invented their language but used, appropriated and adapted it to meet their needs:

> If one calls *bricolage* the necessity of borrowing one's concepts from the text of a heritage which is more or less coherent or ruined, it must be said that every discourse is *bricoleur*. The engineer, whom Lévi-Strauss opposes to *bricoleur*, should be the one to construct the totality of his language, syntax, and lexicon. In this sense the engineer is a myth. A subject who supposedly would be the absolute origin of his own discourse and supposedly would construct it "out of nothing," "out of cloth," would be the creator of the verb, the verb itself. The notion of the engineer who supposedly breaks with all forms of *bricolage* is therefore a theological idea; and since Lévi-Strauss tells

> us elsewhere that *bricolage* is mythopoetic, the odds are that the engineer is a myth produced by the *bricoleur*. (96)

Once again, Derrida points out and debunks the limits and inefficiency of such totalising and systematic categories. One is always embedded in language/discourse rather than being the originator of it.

This shift or event as Derrida calls it, the moment when "the structurality of structure had to begin to be thought," (91)

> [W]as the moment when language invaded the universal problematic, the moment when, in the absence of a center or origin, everything became discourse – provided that we agree on this word – that is to say, a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely. (91)

Thus, there is no transcendental signified – no signified that is not part of the game (play/*jeu*) while governing it – but is part of this system of differences. Consequently, in the absence of such a centre – transcendental signified – "an infinite number of sign-substitutions came into play" (91). By the same token and extension, the author was thought of as a space where the synthesis of the Dialectics operated, where all the contradictions resolved, a transcendental signified which whilst governing and organising the text, giving it a meaning, stood outside it and was not part of the play of signification within the text. Now that the concept of the author as a transcendental signified is under attack, and challenged, considering that He [*sic*] does not have a presence outside the system of difference, He, together with the text, cannot possess an ultimate meaning that might be grasped: the signification is always delayed in a chain. Hence, as Derrida puts it elsewhere, in the absence of a transcendental signified,

> [E]verything depends upon contexts which are always open, non-saturable, because a single word (for example, a word in a title) begins to bear the meaning of all the potential phrases in which it is to be inscribed (and therefore begins to promise, to violently ground its own right and other conventions, since it does not yet *totally* have the right to promise) and because, inversely, no phrase has an absolutely determinable "meaning": it is always in the situation of the word or title in relation to the text which borders it and which carries it away, in relation to the always open context which always promises it more meaning. (*Memoires for Paul De Man* 115-16)

Therefore, when everything depends on context, meaning has no presence of its own.

Language replaces man but it is a new understanding of language, one that is self-contradictory and always calls into question any origin by dislocating the centre and consequently bringing it into the text. In that light, the new centre which was believed to be outside is now inside and accordingly unstable, constantly subject to slippage, having no ultimate control as it is now the outcome of *différance*. It does not pre-exist but emerges as a result of being between things. A is A and is not B; nor is it C, D, E, etc. "Man can no longer be conceived as the subject of his works, for to be the subject of a text, or of knowledge, is to assume a post ideally exterior to language" (Burke *The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida* 10). By defacing the difference and distinction between signifier and signified, Derrida questions the pre-existence and presence of thought over language.

Michel Foucault: Author as a Function

Intrigued by Barthes' and Derrida's polemical essays, although he never directly cites them, Foucault is the other seminal thinker of this historical moment who might be regarded as part of a project to dismantle traditional assumptions concerning authorship. In "What is an Author?" (1969), Foucault argues that the concept of the author, rather than being consistently unified, has gone through changes throughout history and consequently has taken on diverse functions depending upon the dominant discourse in which it finds its place. Rather than being looked upon as a coherent concept, the author has been given multiple functionalities in the course of history. Foucault aims at elucidating the most significant of them in this essay. The whole essay, it might be argued, is an attempt to respond to the question, "What does it matter who is speaking" that Foucault cites from Samuel Beckett's *Stories and Texts for Nothing* (1967): the essay suggests how and why it matters a lot. First and foremost, Foucault draws attention to the fact that the author had not always been living but came into being at a specific moment, a "privileged moment" which he calls "*individualization*" ("What Is an Author?" 174), by which is meant the time when humans begin to attribute the work to an individual authority. The essay makes attempts to explore how the author became individualised.[24] In other words, by historicising the concept of the author, Foucault proposes that the whole notion of the author, which is of course not a unified coherent concept, is a construct that has a historical origin and proceeded through, and took, multiple signifieds in each particular era of history. By implication, this historicising approach stands against the humanist ideology which looks at, and posits, a phenomenon as

[24] Foucault makes it clear that he does not intend to propose "a sociohistorical analysis of the author's persona" ("What Is an Author?" 174); yet, he provides the background of what he means by individualisation of the author in an almost scant paragraph. It is a time when we started to attribute a work to an individual author by valourising him [*sic*] that we in our analysis of a work began to relate the work to its author and his life: "how the author became individualized in a culture like ours, what status he has been given, at what moment studies of authenticity and attribution began, in what kind of system of valorization the author was involved, at what point we began to recount the lives of authors rather than of heroes, and how this fundamental category of 'the-man-and-his-work criticism' began" ("What Is an Author?" 174).

an essential, natural or universal entity and thereby he too provides a critique of humanism and its assumptions.

Rather than focusing upon the question of who is the real author and what implications this might have for criticism, Foucault is more preoccupied with what functions the concept of the author has played historically. In other words, he is not interested in the author's subjectivity; nor is he intent on discussing it since he first acknowledges that writing has recently been conceived other than as an expression of its author's subjectivity. "Referring from itself," as Foucault maintains, "but without being restricted to the confines of its interiority, writing is identified with its own unfolded exteriority" ("What Is an Author?" 175). Accordingly, writing is a relationship between multiple signs. Writing is "a space into which the writing subject constantly disappears" ("What Is an Author?" 175). Secondly, Foucault argues that there is a close relationship between writing and death as well as immortality in that writing has been capable of both killing and immortalising its author. Writing as a means of immortalisation of its subject can be traced back to the Greek epic that gives an account of the hero that thereby immortalises him. Another exemplary narrative that Foucault mentions is that of Scheherazade (or Shahrzad /Shahr-zād/ alternatively) who kept telling stories to "forestall death, to postpone the day of reckoning that would silence the narrator" ("What Is an Author?" 175). Yet, this second aspect of writing has changed and is therefore no longer valid in the present culture. Writing has become the murderer of its author/subject. Or to use Foucault's terms, "[t]he work, which once had the duty of providing immortality, now possesses the right to kill, to be its author's murderer, as in the case of Flaubert, Proust, and Kafka" ("What Is an Author?" 175). Nonetheless, this death is, according to Foucault, "a voluntary" "sacrifice" ("What Is an Author?" 175). Writing becomes a game in which the writer "must assume the role of the dead man" ("What Is an

Author?" 175). This very transformation is indicative of the multifunctionality of the concept of the author.

This discovery also paves the way for Foucault's further discussion of the functions of the author rather than the individuality or subjectivity of it as the idea of the effacement of the author is not new, as he acknowledges. Although this disappearance has already been noticed and argued by earlier thinkers, Foucault goes on to present us his statement of the problem,

> [T]he consequences of their discovery of it have not been sufficiently examined, nor has its import been accurately measured. A certain number of notions that are intended to replace the privileged position of the author actually seem to *preserve that privilege* and suppress the real meaning of his disappearance. ("What Is an Author?" 175 emphasis added)

Foucault's taking up and surveying the author's historical functions has the merit of filling in the gap left by Barthes; the disappearance or death of the author already announced by Barthes might pave the way for the emergence of another dangerous "system of constraint" ("What Is an Author?" 186).[25]

One of the notions that Foucault regards as responsible for the preservation of the privileged position of the author, rather than its replacement, is what a literary work is and how we regard a piece of writing as a work of art and not something else. In other words, if in our analysis we concentrate upon the text and have some sort of close reading (*explication de texte*) as a work of art - as in the fashion of the New Critics – how might a literary work be distinguished from a non-literary work if we do not still have a concept of authorship behind it? Accordingly, for Foucault to say that the intention of the author is bracketed in the

[25] Foucault takes as his project the exploration of what might be the outcome of the empty space left by the disappearance of the author as proposed by Barthes and articulates, "[i]t is not enough, however, to repeat the empty affirmation that the author has disappeared. For the same reason, it is not enough to keep repeating (after Nietzsche) that God and man have died a common death. Instead, we must locate the space left empty by the author's disappearance, follow the distribution of gaps and breaches, and watch for the openings that this disappearance uncovers" ("What Is an Author?" 177).

analysis of the work is not sufficient and does not solve the problem of authorship. This in turn leads to the problem of, to use Foucault's terms, "'[w]hat is a work? What is this curious unity which we designate as a work? Of what elements is it composes? Is it not what an author has written?'" ("What Is an Author?" 175-76). Consequently, the very concept of a work of art, especially a literary work, is grounded upon an assumption that there is an individual author behind it. Yet, the problem is more extensive for even considering that a work has an author does not necessarily make it clear which of the individual's writings is a work of art. Here Foucault gives an example of Nietzsche's writings and poses the question as to which one should be included as his works or oeuvre, presumably not "[t]he deleted messages and the notes at the bottom of the page," "the notation of a meeting, or of an address" "or a laundry list" ("What Is an Author?" 176). As Foucault concludes, there is no such a thing as "[a] theory of the work" ("What Is an Author?" 176). Hence, the author and the work are equally problematising notions.

The second contribution to the conservation of the author whose death or complete disappearance is incumbent upon us is the idea or problem of writing. Writing spares us the reference to the author; it is not the expression of the intention of the individual. Nevertheless, the concept of writing has come to function as a means of presupposing the existence of a secret meaning which is itself a theological idea and giving writing a particular prominence is "the theological affirmation of its sacred character and the critical affirmation of its creative character" ("What Is an Author?" 176).[26] Neutral as it might seem, this concept of writing has the disadvantage of maintaining "the interplay of those representations that

[26] Foucault expands upon his contention that the idea of writing preserves the privileged status of the author: "To admit that writing is . . . subject to the test of oblivion and repression, seems to represent, in transcendental terms, the religious principle of the hidden meaning (which requires interpretation) and the critical principle of implicit significations, silent determinations, and obscured contents (which gives rise to commentary). To imagine writing as absence seems to be a simple repetition, in transcendental terms, of both the religious principle of inalterable and yet never fulfilled tradition, and the aesthetic principle of the work's survival, its perpetuation beyond the author's death, and its enigmatic *excess* in relation to him" ("What Is an Author?" 176-77).

formed a particular image of the author" ("What Is an Author?" 177). By the same token, merely holding onto the defacement or death of the author is not sufficient as it carries the afore-mentioned problems that still contribute to the author's privileged status. In other words, the proposal of the absence of the author – which has been the case "since Mallarmé" ("What Is an Author?" 177) – masks, and provides a gap for, the return to the very concept that it purports to expunge.

Subsequently, Foucault undertakes to address the issues that the author's name raises and goes on to differentiate between the author's name as a real name and the name as signifying the various functions that it fulfils; hence, he proposes his author-function theory. The author's name is a proper name and, therefore, like all proper names, has two functions. Not only does it point to a reference; it goes beyond its "indicative functions": "it is the equivalent of a description" and has accordingly multiple significations ("What Is an Author?" 177). That is, a proper name could both refer to the real person and stand for a concept or a range of concepts associated with it. Consequently, "a proper name," the author's name included, "does not have just one signification" ("What Is an Author?" 177). As a case in point, as Foucault tries to substantiate, a new discovery in Shakespeare's *oeuvre* that he did not compose some of his works, say the sonnets, would certainly and drastically modify our perception, and signification, of the function of his name, whereas a modification of where he was born would not have any influence upon his reception as an author. And herein lies the problem common to all proper names: "the links between the proper name and the individual named and between the author's name and what it names are not isomorphic and do not function in the same way" ("What Is an Author?" 177-78). Thus, "[t]he author's name," Foucault concludes, "is not . . . just a proper name like the rest" ("What Is an Author?" 178) but has other functions. The reason Foucault gives for such a difference between the author's name and a proper name is that the former is not simply a discursive element. More

importantly, the author's name has "a classificatory function" or *oeuvre* in the discourse ("What Is an Author?" 178). Consequently, the author's name does not go beyond the discourse in which it finds a place to refer to the real individual but in having a perpetual presence it defines the text and gives it a specific status. Hence, the author's name has a certain privilege and status over a proper name and especially in our age there are some discourses that embed this author-function but equally others that may not do so.[27]

Now that Foucault has laid bare that the author has a function and a privileged status beyond a proper name and now he has clarified its discrepancies with a proper name, he moves on to address and enumerate the idiosyncrasies of this function, that is, the factors that give rise to the functionality of the author's name. First and foremost, Foucault provides a historical survey of the relationship between the idea of ownership as well as appropriation and a work. As responsibility and accountability were required for any transgression against profaneness, the concept of the author was brought into existence by an act of ownership. The coming into existence of authors made them liable to punishment in case of any transgression. As Foucault puts it, "[t]exts, books, and discourses really began to have authors (other than mythical, 'sacralized' and 'sacralizing' figures) to the extent that authors became subject to punishment, that is, to the extent that discourses could be transgressive" ("What Is an Author?" 179). In Foucault's terms,

> Once a system of ownership for texts came into being, once strict rules concerning author's rights, author-publisher relations, rights of reproduction, and related matters were enacted – at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century – the possibility of transgression attached to the act of writing took on, more and more, the form of an imperative peculiar to literature. ("What Is an Author?" 179)

[27] Foucault makes a distinction between a writer and an author in that, for instance, a letter has a writer but not an author and accordingly "[t]he author-function is . . . characteristic of the mode of existence, circulation, and functioning of a certain discourses within a society" ("What Is an Author?" 179).

Foucault takes the eighteenth and early nineteenth century as responsible for a change in the perception of a literary work since before that time he claims that a work of art would be valued only based upon its content and would not need an author for its authentication and circulation.[28] In contrast, scientific texts would be accredited and certified only if they had the name of the author.

Nonetheless, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries constitute a turning point in that it was this historical moment that saw the reversal of this process of authentication of scientific and literary works with the introduction of copyright law Act in 1709 in Britain under the title of Statute of Anne or alternatively the Copyright Act 1710.[29] The Act was approved a year later in the British Parliament and some decades later in France as well as Germany by including and regarding literary works as intellectual properties. Accordingly, scientific discourses began to be published according to the contribution they would make, rather than because they had an author, and anonymity has since dominated the scientific discourse "and the inventor's name served only to christen a theorem, proposition, particular effect, property, body, group of elements, or pathological syndrome" (180), whereas obscurity for literary works has not been tolerated. Anonymity instead becomes a conundrum to be solved and literary evaluation comes to rely heavily upon the author-function. Although Foucault does not mention it, the Copyright Act 1710 was replaced by the Copyright Act of 1842 that gave the copyright to authors, rather than publishers, making the author-function more significant. As a result, as Foucault contends, in our analysis of a literary work we would like to ask "from where does it come, who wrote it, when, under what circumstances, or beginning with what design?" and its signification has varied and

[28] In Foucault's terms, "[t]here was a time when the texts that we today call 'literary' (narratives, stories, epics, tragedies, comedies) were accepted, put into circulation, and valorized without any question about the identity of their author; their anonymity caused no difficulties since their ancientness, whether real or imagined, was regarded as a sufficient guarantee of their status" ("What Is an Author?" 179-80).

[29] As Ronan Deazley in *Rethinking Copyright: History, Theory, Language* (2006) has it, the Statute of Anne is viewed as "a historic moment in the development of copyright" (3).

dependent upon our answers to these questions ("What Is an Author?" 180). This is the second point made by Foucault upon the emergence of the author-function that not all discourses enjoy the author-function. In other words, the author-function is not present in all discourses in all times and is not therefore a universal feature. As Foucault concludes his second point, "the author-function today plays an important role in our view of literary works" ("What Is an Author?" 180) and by the same token needs to be dealt with.

The author-function, as Foucault arrives at his third thesis, is not the result of a spontaneous ascription of the work to an individual. By contrast, it is the upshot "of a complex operation which constructs a certain rational being that we call 'author'" ("What Is an Author?" 180). In other words, the author is *constructed* in the complexities of a given cultural context and its function varies according to the time and discourse. Likewise, Foucault notes, "[w]e do not construct a 'philosophical author' as we do a 'poet', just as, in the eighteenth century, one did not construct a novelist as we do today" ("What Is an Author?" 180). As he contends, modern literary criticism has defined and constructed the author in the same fashion that the Christian tradition approved or discarded texts ("What Is an Author?" 180).[30] Modern literary criticism still acts according to the same model by regarding the author as a reference, the ground upon which one could account for and explain the text and its intricacies. Moreover, as Foucault argues:

[30] The similarity between modern literary criticism and the Christian tradition, as Foucault expounds, is that the former "uses methods similar to those that Christian exegesis employed when trying to prove the value of a text by its author's saintliness" ("What Is an Author?" 181). As a case in point, Saint Jerome (a priest who lived during the 4th and 5th century) utilised four criteria to evaluate and authenticate works whether they belong to the same author or not as follows: "(1) if among several books attributed to an author one is inferior to the others, it must be withdrawn from the list of the author's works (the author is therefore defined as a constant level of value); (2) the same should be done if certain texts contradict the doctrine expounded in the author's other works (the author is thus defined as a field of conceptual or theoretical coherence): (3) one must also exclude works that are written in a different style, containing words and expressions not ordinarily found in the writer's production (the author is here conceived as a stylistic unity); (4) finally, passages quoting statements that were made, or mentioning events that occurred after the author's death must be regarded as interpolated texts (the author is here seen as a historical figure at the crossroads of a certain number of events)" ("What Is an Author?" 181).

> The author is also the principle of a certain unity of writing – all differences, having to be resolved, at least in part, by the principles of evolution, maturation, or influence. The author also serves to neutralize the contradictions that may emerge in a series of texts: there must be – at a certain level of his thought or desire, of his consciousness or unconscious – a point where contradictions are resolved, where incompatible elements are at last tied together or organized around a fundamental or originating contradiction. ("What Is an Author?" 181)

In other words, the author unites the text and is a source upon which all the paradoxes and tensions are solved. Andrew Bennett expands upon Foucault's thesis as follows:

> [T]he tensions or self-contradictions within a text might be explained from, say, a Marxist perspective in terms of the subject's contradictory class status, or from a Freudian perspective in terms of his or her unacknowledged desires, his or her unconscious, or from a "humanist" perspective in terms of a certain psychology and the ongoing vicissitudes of and variabilities in a writer's life. In each case, Foucault proposes, the particular and sociohistorically specific conception of the author allows the work a unity which encompasses and ultimately explains its contradictions. (*The Author* 25)

This is how modern literary criticism caused the author-function to exist.

Foucault turns to his fourth thesis in the series by proposing that there is a difference between the author-function and the real author and that not all discourses have the former whilst others do have indicators which refer to the real author. Thus, these references to the author in a text play dissimilar roles in a discourse bearing the author-function from the ones which do not. Foucault states what he considers the obvious, about which there is a general consensus, that "in a novel narrated in the first person, neither the first person pronoun, nor

the present indicative refer exactly either to the writer or to the moment in which he writes, but rather to an alter ego whose distance from the author varies, often changing in the course of the work" ("What Is an Author?" 182).[31] This alter ego is, to Bennett, "close to arguing for the integrity of the so-called 'implied author' (but without the hierarchy of roles assumed in Wayne Booth's model)" (*The Author* 26). Hence, the distinction between the author-function and the real author is made clear and points to multiple selves that the author-function possess.[32] Foucault has made it clear that the author is not a signifier nor a transcendental signified but a signifier that leads to another signifier which in turn leads to another one throughout history and not a single unified point of reference.

Finally, Foucault explicates two distinctive realms in one of which the author fulfils two dissimilar functions. In the first, the author-function refers to a work or *oeuvre* of an individual whereas in the other it becomes what Foucault calls "founders of discursivity" and he goes on to expound upon the latter. Accordingly, one might be an author of not just a book but a theorem, philosophy, a discourse – a category under which other writers find their place. This author, according to Foucault's contention, is in a "transdiscursive" position ("What Is an Author?" 183) the examples of which could vary from the ancient times and include authors from Aristotle and Homer through to contemporary figures such as Freud and Marx. What is distinctive about them is that "they are not just the authors of their own works. They have produced something else: the possibilities and the rules for the formation of other

[31] Foucault continues, "[i]t would be just as wrong to equate the author with the real writer as to equate him with the fictitious speaker; the author-function is carried out and operates in the scission itself, in this division and this distance" ("What Is an Author?" 182).

[32] Foucault elucidates his point by bringing an example from a preface to a treatise on mathematics in that one can detect three simultaneous selves. The first one refers to conditions of its composition and "is identical neither in its position nor in its functioning to the self that speaks in the course of a demonstration, and that appears in the form of 'I conclude' or 'I suppose'. In the first case, the 'I' refers to an individual without an equivalent who, in a determined place and time, completed a certain task; in the second, the 'I' indicates an instance and a level of demonstration which any individual could perform provided that he accepts the same system of symbols, play of axioms, and set of previous demonstrations. We could also, in the same treatise, locate a third self, one that speaks to tell the work's meaning, the obstacles encountered, the results obtained, and the remaining problems; this self is situated in the field of already existing or yet-to-appear mathematical discourses" ("What Is an Author?" 182). He also points out that all these three are fulfilled simultaneously by the author-function which does not simply refer to an individual (182).

texts" ("What Is an Author?" 183) whereas a novelist is only the author of his/her own book and nothing more. As in the case of Marx and Freud, Foucault argues, they are the founders of "an endless possibility of discourse" ("What Is an Author?" 183). Foucault considers a possible objection regarding whether the author-functionality of a writer like Anne Radcliffe could go beyond her book as she is famous for establishing what came to be known as the Gothic novel. As a reply to this objection, he maintains that although in the case of Radcliffe she gathers analogies and similarities possible under the generic concept of the Gothic novel, Marx and Freud, for instance, not only brought about analogies but made peculiar distinctions. "They," he continues, "have created a possibility for something other than their discourse, yet something belonging to what they founded" ("What Is an Author?" 183). In other words, "[i]n practising psychoanalysis or developing a Marxist analysis, one therefore continually refers back to the originator, to the 'author', of these discourses" (Bennett *The Author* 27). This implies that, as Seán Bruke puts it, "wherever an 'ism' attaches itself to a proper name, there some degree of transdiscursivity has arisen" (*The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida* 47).

Foucault also makes a clear distinction between the founder of discursivity and an establisher of a science in that in the first category there is a continuous reference made to the originator whereas the authentication of Galileo or Newton for example is measured and tested not by reference to them but by the science of physics. Moreover, as in the case of the founders of discursivity the "return to the origin" (Foucault "What Is an Author?" 184) perpetually transforms the discourse. As a case in point, Foucault maintains, "[r]e-examination of Galileo's text may well change our knowledge of the history of mechanics, but it will never be able to change mechanics itself" whereas re-evaluation of Freud's idea effects a drastic change in our perception of "psychoanalysis itself" ("What Is an Author?" 185). Nevertheless, Foucault confesses that such a distinction is sometimes hard to make but

the reason for it is to demonstrate to us how the author-function operates in complex ways. By the same token, he concludes, in order to address the problem and complexities of the author-function construction, a great need is felt for the examination of:

> [D]iscourses not only in terms of their expressive value or formal transformations, but according to their modes of existence. The modes of circulation, valorization, attribution, and appropriation of discourses vary with each culture and are modified within each. The manner in which they are articulated according to social relationships can be more readily understood, I believe, in the activity of the author-function and in its modifications, than in the themes or concepts that discourses set in motion. ("What Is an Author?" 185)

The author is an ideological construct whose existence is to help us overcome our fear of "the proliferation of meaning" ("What Is an Author?" 186). It is therefore our anxiety concerning control or power that makes us feel the need for a finite meaning since lack of it enhances our vulnerability. Thus, in "pure romanticism" ("What Is an Author?" 186) the full disappearance or death of the individual author and the author-function is required as a solution. The future culture will be free of the author-function and anonymity will rule as Foucault foresees.

What is shared by Barthes, Derrida and Foucault is the critique of epistemology and the question of the possibility of the subject. For instance, Foucault considers 1800 to be the birth of man. As Burke puts it, according to Foucault "man only came into being as the subject of knowledge in 1800, and this opening is marked by Kant who introduced the anthropological question to philosophical reflection" (*The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida* 34). Foucault comments elsewhere that, "[i]t is comforting, however, and a source of profound relief to think that man is only a recent invention, a figure not yet two centuries old, a new wrinkle in our knowledge,

and that he will disappear again as soon as that knowledge has discovered a new form" (*The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* xxiii). Therefore, if the concept of the subject or man is challenged and is absent from discourse, then the assumption of the possibility of arriving at any sort of knowledge becomes futile. As Burke expands:

> For should it be that all thought proceeds necessarily by way and by virtue of language, then the absence of the subject from language translates into the absence of the subject or consciousness from knowledge. If knowledge itself, or what we take to be knowledge, is entirely intradiscursive, and if, as it is claimed, the subject has no anchorage within discourse, then man as the subject of knowledge is thoroughly displaced and dislodged. (*The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida* 9-10)

As in humanism, it is the experience of the subject that precedes and leads to knowledge, the absence of the subject results in the impossibility of any claim towards grasping knowledge.

The Paradox of Self-referentiality: Jorge Luis Borges

Arguably, long before the death of the author became a critical orthodoxy in the 1980s, with the dissemination of these key essays, Derrida's "Structure, Sign and Play" (1966), Barthes' "The Death of the Author" (1967) and Foucault's "What is an Author?" (1969), fiction writers such as Jorge Luis Borges in *Labyrinths* (1944), Samuel Beckett in *The Unnamable* (1953) and Vladimir Nabokov in *Pale Fire* (1962) – subsequently viewed as proto-postmodernists – had already shown a fascination and preoccupation with many of the themes and motifs later expressed by these theorists. These earlier fictional works carry or seem to anticipate postmodern concerns and raised crucial questions concerning textuality, self-referentiality, truth, authorial voice, intentionality, knowledge and originality. Borges is evidently fascinated and intrigued by the paradox of self-reference in many of the short stories and essays in the collection entitled *Labyrinths*[33] – which, as the name implies, could be an allegory of fiction as a maze where truth or the point of destination is always deferred and the truth seeker is lost and frustrated in an infinite regress.[34] An incredulity towards originality and the ability to access or achieve the truth or knowledge – one of the chief concerns of postmodern and post-structuralist thinkers such as Foucault, Derrida and Barthes – is already a recurring theme in Borges' short stories.

In a seminal essay for postmodernism, written in 1967, John Barth takes up Borges and praises his writing as the epitome of what he calls the "literature of exhaustion," a literature that shows the impossibility of novelty and originality as opposed to, by implication, the earlier Romantic view of art where the poet is viewed as an originating and creative genius. Barth points to Borges' fascination with the story-within-the-story structure

[33] *Labyrinths* is a collection of selected short stories written in the 1940s (they originally appeared in *Ficciones* in 1944) by Borges and were translated into English and published in 1962.

[34] Self-referentiality is a philosophical issue "since antiquity" (Bolander). Among these paradoxes are the liar's paradox, Russell's paradox, and Curry's paradox. The liar paradox is "often credited to Eubulides the Megarian who lived in the 4th century BC" (Bolander). An example of a self-referential statement (the liar paradox) is: "this sentence is not true."

of *One Thousand and One Nights* in which Scheherazade's activity of starting the story over again is "a literary illustration of the *regressus in infinitum*," "an image of the exhaustion, or attempted exhaustion, or possibilities – in this case literary possibilities" (73): this is a literary performance of the philosophical conundrum of self-reference. As he continues,

> Borges defines the Baroque as "that style which deliberately exhausts (or tries to exhaust) its possibilities and borders upon its own caricature." While his work is *not* Baroque, except intellectually (the Baroque was never so terse, laconic, economical), it suggests the view that intellectual and literary history has been Baroque, and has pretty well exhausted the possibilities of novelty. (74)

In an essay entitled "Partial Magic in the *Quixote*," Borges manifests his disturbance at and simultaneous fascination with Scheherazade's story that for him "[n]one is more perturbing than that of the six hundred and second night, magical among all the nights. On that night, the king hears from the queen his own story. He hears the beginning of the story, which comprises all the others and also – monstrously – itself" ("Partial Magic in the *Quixote*" 230). In the fashion of Scheherazade on the six hundredth and second night, Borges practices this starting-a-story-over-again pattern and his narrators tell their own story and become characters and simultaneous readers of their own stories. Borges' cardinal theme of infinite regress also reverberates in "The Garden of Forking Paths," a multiverse each of whose paths forks and leads to a possibility, an idea that foresaw the idea of multiverse.

Borges' fiction, at the vanguard of postmodernist fiction and theory, is a narcissistic narrative reflection on and investigation of its own ontological and epistemological status. Reality or knowledge is not an autonomous independent objective entity which can be represented by language, but rather is constructed in a textual layer and is therefore a textual perspective with aesthetic aspects; hence, both knowledge and existence are textual. His

fiction is an epitome, and anticipation, of Derrida's dictum "there is nothing outside of the text" (*Of Grammatology* 158).

Borges' critique of originality (a Romantic idea) also manifests itself in the circular, serpentine, labyrinthine (hence, the title of the collection) status and nature of the library in "The Library of Babel." It shows itself inductively in the infinite abyss of text, language, in the story where the contemporary reader, together with the character himself (or herself), is no longer Theseus who, with the help of thread, is able to find his/her way back from it. The library that Borges is describing, with its "infinite number of hexagonal galleries", where "there is a mirror which faithfully duplicates all appearances" ("The Library of Babel" 78), implies a spatial web where different books sit, each providing a perspective that possibly negates and stands at odds with all others: that is the nature of a library, a multifaceted place/space where a great number of books are kept each encompassing a distinctive world of words. Borges' analogy of the universe as a library is contagious as the existence of the library reminds us that there is no exclusive and ultimate "Knowledge," or ultimate truth, reality and knowledge are always textually constructed and subject to the contextualisations and rules of diverse language games, including the game of self-reference, the paradoxical experience of finding your way through an infinite labyrinth.

There is a consensus, a "superstition," amongst the people, that there, in the library, exists "the Man of the Book" and that somewhere there must be a core book with instructions for decoding all others, the master narrative, "the formula and perfect compendium *of all the rest:* some librarian has gone through it and he is analogous to a god" in search of whom people have spent their time in vain (83). Borges flags up the human tendency to believe in a condition of metaphysical presence – a noumenon or realm of ideal forms – that is anchored in a centre which actually cannot be located, never accessed, even if it exists. In other words, the knowledge of the library (the universe) could be never attained as we are always bound to

find ourselves lost in a never ending textual web. In addition, given the lack of a transcendental presence, an ultimate chief Librarian, everything becomes possible, everything becomes equally true. Each hall of the library may lead to another gallery, a different possible identical world and a "spiral stairway, which sinks abysmally and soars upwards to remote distances" (78) which includes and anticipates all possibilities of alphabetic combinations. As the narrator has it, "I cannot combine some characters *dhcmrlchtdj* which the divine Library has not foreseen and which in one of its secret tongues do not contain a terrible meaning. No one can articulate a syllable which is not filled with tenderness and fear, which is not, in one of these languages, the powerful name of a god. To speak is to fall into tautology" (84-5). Nothing could be written which is not already there; hence, the text questions novelty and originality.

Borges is amongst the first wave of postmodern authors to begin to experiment with characters who are conscious of their status as characters who are reading their own story, though the prototype of course remains Don Quixote, perhaps the first fully fledged novel character. Borges' characters are aware of their fictitious existence and in the process of seeking knowledge realise they are trapped forever in the textual labyrinth where no originator has control over them; hence their fate along with the meaning of the text becomes fluid and amorphous. As the narrator in "The Library of Babel" realises, "[t]he certitude that everything has been written negates us or turns us into phantoms" (85). They are self-conscious characters who know that they are written: they are a product of a text, are textual, delimited by the play of signification. They are reading (or searching for) the story of their own condition/existence. In the vein of Scheherazade and Hamlet, the characters in "The Garden of Forking Paths" and the narrator of "Borges and I" are all readers of their own story. The idea of the universe as a library, put forth in the beginning of Borges' story, suggests how we are all embedded in texts: how we are all in that sense characters in books (texts) who are

able to consciously intuit our status as constructs or fictions, not produced by an Author-God, but constantly rewritten and reinscribed through the differential webs of linguistic and semiotic systems that are part of an infinite web of language games. As Alberto in "The Garden of Forking Paths" tells the narrator,

> Before unearthing this letter, I had questioned myself about the ways in which a book can be infinite. I could think of nothing other than a cyclic volume, a circular one. A book whose last page was identical with the first, a book which had the possibility of continuing indefinitely. I remembered too that night which is at the middle of the Thousand and One Nights when Scheherazade (through a magical oversight of the copyist) begins to relate word for word the story of the Thousand and One Nights, establishing the risk of coming once again to the night when she must repeat it, and thus on to infinity. I imagined as well a Platonic, hereditary work, transmitted from father to son, in which each new individual adds a chapter or corrects with pious care the pages of his elders. ("The Garden of Forking Paths" 50-1)

This is also a self-conscious reflection and commentary on the status of the story of "Garden of Forking Path" itself; hence, Alberto, as a reader of the story in which he is posited. As the narrator reveals, "'[w]e descendants of Ts'ui Pên', I replied, 'continue to curse that monk. Their publication was senseless. The book is an indeterminate heap of contradictory drafts. I examined it once: in the third chapter the hero dies, in the fourth he is alive'" (50). Like the story of "The Garden of Forking Paths," the manuscripts that the narrator's grandfather has left are a heap of contradictory statements. The narrator's delving into the riddle of Ts'ui Pên' is analogous to that of solving his own problems and a reflection upon his own ontological status in the manner of Oedipus in response to the Sphinx's conundrum. But this has now become a conscious search for identity.

This also seems to be an anticipation of Foucault's remark that although story-telling was once a sign of postponing an imminent death, things have changed in the contemporary world of writing where writing has become a place where the author as a God-like figure controlling and grounding the world and meaning of the text, is now dead. But neither is he any longer a projection or representation of the author's individuality: "The work, which once had the duty of providing immortality, now possesses the right to kill, to be its author's murderer" ("What Is an Author?" 175) since the author is nothing but a product of the text. In such a textual world, everything becomes a possibility. As the narrator of "The Garden of Forking Paths" puts it, "[*t*]*he author of an atrocious undertaking ought to imagine that he has already accomplished it, ought to impose upon himself a future as irrevocable as the past*" (47). It is the power of language, text, that when you state a word, it comes into a sui generis textual existence where everything in terms of time becomes possible: the simultaneous existence of past and present and the end of the story itself, where the narrator is reading the news of the murder he has already committed before he commits it.

Related to this is Borges' preoccupation with and interest in the paradox of self-reference – when the work contains a copy of itself – that is a recurring motif in the various *mise-en-abymes* and diegetic violations or metalepses of postmodernism. In Borges, the device functions as a dimension of the textual reflection on the ontological status of being human and being a character. As he contends in the essay "Partial Magic in the *Quixote*", "[e]very novel is an ideal plane inserted into the realm of reality; Cervantes takes pleasure in confusing the objective and the subjective, the world of the reader and the world of the book" (229). In other words, fiction occupies a strange ontological category where it is a textually materialist and idealist realm, something whose finality is to make believe and yet that takes its place in significant and agential ways in the materially real world of history. So the strange and unique no place and no time of fiction may be extended into the real and into the

realm of the infinite, hence its flaunting in Borges, as in Derrida, of the textual condition of deferral. Borges imagines the way in which infinite series of parallel universes, as in "The Garden of Forking Paths" or "The Library of Babel," exist each with their own kind of world story. As he reflects:

> Why does it disturb us that the map be included in the map and the thousand and one nights in the book of the *Thousand and One Nights?* Why does it disturb us that Don Quixote be a reader of the *Quixote* and Hamlet a spectator of *Hamlet?* I believe I have found the reason: these inversions suggest that if the characters of a fictional work can be readers or spectators, we, its readers or spectators, can be fictitious. In 1833, Carlyle observed that the history of the universe is an infinite sacred book that all men write and read and try to understand, and in which they are also written. ("Partial Magic in the *Quixote*" 231)

Borges' oeuvre is a continuous experiment with such paradoxes of self-reference. In "Borges and I," with exemplary economy and condensation, he raises the question of who we are and how we can have knowledge of the "self" that we are: to what extent in reading a self is that self necessarily always a character? This ouroboric story-within-story which tells the story of itself cancels its own originary centre and questions the nature of the subjectivity of its creator.

Borges anticipates and experiments with the idea of the author/self-relation as a manifestation of a dissociated or split personality, a variation on the Double which recurs throughout later postmodern writing (in Nabokov, Fowles and Auster for example) by putting distance between Borges as well-known author and public figure and the private Borges indicated by the pronoun "I," in order to locate the core self – a humanist assumption – but is thwarted in his efforts at unification and location: "I do not know which of us has written this

page" ("Borges and I" 283). In the beginning the narrator – the private "I" – presumes that the other self, that is, Borges as author "is the one things happen to" (282), whereas in the process and in the end, the I of the text we are reading encounters the same fate: things happen over which he has no control and there is no "essence" of Borges that might unite the public and the private into one identity. Borges notices instead that his public figure and writing have instead been a threat to his search for a core self, the one that only he knows: "It is no effort for me to confess that he has achieved some valid pages, but those pages cannot save me" (282); he therefore undertakes to write about it but fails, as this writing too has become part of Borges' oeuvre to which things happen. As for Foucault, locating the author in relation to the author function is no simple task. This private "I" which is at first distinguished from the public Borges, becomes public as a deictic and provides a space that the reader fills in and takes command of: the reader identifies with the "I" the text in the process of reading and thereby transforms that "I" in a dialogic process that is one of phantasmal crossing, becoming in effect not only the reader but also the writer of the text. The apparent autonomy and independence of his imagined subjectivity is lost and exposed as having only ever been an illusion. In addition, in crossing over to become the "I" of the text, the reader too becomes textualised as well as contextualised and accordingly subject to its language games. There is a creator – Borges as a public figure – who is a product of another creator – the "I" of the text – who is in turn the product of another creator – the reader, and so on ad infinitum. Also, the narrator knows Borges only through writing, as do his readers: "I know of Borges from the mail and see his name on a list of professors or in a biographical dictionary" (282). As any special privilege and ability to know Borges is undermined so does Borges' reflection on the epistemological status of man follow from his identity crisis.

By the same token, Borges' private self (the I of the text) becomes fictitious (artistic) and writing, although at first "intended" to be the search for selfhood and its distinctiveness

with a brand name, becomes instead its murderer; the parallel with Foucault's reflections are again apparent. As Barth has it, "[w]hen the characters in a work of fiction become readers or authors of the fiction they're in, we're reminded of the fictitious aspect of our own existence" (73). Earlier than Foucault, Borges demonstrates that from the very moment that one undertakes to write about one's own authority, self, agency, in order to establish his/her autonomy and authority, one is trapped, inscribed and embedded in the materiality of language and accordingly becomes fictional. These games with public and private identities are harbingers of Foucault's concept of the author-function, anticipating too the postmodernist autobiographies such as *Roland Barthes* by Roland Barthes.

If Borges is the public image known to his readers through writing, this personal private self ("I") becomes analogous and identified with Borges – the speaker (the intended to be Borges' private real independent self) becoming a character in Borges' fictions – and not separate from him; this "I" is now part of his public recognition carried on even in the reading of this short story, now part of his *oeuvre* and written and with each reading dissipating any possibility of locating a core essence, self, identity. How in any case could this narrator's voice be identified with the writer (Jorge Luis Borges) in this story, but not identified as such in Borges' other stories? We are reminded here surely of Barthes' observation of how the authorial voice is lost and becomes one amongst other voices in a text. But Borges is already questioning and problematising the Romantic/expressive concept of authorship and the humanist/existential concept of a core self in ways that seem familiarly postmodern. Although the narrator attempts to distinguish between Borges as a real person, the "I," and Borges as an author, here referred to as "Borges," he fails but his failure and the impossibility of such distinction is deliberately acknowledged.

Chapter 2: Women Writers, from Madness to Agency

Introduction: The Woman Writer and Authorship

It is hardly surprising that almost all the discussions on and around the concept of the demise of the author as a critical culture erupted concurrently in 1967 with the publication, as we have seen, of Roland Barthes' widely cited and highly influential essay "The Death of the Author" (1967), Jacques Derrida's "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences" (1967) and Michael Foucault's "What is an Author?" (1969). Similarly, within a few years, reader response and reception theory begin to focus on the practices of reading, as in Wolfgang Iser's influential "Indeterminacy and the Reader's Response in Prose Fiction" (1971) and "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach" (1972), with its shift of focus from author to the reader and/or the text in the process of interpretation. The period can be regarded as not only a turning point in critical thought but specifically in the understanding and use of concepts related to the discussion of the author including centre, intention, identity, the idea of the transcendental signified and the notion of presence. In an introduction to Derrida's essay of 1967, David Lodge (2000) considers the piece as belonging to "a historic moment in the traffic of ideas between Europe and America" (*Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader* 87). Likewise, in his article, Derrida speaks of "an event" or "a rupture," a time during which new thinking begins concerning "the structurality of the structure" ("Structure Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" 90-1). Similarly, historicising the idea of the death of the author, Foucault points out "the *moment* of this effacement," that is, that of the author ("What Is an Author?" 176 emphasis added).[35] All

[35] "Where and how does this decentering, this thinking the structurality of structure, occur? It would be somewhat naïve to refer to an event, a doctrine, or an author in order to designate this occurrence. It is no doubt part of the totality of an era, our own, but still it as always already begun to proclaim itself and begun to work" (Derrida "Structure Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" 92). In the same vein, comparing the oral tradition in which telling story, as in the case of Scheherazade, was to immortalise the hero and forever postpone death, to the present, Foucault notices a new shift in the concept of the author, a shift which is

these shape a historic moment and define the dominant atmosphere of the critical culture of the period. All three theorists regarded their insights as a radical departure. But their work is arguably still patriarchal in the sense that although these theories – deconstructive, Poststructuralist and post-phenomenological – provided vehement critiques of, and subverted, the notion of authority and authorship, none of them explicitly address questions of gender even as concepts such as supplementarity and decentring might promise to offer insights into the power relations that structure gender binaries. All three ignore the existence and problem of women as authors, and especially women's writing specifically as a critique of patriarchal conceptions of the author. It is hardly insignificant therefore that at precisely this historical moment, a time of "the destruction of every *voice*" when "the *voice* loses its origin" and "the author enters into *his* own death" (Barthes "The Death of the Author" 146 emphasis added), some women set out to make their own "voices" heard. Almost coinciding with second wave feminism, the Death of the Author debate was and has remained curiously male in orientation.

Being and acting as an Author-God, Barthes' idea of the author to be killed is certainly associated with masculinity, though gender is not something addressed in Barthes' essay. From a contemporary perspective, the male pronoun resonates throughout the essay. Yet this fixity of the pronoun seems to contradict Barthes' proto-postmodern and poststructuralist concept of the slipperiness of binary oppositions whose signifieds are never fixed and identities attainable. Could it be that these seminal theorists were still reluctant to bring the notion of the author as a woman into consideration? Yet, writing about the death of the author, speaking of the author as a guarantor of meaning who needs to be killed and who is purported to have ultimate control and superiority, implies the critique of an authoritarian tyrant – in referring to the author, Barthes uses the adverb "tyrannically" (147) – a

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characteristic of the time: "Our culture has metamorphosed this idea of narrative, or writing, as something designed to ward off death" and that "[t]he work, which once had the duty of providing immortality, now possesses the right to kill, to be its author's murderer" ("What Is an Author?" 175).

designation more obviously associated with masculine rather than feminine power. Considering Barthes' polemic that "the voice loses its origin" (147) and that language itself "ceaselessly calls into questions all origins" (149), a significant question rises here: what if women, with few exceptions, have never had a voice to lose its origin, or what if they have never been treated as the site of origin in a piece of work at all? Given that the author – "His" voice – which Barthes speaks of is a theological concept – an apotheosised figure – and God too are man-made, discursive constructs,[36] surely both are reflections of patriarchal laws and structures. As Seán Burke (1992) puts it, "the liberation of the text from its author is to reiterate the liberation of the world from God" (*The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida* 24); if this killing of the author, as Barthes points out, is "an anti-theological activity, an activity that is truly revolutionary since to refuse to fix meaning is, in the end, to refuse God and his hypostases – reason, science, law" ("The Death of the Author" 150), then why is there silence around the question of the normative gendering of authorship?

Therefore, Burke is quite right in arguing that there are authors who cannot be included in Barthes' concept of the author:

> The attributes of omnipotence, omnipresence, of being the first uncaused cause, purpose and end of the world are all affirmed *a priori* of the Christian God: they inhere in his definition, without them He is not God. Not so for the author though: we can, without contradiction, conceive of authors who do not issue "single theological messages," who do not hold a univocal mastery over their texts. There are indeed even conceptions of authorship that are

[36] Derrida contends that "in the absence of a centre or origin, everything became discourse – provided we can agree on this word – that is to say, a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences" ("Structure Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" 91).

> determinately anti-theological. (*The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida* 25)

Barthes' argument may not be applicable then to women writers who share his anti-theological critique, but his position fails to consider their arguments. Barthes seems concerned merely about an apotheosised concept of the author who reflects a Christian God whose rules and laws are arguably patriarchal and misogynous and one is hard pressed to think of a female tyrant or tyrannical regime in history whose laws are equally matriarchal and misandric. In Barthes' essay, "[n]ot only is the author to be compared with a tyrannical deity, but also with *bourgeois man himself*" (Burke *The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida* 26 emphasis added) and this bourgeois man cannot but be masculine. Nonetheless, what Barthes seems to overlook is this "false assumption that if a magisterial status is denied the author, then the very concept of the author itself becomes otiose" (27).

In other words, Barthes seems to be concerned only with a deified God-like author figure that seems intrinsically allied with culturally expressed modes of masculinity. What a number of important women writers of the period achieve, however, is a critique of the very notion of the death of the author as a male concept through subverting the patriarchal discourse in their own language, drawing upon postmodernist critique of the enlightened rational mind and its implicit claim to universality. As Patricia Waugh (1996) suggests, "feminism has been drawn into that postmodern critique which accuses Enlightenment thinkers of setting up so-called 'universal' categories of knowledge and value which actually exclude entire communities or groups of people, and of claiming 'objectivity' for knowledge which actually reflects vested interests" ("Postmodernism and Feminism" 344). Even before the establishment of second wave feminism, women who began their writing careers in the 1950s and early 1960s – such as Muriel Spark, Iris Murdoch and Sylvia Plath – already

embarked on a critique of those properties associated by Barthes with the concept of the author: his majestic power, his rationality and his scientific discourse, which are all patriarchal.

My contention is that much of the theoretical and philosophical debate around the concept of authorship in the moment of High Theory in the 1980s had been engaged earlier in literary fiction by writers themselves. Theoretically, feminist discourses would not appear until the 1970s (Greer, Millett, Firestone) though Virginia Woolf had directly addressed the question of female authorship in *A Room of One's Own* (1928). Yet, writers as various as Doris Lessing, Margaret Drabble and Muriel Spark began to address such questions from the late fifties and early sixties. Spark's early to mid-career writing directly expresses concerns with the patriarchal discourse that had dominated society and literary cultures by bringing to the fore obsessions and problems that had beset all women under patriarchy, but particularly women writers as they sought to counteract or challenge male dominated discourses. An abiding preoccupation in much of this writing and particularly in that of Spark, is the desire to lay bare the patriarchal binary that, in order to protect a concept of pure rationality as male, promulgated assumptions defining women as more driven by irrational emotional responses and with tendencies therefore towards the hysteric. Bearing in mind that hysteria etymologically means suffering in the uterus/womb (and that hysterectomy, derived from this root, refers to removal of the womb), and given prevailing discourses connecting creativity and art with madness, women writers were particularly prone to being regarded as hysteric and mad and the intellectual life too was regarded as a threat to female well-being. Because of its prevalence amongst women, hysteria was widely regarded as the "female disease" (Gilbert and Gubar 53) throughout the late nineteenth and much of the twentieth century. Despite its disappearance from official psychiatric handbooks, the diagnosis still remained

pervasive and lingered on much longer in general cultural perceptions of women.[37] In the early 50s, as Elaine Showalter writes, "psychiatrists prematurely announced the death of hysteria" just as scientists thought they conquered infectious diseases thanks to antibiotics (*Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Culture* 4).[38] But hysteria might be re-engineered through writing into a reverse discourse describing the conditions of women's suffering under patriarchal law and seen as a consequence of identity production under patriarchy. Even in cases where women might be seen to try to adapt themselves to patriarchal society and its norms, they might also be seen to fall into related psychosomatic diseases such as anorexia and agoraphobia (53-4). Though hysteria as a diagnosis lost its prominence by the 1920s, it is perhaps hardly surprising that it returned to prominence, after the socially conservative gender politics of the 1950s, to occupy a central position in the work of writers such as Lessing, Drabble and Spark. Interestingly, this return was accompanied by an unusually focused preoccupation with questions around female authorship in the 1960s, as in *The Golden Notebook* (1962), *The Millstone* (1963), *The Waterfall* (1969) and *The Driver's Seat* (1970). But as Elaine Showalter (1993) suggests, "[f]or some writers, hysteria has been claimed as the first step on the road to feminism, a specifically feminine pathology that speaks to and against patriarchy" ("Hysteria, Feminism, and Gender" 286). For Showalter**,** the concept can be turned around to signify a mode of protest, but its normative use remained negatively attached to women and also to men looked down on as effeminate and treated with disgust or marginalized in mainstream society. In this view, hysterical symptoms reflect a biologically essentialist view that connects women with the means of reproduction and regards any intellectual engagement as an irrational attempt on their part to compete with

[37] Mark S. Micale in "On the 'disappearance' of hysteria. A study in the Clinical Deconstruction of a Diagnosis" (1993) points out a decline in the diagnosis of hysteria in the early twenty first century due to a change in understanding of the nature of hysteria.

[38] Many reasons are offered for the disappearance of hysteria from psychiatric books, among which was the argument that "hysteria was really a Victorian disorder, a female reaction to sexual repression and limited opportunities, which," as it was thought, "diminished with the advent of modernism" (Showalter *Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Culture* 4).

men; deviation from maternal duty the beginning of madness and an unnatural disruption to reproductive abilities (297). If knowledge is a source of power, women are overtly or more subtly ostracised from power and authority by restricting access to the realm of education, thought and intellectual pursuit. Hysteria is then the symptom and the potential source of cure: as Showalter has it: "feminism" becomes "only a healthier form of hysteria" (290).

Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (published in France in 1949) was an early important expression of the need to reconsider the subjectivity of women and the generation of women writers whose careers were launched in the late 1950s and 1960s – Lessing, Spark, Drabble, Plath – encountered her work during their college years. Her call was for women to attend to the fact that they have failed to bring about a change in the way they are represented, universalised, naturalised and therefore stereotypically defined: "woman is viewed by biology, psychoanalysis, and historical materialism" (28). She points out that despite the black and the proletarian's attempts to assert a collective race and class identity, women have never been able to say "We" and have therefore drawn upon men's vocabulary to refer to themselves (18). In pointing to the patriarchal representation of women in literature in which they have been consistently represented as a subordinate – the second sex, rather than an autonomous subject – she holds that "[w]oman is a special prize which the hero, the adventurer, and the rugged individualist are destined to win" as in chivalric novels (198-99). Even when they feel free, women are so "only in becoming a captive" (203).

As mentioned earlier, second wave feminism as well as postmodernism, almost historically coinciding, have common aspects, including their shared critique of the universality of knowledge. De Beauvoir turns to biology to demonstrate how this knowledge has functioned to downgrade women as the second sex by juxtaposing truisms – knowledge that has come to be functioning as a doxa – with contradictions and exceptions in nature to cast doubt upon the universality of knowledge. In so doing she questions the universality of

this knowledge that relegates women as naturally inferior. As a case in point, although males and females are distinguished in relation to each other even in the wild, "even the division of a species into two sexes is not always clear-cut. In nature it is not universally manifested" (de Beauvoir 33-4). This is true for example in hermaphroditic species in which both egg and sperm are produced. Yet these biological facts are not sufficient to condemn a woman as the Other. Science has it that "[i]n essence woman is fickle, as water is fluid; and no human power can contradict a natural truth" (204). In other words, the essentialist view of women as fickle is penned by science and its universalising ideology. Likewise, a woman's body has been considered as naturally and inherently barring and, hence, she is postulated as imperfect in relation to man:

> He [man] thinks of his body as a direct and normal connection with the world, which he believes he apprehends objectively, whereas he regards the body of woman as a hindrance, a prison, weighed down by everything peculiar to it. "The female is a female by virtue of a certain *lack* of qualities," said Aristotle; "we should regard the female nature as afflicted with a natural defectiveness." And St. Thomas for his part pronounced woman to be an "imperfect man," an "incidental" being. This is symbolized in Genesis where Eve is depicted as made from what Bossuet called "a supernumerary bone" of Adam. (de Beauvoir 15)[39]

In criticising the universalised representation of women by men according to which the latter is naturally superior as opposed to woman as naturally inferior, de Beauvoir contends that "humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not

[39] "Eve was not fashioned at the same time as the man; she was not fabricated from a different substance, nor of the same clay as was used to model Adam: she was taken from the flank of the first male. Not even her birth was independent; God did not spontaneously choose to create her as an end in herself and in order to be worshipped directly by her in return for it. She was destined by Him for man; it was to rescue Adam from loneliness that He gave her to him, in her mate was her origin and her purpose; she was his complement in the order of the inessential" (de Beauvoir 161).

regarded as an autonomous being" (15). Consequently, by pointing out that woman is defined in relation to man, not as a unified autonomous being, she subverts the myth of woman and her status as the Other which is "defined with relation to men" (24): she "is defined exclusively in her relation to man" (162), hence, women are seen as the second sex. In a move analogous to Derrida's concept of supplement, she destabilises the perception of woman as being secondary by laying bare how the notion of being a woman is constructed – "she is the Other in a totality of which the two components are necessary to one another" (19) – as well as by referring to the view of women as depicted and referred to in the Bible. This implies that first and foremost the concept of women as being secondary to men has been there since time immemorial, as immemorial as the creation of human beings. Second, it implies that the concept of God, organised religion and all related theological concepts are patriarchal and potentially misogynous.

Drawing attention to women's bodies as an impediment to the achievement of that so-called universal knowledge which is also, of course, patriarchal and perspectival, de Beauvoir frequently calls upon women for a new self-expressiveness enabling women to emancipate themselves from this enslavement. As she maintains, "[w]oman has ovaries, a uterus; these peculiarities imprison her in her subjectivity, circumscribe her within the limits of her own nature" (15), hence, the idea of women's body as a containment, barrier.[40] Pointing out that gender is a construct, de Beauvoir calls for a change which might be best achieved through writing. In her famous highly quoted maxim, she proffers a constructivist approach that woman "is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. . . . It is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine" (273). Women, as she asserts, "have no religion or poetry of their own: they still

[40] "Women? Very simple, say the fanciers of simple formulas: she is a womb, an ovary; in the mouth of a man the epithet female has the sound of an insult, yet he is not ashamed of his animal nature; on the contrary he is proud if someone says of him: 'He is a male!' the term female is derogatory not because it emphasizes women's animality, but because it imprisons her in her sex" (de Beauvoir 33).

dream through the dreams of men. Gods made by males are the gods they worship. Men have shaped for their own exaltation great virile figures: Hercules, Prometheus, Parsifal; woman has only a secondary part to play in the destiny of these heroes" (162). Here she is also exposing that men's as well as women's representations and therefore their identities are socially constructed; they are equally made. Thus, she feels it is high time that women should begin to construct their own representations, most powerfully through writing. "Representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men; they describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse with absolute truth" (162); accordingly, it behooves women to undertake the act of writing – constructing – their own representation and therefore identity provided that they want to alter men's account of them. A call to women for change is strongly implied in her words: "Society has always been male; political power has always been in the hands of men. 'Public or simply social authority always belongs to men,' declares Lévi-Strauss at the end of his study of primitive societies" (96). De Beauvoir lays out the grounds for a critique of the patriarchal foundations of authorship premised on the essentialist view of women constructed through the writing of history, religion and science.

Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1970) – more strident in tone but another call to arms – might be seen as the book that raised the profile and effectively launched second wave feminism, though the movement for women's liberation was officially launched in 1968. As a best-seller and having "the virtue of being magnificently accessible," as Christine Wallace (1999) puts it, (157) the book immediately attracted international acclaim. Its direct, iconoclastic content, together with its disturbing title, brought instant notoriety: "[s]ome women bought *The Female Eunuch* and hid it from their husbands, fearing the consequences of being found with such an inflammatory tract" (C. Wallace 160). Despite the fear of

reprisal, however, the book found its pathway into the family home[41] and "triggered a shock of recognition in tens of thousands of Western women who read it, and in the hundreds of thousands of women who received Greer's analysis via the media. It was feminism's smash-hit bestseller," to use Wallace's terms (160). Greer, with commendable bravery and candidness touches upon issues which had been, and were, regarded as taboos throughout history, subjects that are associated with women's body such as hair, curve, sex, menstruation,[42] the clitoral as well as the vaginal orgasm. Indeed, Greer daringly addressed subjects concerning women that were, or perhaps are still, regarded as vulgar and discourteous to be expressed or mentioned in a book: "The worst name anyone can be called is *cunt*" (44). The deliberately provocative language used by Greer brought it into a mode of writing arising out of what Jeff Nuttall would refer to as "Bomb Culture" (1968).

Similar to de Beauvoir's idea, Greer attacks the stereotyped representation of women by men based upon the former being considered as the inferior- powerless- sex, to be treated therefore as objects. The woman, instead of inhabiting her body, finds it objectified externally and inevitably internalizes that relation so that she becomes alien to herself in a relation whose emotional tenor is dominated by shame. The body, rather than constituting a locus of selfhood, is experienced as a hindrance: "Sex must be rescued from the traffic between powerful and powerless, masterful and mastered, sexual and neutral, to become a form of communication between potent, gentle, tender people, which cannot be accomplished by denial of heterosexual contact" (21). She emphasises instead that, "for whatever else we [women] are or may pretend to be, we are certainly our bodies" (34). Focused through a

[41] "'It changed my life' is the most common anecdotal response when the book is mentioned to women who read it in the early 1970s (C. Wallace 160).

[42] Greer is at her most candid especially where she addresses women with "[i]f you think you are emancipated, you might consider the idea of tasting your menstrual blood – if it makes you sick, you've a long way to go, baby" (57). As another case in point, boldly talking about her own experiences as a woman, experiences that only women face and have never had the opportunity or the bravery to express and share with others in the public, she says "[t]he clitoris is ignored: a nurse once narrowly missed cutting mine off when shaving me for an operation" (54). Perhaps it was the most impressive, shocking as well as terrifying book of the time. A new bold attention was given to a woman's body and its idiosyncrasies and peculiarities.

preoccupation with women's bodies, the stereotyped representation of women has always reduced them to a body objectified and regarded as inferior owing to the body's "natural" weakness. But even within the terms of objectification, for Greer there is no Eternal Feminine, no universal stereotype whose characteristics are those of the castrato and the eunuch; sexual patterns, like bodies, vary from woman to woman. Greer comments in characteristically outspoken language: "[t]he implication that there is a statistically ideal fuck which will always result in satisfaction if the right procedures are followed is depressing and misleading" (49). In consonance with opposing this false universal stereotype, she maintains, however, that "[t]he characteristics that are praised and rewarded [in women] are those of the castrate – timidity, plumpness, languor, delicacy and preciosity" (17).[43] Thus, her main contention is that women are required to be treated and represented as castrated even as they appear to be eulogised for gentle displays of their deficiency.

Like de Beauvoir, Greer too turns to the essentialist view of women's body as a hindrance. She condemns outright all attempts to represent and present women as aestheticised objects and she brings attention to the harm this has brought them. In treating "women's bodies as aesthetic objects without function," she asserts, "we deform them and their owners" (41). Such demands include austere measures to conform to the stereotypes of fragility, appeasing behaviour and self-denial that ailments such as anorexia come to express what is regarded an intrinsic femininity. As a case in point, "[n]ineteenth-century belles even went to the extremity of having their lowest ribs removed so that they could lace their corsets tighter" (40). It is in such a condition that woman becomes ashamed not simply of her body but of her very nature, preoccupied with hiding the corporeal, anxious that "she is not sloppy or smelly, and obligingly obliterates all signs of her menstruation in the cause of public

[43] Interestingly enough, Greer subverts these very characteristics through her own diction which is highly bold, audacious, acerbic and acrimonious, especially with regard to the time she was writing the book in question. In other words, she is going against what is demanded of women by men: to be decent.

decency" (45). Many women die of diseases related to the womb and sexual organs because of the late diagnosis due to what people falsely call "modesty" (53).

Added to this is an essentialist view of the womb through a long history associating it as the origin and cause of women's inferiority to men. It is the source of all physical and psychological problems that infect them, the source of fouls, wickedness and bad-temperedness. As Greer maintains in a chapter with the title "The Wicked Womb" that is dedicated to this subject, delving into the matter of how women's womb has always been considered as the source of all follies and especially the cause of hysteria,

> The most recent form of fantasy about the womb is the enormously prevalent notion of the pathology of *hysteria* in Europe until the twentieth century. At first it was called the *mother*, and was thought to be the wandering womb that rose into the throat of a girl and choked her. The most sceptical anatomists, while deploring the arts which quacks and witches used to allay hysterics, believed that the womb was "charged with blood and stale seed from whence arise foul and ill-conditioned damps," developing their own strange theory of pelvic congestion. It was assumed that unmarried women and widows suffered most from hysteria, and that a good husband could fix it. (54-5)

Consequently, so runs the view, women are ruled and controlled not by rationality but by their wombs. In effect, hysteria, having its root in the womb, which was regarded as a final cause – that women are by nature prone to hysteria because of their body/womb – is seen as the source of women's psychological crises and abnormalities.[44] Another metonymy of the body is used to obliterate the whole woman, to fragment her into body parts. Such a view generates an "atavistic fear" of the womb (56), in men. This fear of the womb as a

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[44] "Women were too weak, too vulnerable to irrational influences to be allowed to control their own lives. When one of my students collapsed in her final examination with cramps and bitter uncontrollable sobbing, the cause was officially recorded as *hysteria*: the aetiology of her case was particularly important but the word *hysteria* seemed to supply all the answers" (Greer 56).

troublemaker has been directed towards women themselves in the form of hatred and misogyny, exacerbated also by the religions of Islam, Hinduism and Catholicism, all of which regard women as unclean in the times of menstruation (56).

Greer's aim in writing the book was to subvert the stereotyped image of women and call for action in the form of experimentation with new kinds of writing.[45] Only through experimentation with modes of representation might women emancipate themselves from the current imagery. "Only by experimentation," she stipulates, "can we open up new possibilities which will indicate lines of development in which the status quo is a given term" (368). She also emphasises that it is essential that women acquire adequate knowledge of their own bodies if they are to be equipped with the power to liberate themselves. As she states, "[w]omen must first of all inform themselves about their own bodies, take over the study of gynaecology and obstetrics, and, not least, conquer their own prejudice in favour of men doctors" (54). The need for education, of which women have traditionally been deprived on the false ground that it might bring them into frenzy, begins with an education in a Socratic mode of knowing thyself that must first begin with the body and its representation. Authorship for Greer begins not with the disembodied mind but with the body and the embodied mind.

Sexual Politics by Kate Millet, also appearing at the end of the 1960s, though less strident in tone was equally an expression of gender anger focused on ways in patriarchy has determined the formation of sexual relations, illustrated through discussion of three novelists

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[45] Turning to biology and speaking of how genetic traits are transmitted through chromosomes and drawing upon science, and although being essentialist here, Greer dismantles and subverts the false representation of women as the weak sex: "About thirty other disorders are to be found in the males of the species and seldom in the females for the same reason. There is much evidence that the female is constitutionally stronger than the male; she lives longer, and in every age group more males than females die although the number of males conceived may be between ten and thirty per cent more" (31). Moreover, it was found out that "there was a high proportion of males with the XYY-chromosome, that is an extra Y, among those men in prison for crimes of violence, and it seemed to be linked to certain deficiencies in mental ability" (31). Elsewhere she adds, "[w]omen are not more incapacitated by menstruation than men are by their drinking habits, their hypertension, their ulcers and their virility fears" (59). Or, "[i]t may be that women commit crimes during the premenstrual and menstrual period, but it is still true that women commit far fewer crimes than men" (58).

(D. H. Lawrence, Henry Miller, and Norman Mailer) who are castigated for their sexism and misogyny. What she has in mind by the term politics is more inclusive, referring to "power-structured relationships, arrangements whereby one group of person is controlled by another" (23). For Millet, "sex is a status category with political implications" (24) and she insists that social, ideological, biological aspects of sexual relations together with class, economic and education, anthropological and psychological factors have contributed to patriarchy. As a case in point, she overturns the false assumption that rather than resting upon physical and biological strength, male supremacy is simply the result of "the acceptance of a value system which is biological" (27).

Germane to the present discussion of the period in question is Millett's concern with how the patriarchal system denies women control over their own bodies, which is the basis of their loss of power and authority. This also has a detrimental effect on their health and she notes how enforced shame surrounding sex leads to "illegal abortions" from which "it is estimated that between two and five thousand women die each year" (Millett 43-4). In addition, in this patriarchal discourse, sex is associated with the sense of violence and guilt:

> Patriarchal force also relies on a form of violence particularly sexual in character and realized most completely in the act of rape. The figures of rapes reported represent only a fraction of those which occur, as the "shame" of the event is sufficient to deter women form the notion of civil prosecution under the public circumstances of a trial. Traditionally rape has been viewed as an offence one male commits upon another – a matter of abusing "his woman." (44)

Consequently, patriarchal power manifests and imposes itself in the form of sexual violence such as rape in which the woman takes the role of the victim.[46] Subverting the prevalent view, Millett requires a sexual revolution that might lead to "abolition of sex roles and the complete economic independence of women" and concerning patriarchy "would undermine both its authority and its financial structure" (62). This sexual revolution would aim at maintaining "a single standard of sexual freedom" that puts an end to the patriarchal institution (62).

Millett's focus on bodily shame and the requirement that women's desire, like their bodies, should be hidden a requirement that they should negate themselves, built on Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) that, like de Beauvoir's work was a key document in the formation of what became second wave feminism. Under the concept of "The Problem that has no Name," Friedan addressed the hidden problem of America, the syndrome of the desperate housewife and the widespread unhappiness and dissatisfaction of middle class affluent women who, supposedly domestically content, were evidently depressed but told that they had no problem by medical consultants. Friedan articulated the experience of women, mostly married women and with children, whose lives were meant to be idyllically complete but whose interior lives seemed hollow and lacking a core sense of identity. [47] Friedan aimed to draw women's attention to the fact that the problem that has no name is not intrinsically part of their psyche but is internalised as a dominant feature of a society that reduces them to material functionalism and then treats them as both hysterical and less than feminine for being disgruntled with their lives. Women, even those who had received formal college education, were still primarily to be educated to be good housewives first and foremost: "[a]

[46] It is worth mentioning that Millett's argument here was inspired by sadist Richard Benjamin Speck, a notorious mass murderer who took hostage, raped and murdered student nurses in 1966 in America, to which she refers.

[47] As Friedan states, the feminine mystique requires that women be defined and identified not in terms of their own personality but in relation to their husbands or children: "'Tom's wife . . . Mary's mother'" (64), hence, they suffer from a crisis in their identity.

new degree was instituted for the wives – 'Ph.T.' (Putting Husband Through)" (12). Once through college women would still enter the workplace of the kitchen. For Friedan, this kind of constraint – a kind of imprisonment restricting women to the performance of bodily domestic labour – rendered women physically ill and even led to mental and nervous breakdown.[48] Yet, this unnamable and insidious problem had continued to erupt "like a boil" in the 1960s amongst middle class American families (17). Women's expression of discontent was simply interpreted as evidence of their unsuitability for college education: the assumption confirmed that the more women are educated, the less happy they are as housewives, the less happy with their natural lot (18). Friedan argues that for the patriarchal right, this went as far as to suggest women should be banned from entering universities.

Attempting to unleash women from the yoke of the feminine mystique, Friedan pointed out how even giving up being a housewife and turning instead to try to find sexual fulfillment, women still feel dissatisfaction. Exaggerated attention to sexualisation of the body in media culture and the explosion of sex manuals was, for her, not liberation, but more enchainment to the body, another aspect of the feminine mystique (250). The problem that has no name has many facets but that "[w]e can no longer ignore that voice within women that says: 'I want something more than my husband and my children and my home'" (27).

Although Foucault, Barthes and Derrida establish terms which might be used to identify the factors involved in women's exclusion from authorship, they do not in fact engage with questions of gender. The key issue is that in reducing women to the body and in defining the capacity to name the world as an act of authorship – that is fundamentally politically empowered – patriarchal cultures have made it difficult for women to be recognised as authors. The strident tone of Greer and Millett, in particular, is a response to this lack of engagement in theory and the reduction of women to an objectified body. These

[48] "In a New York hospital, a woman had a nervous breakdown when she found she could not breast feed her baby. In other hospitals, women dying of cancer refused a drug which research had proved might save their lives: its side effects were said to be unfeminine" (Friedan 12).

women writers seek to be heard even if that requires the use of demotic or even vulgar language, rather than the accepted terms of academic debate.

This is also why the authorship debate for women is continued in fiction and why fiction becomes a key platform for feminist writers: reaching broader audiences and through powers of world-building much radical feminist writing of the 1970s took the form of fiction: among these writers were Erica Jong, Marge Piercy and Marilyn French. Yet, the key point is that if we turn back to the earlier sixties and even fifties then again what we see is the way in which the question specifically of female authorship is central to the generation of women writers who came to critical attention well before the rise of the explicit feminist theorisations of second-wave feminism. Therefore, in this next section, I will consider key texts by Spark, Plath and Lessing, that with hindsight may be seen to be addressing questions of gender and authorship in ways that again appear to prefigure later theorisations of the author debate (such as those by Nancy K. Miller, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar and Alice Jardine), though none of this was available to Spark, Plath and Lessing. These three writers address what is missing in the accounts of Barthes, Derrida and Foucault regarding female authorship: primarily the reduction of women to their bodies and the inducement of shame about their bodies, concerns that are never touched upon in these three discussions of authorship.

Muriel Spark's *The Driver's Seat* has received a range of critical attention, some of it, gesturing towards an acknowledgement of its feminist politics yet rarely noticing how this is tied to its darkly suicidal and inverted politicization in gender terms of the authorship question. One of the most recent, David Herman's "Introduction 'A Salutary Scar': Muriel Spark's Desegregated Art in the Twenty-first Century" (2008), for example, explores how Spark's art of ridicule and the technique of estrangement in *The Driver's Seat* affect the reader and "call attention to the constructedness of the fictional scenarios being portrayed in order to inhibit readerly immersion and promote instead a critical engagement with those situations

and events" (477-78). Distinguishing between anti-modernist novelists, who continue realism's conventions against which modernism was a reaction, and postmodernist novelists, who keep on doing away with modernism's critique of realism but go far beyond its strategies, Herman places Spark in a third category that draws upon both, that is, modernism's narrative techniques and realism's projection of characters in seemingly real situations and conditions. Indeed, her emphasis is upon "narrative form and her engagement with the historical contingencies of lived experience, her dual commitment to innovation and representation" (474). In this view, he points to Lise's "violent erasure of the self" and states that the novel "ridicules conventional conceptions of the self and its place in the social order" in terms of theme and structure (482), but this seems not to go far enough to account for the peculiar effect of Spark's writing. It ignores the way that the idea of female authorship is a significant concern and obsession of both Spark and Lise, her protagonist.

One of the most influential early readings of Spark was Malcolm Bradbury's "Muriel Spark's Fingernails" (1973). Bradbury first reads the novel in the context of Spark's Catholic inclinations and notes therefore its teleological preoccupations, how the style of the novel is "end-directed" (250) and he places her art as a study in "the relation between the chaotic or contingent and the teleological" (248). The essay elucidates how Lise's plot to kill herself is an attempt to give meaning to her life since "endings attach meaning to time" (249). The significance of the novel's plot and its end-directedness are related to Lise as "an alternative plot-maker" (252) who cannot "outwit or excel the author" (254), but the full implications of specifically gendered authorship are not articulated. Surprisingly this is also the case for Jonathan Kempt who, rather than focusing on plot, draws attention, in *écriture féminine* style to the erotics of the body and their relation to Lise's incapacity to articulate her sufferings or desires.

Jonathan Kempt's more recent "queer reading of *The Driver's Seat*," that underscores Lise's act of committing a suicide as "a kind of existential comportment" (545) might suggest at last, some forty years after Bradbury's influential essay, and within the terms of third wave gender and queer theory, an engagement with the central question of authorship that evidently determines the novel's form and themes. Yet this essay – despite its appearance almost forty years after the novel was published – appears curiously complicit with a kind of biological reductionism that is surely the focus of the novel's own critique even within the terms of its own intellectual context. Kempt places at the centre of his argument the sexual connotations of Lise's parted lips and their metaphoric significations within the novel. Speaking of the inexpressible or the ineffable, this metaphor, he argues, together with that of the book Lise holds in her hand, recalls the female labia and their erotic signification. Lise is able to speak four languages yet all fail her in avoiding the final rape, suggesting the inexpressibility of her experience in language. Under the subtitle "Death as the Failure of Language," Kempt points to Lise's screaming when she is stabbed as an indication of this ineffability. Yet what Spark addresses – the social construction of Lise as an hysteric only able to articulate her desires through the body and therefore embarking on a suicidal quest that might empower her as the author of her own life – fails to enter into Kempt's analysis. Again it seems another opportunity is lost to foreground in criticism what is evidently a crucial aspect of Spark's fiction: the desire in fiction by a woman writer to present and critique the terms of authorship that are on offer to women in the 1960s.[49]

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[49] Marina MacKay, in "Catholicism, Character, and the Invention of the Liberal Novel Tradition" (2002) reads the novel against Spark's Catholicism and contends that her characters including Lise are not liberal because of the anti-liberal tendency of Catholicism but again fails to comment on the question of female authorship. This is a pattern throughout the critical writing on her work; Allen Kennedy's *The Protean Self* (1974), Elaine Showalter's "Rethinking the Seventies: Women Writers and Violence" (2012) or Allan Pero's "'Look for One Thing and You Find Another': The Voice and Deduction in Muriel Spark's *Memento Mori*" (2008), all fail adequately to put the text in the context of gender history and the first moments of women writers' backlash against the dominant idea of the death of the author.

Hysterical Woman and Authorship in Muriel Spark's *The Driver's Seat*

Despite the lack of critical attention to Spark's preoccupation in the novel with questions of authorship, reading it in the context of the authorship debate more satisfactorily sharpens its feminist focus. Spark creates a fictional world where a young woman, whose efforts are directed towards giving shape to her life, almost passively undergoes hystericisation but in order finally to attempt to take control, gains agency and authority over her life narrative, while challenging dominant misogynistic discourses. Ironically, of course, Lise only succeeds by plotting the ending of her life: a wry improvisation on the fortunes of all those nineteenth-century heroines, like Maggie Tulliver, who attempt to escape patriarchal incarceration but are undone in their hysterical response. *The Driver's Seat* is a kind of detective story turned around, for by drawing attention towards the reasons behind Lise's action, Spark, at the cost of being seen as hysteric herself, subverts the patriarchal view of the woman writer as mad or hysteric and exposes the masculine bias operative in this regard. The possibility of reading the novel against its author's feminist strategising, however, may lead the psycho-biographising reader to attribute Lise's madness to the author's own projected fantasy of suicidal completion. The novel might indeed be read as Spark's sense of a dark alter ego of authorship that is the risk that all women writers take. For Lise might be understood as a figure for the female author, setting out intentionally to write or rewrite her own life, who attempts to emerge from a state of invisibility – the state normative for women under patriarchal regimes where they are degraded as a means of reproduction and sexual pleasure – to one of visibility through purposefully, ironically, plotting her own death as a desperate way to take control of, by ending, her life. As she says, she is "going to the Centre" (51), metaphorically, the centre of readerly as well as societal attention. For this purpose, she plans intentionally to leave her trace wherever she goes. She (Lise within the world of fiction and Spark by creating this world, including Lise and her action) lays bare those invisible

normative boundaries that impede women's progress in social life: invisible boundaries that women writers also encounter and about which Woolf had written so eloquently in *A Room of One's Own* as she is refused entry to the library, kept off the college lawn and denied access to a canon of "mothers." Woolf's mind wanders throughout her text as she is led astray from the question of what might be an appropriate subject for women's writing, when she realises the meaning that such prohibitions – keeping off the turf of the literary institution – carry for women in her own society. *The Driver's Seat* might be read as a reflection, some fifty years on, of equivalent experiences in the supposedly more politically liberated 1960s. As Showalter observes, however, when women started to question and rebel against patriarchal norms in society, "one obvious defense was to label women campaigning for access to the universities, the professions, and the vote as mentally disturbed" ("Hysteria, Feminism, and Gender" 305). Aware of that male literary tradition – with its essentialist view of women as mad if they aim at becoming intellectuals (as opposed to a view that identity and "madness" associated with women is a masculine construct made in a discourse) – Spark draws upon this very idea and turns it against itself. "The woman novelist," Juliet Mitchell argues, "must be an hysteric. Hysteria is the woman's simultaneous acceptance and refusal of patriarchal capitalism. It is simultaneously what a woman can do both to be feminine and to refuse femininity, within patriarchal discourse" (289-90). Lise resorts to hysteria and madness to address the issue of why femaleness is associated with madness and hysteria. In so doing Lise, and Spark too along with her, inscribes herself and her authority as a female author (of her own life). She constructs her existence and identity and puts her signature to the world through constructing her own intentional discourse. Her trail of clues is also an attempt to reassure herself of her existence in a world where she is not present although not absent but, as she says, "[n]ot really a presence . . . [t]he lack of an absence, that's what it is" (Spark 71).

All her actions – her dress, the delay in answering the clerk, her long monologue about traveling light and its advantages to a couple behind her as she keeps the queue waiting – are directed towards a purpose: ultimately, she wants others to recognise in retrospect her suicide as a deliberately chosen or intentional act, not something that accidently happened to a *victim.* As the novel reads, "it is almost as if, satisfied that she has successfully registered the fact of her presence at the airport among the July thousands there, she has fulfilled a small item of a greater purpose" (20). It is through her physical absence, the disappearance entirely of her body, that the acknowledgement of her presence is fully attained. To achieve her goal, one of Spark's purposeful narrative strategies is to use the technique of flashforward at the very beginning of Chapter Three by early disclosure the finale of the plot, that Lise will be found stabbed and dead, and by proleptically bringing the future events of the story into its middle or ongoing process. Spark's activity as author is thus in line with what Lise is also doing during her journey throughout the novel. She conspicuously keeps leaving clues and drawing attention to herself in different ways. Her aim is to leave the least possible ambiguity concerning her identity so that others who will hear about her death turn their attention towards the reasons that led up to it rather than to who she or the murderer is. As Spark confesses, using this technique is advantageous in that "[t]he reader is then all the more anxious to find out how the conclusion came about" (Spark and Hosmer 146). Thus, it diverts attention from what is to be at hand, towards why things have already happened. The novel revels in the future anterior.

Parodying the detective fiction genre, Spark turns the story into "a whydunnit" (101), in Lise's words, aiming at making visible her female character and her author and their shared problems living and writing in a patriarchal society. The outcome is more than what might be regarded as simply creating more suspense. It has a metafictional function carrying a serious political resonance written by a highly reflexive female writer about a female subject who

makes deliberate attempts to gain control and establish space for her own agency and her own authority under patriarchal law. It is a vehicle for the investigation of how masculinist discourses construct the notion of female identity, especially that of the female author. The technique is reiterated throughout the fiction, for example by bringing part of the conversation between the police and the murderer being interrogated forward in order to self-reflexively remind the reader of the novel's own structure in particular – bearing in mind the fact that Lise herself manipulates the plot to remind the reader how stories in general operate in creating social discourses of identity. The technique relies on a high degree of prior readerly knowledge of how narratives work. The narrator exposes almost nothing about Lise's intentions and the purpose behind her actions for she is insisting on her own ultimately limited omniscience. She observes but does not go deep into the mind of Lise; nor does the narrator reveal or appear to know about her motivations.

Spark parodies the condition of hysteria in order to address and challenge simultaneously the patriarchal discourses through which women writers are viewed as hysterics. Parody relies upon known conventions and norms for its effects, that is, in order to challenge them. Spark draws upon patriarchal descriptions and readings of the female author as mad and hysteric in order to challenge the terms of that discourse. As Linda Hutcheon clarifies, "parody's 'target' text is always . . . another form of coded discourse" (*A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* 16). By the same token, Lise's madness and hysteria is a return to and reworking of the patriarchal projection of intellectual women, including women writers, in an ironic way but with a critical purpose. This imitation with critical distanciation of parody enables Spark to impart the ways intellectual women are stereotyped and how the notion of the hysteric woman is constructed through patriarchal discourse. What parody does is to attract our attention towards the structure of its own linguistic and narrative construction. Spark imitates a hysteric woman but does so only to

challenge the concept by pushing it to the extreme. As Showalter has it, "[l]anguage has played a major role in the history of hysteria; to pry apart the bond between hysteria and women, to free hysteria from its feminine attributes, and to liberate femininity from its bondage to hysteria, means going against the grain of language itself" ("Hysteria, Feminism, and Gender" 290). Spark ironically parodies the image and behavior of hysteric woman – maniacal laughter and extravagant tears for example – in order to liberate hysteria from patriarchal constructions of femininity including herself as author. Madness is not a biologised condition of the essentialised female nature, one who becomes mad if she attempts to take up an authorial position. It is male-driven society in *The Driver's Seat* that drives women mad. Now Lise steps into the driver's seat. She parodies, addresses and questions the authority of patriarchal discourse that views the woman writer as mad and hysteric. Yet, it is only through ironic subversion that she is able to do this. Although not floridly histrionic in her new behavior, Lise adopts the hysteric mode in order to render herself visible. Whereas the hysteric mimics on impulse, Lise plans and plots. Hysterics draw attention to themselves in order to be approved, whereas Lise's aim is not to be approved but to be noticed, to be seen. Nonetheless, for her, it is only through madness that she can challenge and question and make herself into a female autonomous subject. She does not of course fully achieve her plan, for events do not unfurl smoothly according to her intentions.

Spark explores what it means to be a female author in a capitalist patriarchal society. Lise is the author of her own life, creating her own identity and fate. But misogynistic violence and sexual discrimination as well as a utilitarian view of women as a tool for sexual pleasure is played out in extreme form as she is raped and murdered by a misogynistic man, Richard, newly released from six years' treatment for sex offenses and assaulting women. Richard is the key representative of the consequences of patriarchal ideology but Lise's entire society is rife with objectifications of women, from the Italian car mechanic who sexually

assaults her earlier, to the New Age, macrobiotic Bill who assumes her readiness to gratify his regime of daily orgasm. Another institutionalised form of sexism is laid bare by the notion of the diet – where food and sex are equivalent – as a "scientific" achievement, as expressed in Bill's explanation, and researches being carried out in the Mediterranean countries by an organisation called "the Regional Master for Northern Europe" (38). The male characters all view Lise simply as an object for their sexual pleasure.

Here in the novel, hysteria is manipulated as a means towards visibility and recognition. However, visibility is only the first step towards liberating women from masculine discourse and establishing their own. Lise laughs hysterically many times or shifts from laughter to crying – a classic instantiation of the hysteric character. Her clothes are gaudy and with lurid colours – "[a] lemon-yellow top with a skirt patterned in bright V's of orange, mauve and blue" (Spark 10) – so vivid, lurid and ridiculous that the woman at the porter's cabin cannot help laughing at her: "Are you going circus?" she sarcastically asks (17). When the salesgirl insists on the idea that the coat does not fit the dress, Lise says "'[t]hey go very well together,'" and that "'[t]hose colours of the dress and the coat are absolutely right for me. Very natural colours'" (11). She continues, "'[t]he colours go together perfectly. People here in the North are ignorant of colours. Conservative; old-fashioned. If only you knew! These colours are a natural blend for me. Absolutely natural'" (12). The novel foregrounds the illusion of nature and the constructedness of life categories and experiences. Lise dons the dress to be noticed but also in repudiation of the "natural": in this novel, art goes all the way down. Indeed, Lise's clothes are read conventionally by those around her for they are semiotically received as the mantle of prostitution:

> Just as, in former times, when prostitutes could be discerned by the brevity of their skirts compared with the normal standard, so Lise in her knee-covering

> clothes at this moment looks curiously of the street-prostitute class beside the mini-skirted girls and their mothers whose knees at least can be seen. (51)

Lise is also verbally attacked and accused of being a prostitute by a man asking her "to go home to the brothel where she came from" (75). This is how an intellectual woman who challenges and resists patriarchal authority and tries to gain autonomy as well as authority may appear to others: hysteric, maniac, eccentric, outcast, odd, labeled away. As Showalter speaks of the nineteenth-century women, a woman who showed

> [S]ymptoms of hysteria aroused suspicions of a silent revolt against her domestic, class, and reproductive role. Thus nervous women received much more attention than nervous men, and were labeled as "hysterical" or "neurasthenic" in the contexts of a highly charged rhetoric about the dangers of higher education, women's suffrage, and female self-assertion in general. ("Hysteria, Feminism, and Gender" 306)

Lise chooses to be deliberately alone and, consequently, is neither an object for sexual pleasure or reproduction. Feeling sick and terrible, she wishes her parents "had practiced birth-control" and that a contraceptive "pill had been invented at the time" (Spark 76) which is a further indication of her revolt against the view of women as a means of reproduction. Thus, finding her body, her femaleness, as an obstacle to gaining her autonomy and subjectivity, as opposed to a mechanically stereotyped object of pleasure, she plots to eradicate this impediment in order not to be seen in terms of the body but of her intentionally applied intellect as what remains after her suicide for the police, and the reader as well, is evidence of her intentional plotting and the exercise of the intellect behind it. She is contained and trapped in her office existence and in her body: viewed as an instrument of reproduction in the sphere of labour and sexuality. Indeed, Spark flaunts the body as a barrier to women's autonomy and for Lise the final desperate measure is therefore to do away with the body

completely, much in the manner of nineteenth-century heroines, except she makes her choice consciously and believes she can control the manner of her death. Similar to "anorexics renouncing the guilty weight of their female flesh" (Gilbert and Gubar 57), killing, destroying, the flesh and body is a way to refuse the limitations and barriers standing before women writers. "[L]ike most women in patriarchal society, the woman writer does experience her gender as a *painful obstacle*, or even a debilitating inadequacy" (50 emphasis added). By the same token, her power and autonomy is asserted through refusal of the body which can be raped and exploited. "Stepping into Muriel Spark's shoes," as Patricia Waugh puts it, "is like pulling gloves onto our feet: in her novels, clothing never quite fits the human body" ("Muriel Spark and the Metaphysics of Modernity: Art, Secularization, and Psychosis" 65). Here Lise tries to liberate herself from this patriarchally ready-made habitual container that defines women by putting them in misfit clothes by destroying her body to disturb the confining barriers to women's liberation. Describing the woman who laughs unremittingly at Lise, the narrator compares her laughter to a machine "emitting noise like a brown container of laughing-gas until the taxi is out of her scope" (Spark 17). The description is similar to what Waugh speaks of as the nineteenth-century scientific view of the human body "as a kind of steam engine: a thermodynamic machine distributing flows of energy and wastes, maintaining equilibrium homeostatically, and in need of maintenance, ergonomic attention, dietary regimes and regulation of flows" ("Muriel Spark and the Metaphysics of Modernity: Art, Secularization, and Psychosis" 75). Here, by referring to the woman's body as being a machine that produces in and for a capitalist materialistic society, Spark further highlights Lise's intentions in destroying her own body. As opposed to this machine that is constructed by patriarchal discourse, she craves for naturalness that is beyond the "nature" prescribed for her under patriarchy.

Analogies are made throughout the novel to link storytelling and its significance with women's autonomy and authority in a patriarchal capitalist society. The whole story relies upon Lise's purposeful and intentional plotting and storytelling to end her life physically. In addition, the book she deliberately holds up in an obvious way at the airport stands for fiction and its ability to make women visible and bring authority to them as authors in their own right (write). Storytelling can be used to bring women from invisibility to visibility and disturb masculine-dominated discourse.

> Lise stands for a moment in the aisle, raising the arm on which the hand-bag is slung from the wrist, so that the paperback, now held between finger and thumb, is visible. She seems to display it *deliberately*, as if she is one of those spies one reads about who effect recognition by pre-arranged signals and who verify their contact with another agent by holding a certain paper in a special way. (Spark 38-9 emphasis added)

It (the paperback book) symbolically stands for the novel itself, for what Spark is doing, holding up the book as mirror of a constructed nature in front of the reader/audience to make women of her time visible. Although at the end she fails in avoiding rape, "[s]till, being notorious for failing," as Showalter has it, "is better than not being noticed at all" ("Twenty Years On: 'A Literature of Their Own' Revisited" 402). As the narrator tells us, "Lise keeps her flat as clean-lined and clear to return to after her work as if it were uninhabited" (Spark 15). Her flat symbolically suggests that if she continues living like this – that is, succumbing to the male dominant discourse – it will be as if she had never lived. Mitchell points out, "I do not think that we can live as human subjects without in some sense taking on a history; for us, it is mainly the history of being men or women under bourgeois capitalism. In deconstructing that history, we can only construct other histories. What are we in the process of becoming?" (294). Likewise, Lise has to write her own history and existence as an autonomous subject as

well as her own discourse and thereby exert her power and authority, at the cost of being mad, or being written by others. Spark affords her the partial awareness that subjectivity, autonomy and authority are not final products but constructed processes: that of writing, storytelling, plotting. For this purpose, her storytelling must have its own structure, one out of line with that of masculine discourse. On the contrary it must be *intentionally* disturbing, deconstructive, challenging, ironic and metafictional in order to constantly remind the reader of how discourses are constructed and to dissect their elements and structure. In the words of one feminist critic, "[t]he novel is the prime example of the way women start to create themselves as social subjects under bourgeois capitalism – create themselves as a category: women" (Mitchell 289). Consequently, feminist storytelling creates and constructs discourses that make cracks on the surfaces of masculine discourse. In plotting her own death, Lise subverts masculine discourse while constructing her own identity as a female author. Not conforming to the status quo, Lise becomes the "authoress" of her life. Spark deliberately subverts conventional notions of plot for "[p]lots are not simply organizing structures, they are also *intentional* structures, goal-oriented and forward-moving" (P. Brooks 12 emphasis added). Instead of being a passive product of her own culture – written by patriarchal authority – she undertakes to write (plot) her own life story. She does not choose to be a prey and is cognizant of this choice. When ogled by Bill in the plane, she asks, "[d]o you want to *eat* me up?" (Spark 27 emphasis added). Nevertheless, in this violently sexist society, not to be an easy prey of sexual pleasure necessitates one's own self-destruction as a woman.

Plot is what Peter Brooks refers to as "the dynamic shaping force of the narrative discourse" (13). Also, Waugh points out the intention behind plots that they "are always forward-moving, intentional and oriented towards goals, and the sense of a beginning is always structured through the sense of an ending" ("Muriel Spark and the Metaphysics of Modernity: Art, Secularization, and Psychosis" 12). Accordingly, it could be said that plot is

a dynamic force that shapes, gives order and governs and consequently gives significance to and constructs discourse as vehicles for power. If we agree that "the end writes the beginning and shapes the middle" (P. Brooks 22), then Lise, through putting an end to her life, gives meaning and order to her life and achieves authority over her past, her beginning and middle. In so doing Spark, as well as Lise, constructs a discourse of her own through writing, with a plot, of her own. Lise is a dynamic self-constructing subject, as opposed to the machine-like object in a materialistic world in which women are defined (rather than define) in terms of stereotyped patterns. Lise's plotting and planning for her own death is an attempt to occupy – as an autonomous, willing agent – the driver's seat of her own life. As Richard tells the police, Lise "made me go. She was driving" (Spark 105) which metaphorically means Lise was in control. In addition, the motion of the act of driving intensifies this dynamism that lies in the plot and is in opposition to the static positioning required of women in patriarchal society. Metaphorically, Spark, together with Lise, tries to be the driver of her own life by swimming against the current. Writing, and art in general, can metafictionally renew our vision of life or as Spark herself has it, "one is renewed by it [art]" (Spark and Hosmer 154).

Lise is like a tragic hero, a modern Antigone who stands against the law of the father, a scapegoat whose tragic fate is not pathetic but intentionally plotted and courageously encountered. She does not identify herself with the victim or the weak; nor is she an underdog. Speaking of Spark's style of writing, Peter Robert Brown says, "[i]nstead of art that affectively portrays suffering and victimization, Spark recommends an ironic and satiric art which, she believes, allows for a greater inter-penetration of art and life" (228). Nevertheless, ironically, she intentionally plots to be victimised in order to come to the centre and to challenge the dominant masculine discourse in the society.

Lise's style of clothing is reminiscent of Mikhail Bakhtin's idea of the novel as a mode of the carnivalesque and heteroglossic. Bakhtin too explicates the essential mode of fiction as

dialogic and critical, its contextualised utterances resonating with the previous "utterances to which it is a response, and to the social situation in which it is spoken and interpreted" (Abrams *A Glossary of Literary Terms* 231). He refers to this carnivalesque aspect of the novel as a potentially liberating force, through the capacity of fiction, as in free indirect discourse, to mix the authorial voice with other voices that belong to different social groups or individuals (674). Wearing a dress, like a costume, appropriate for a certain ritual, Lise sets out to perform her own carnival: a sacrificial ritual. As a woman says, Lise has "'[d]ressed for the carnival!'" (Spark 69). This ritualistic act of sacrificing herself disturbs patriarchal authority; carnival is a time when patriarchal law – the authoritative discourse – is suspended and Lise's authority as a female subject and author is – albeit temporarily – liberated. Lise's 'I' breaches and leaks into patriarchal authority as a unified autonomous discourse and inscribes her subjective voice upon it.

However, Spark as a woman writer is also obsessed with the fear of masculine authority or what Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar call "anxiety of authorship." Adopting Harold Bloom's idea of the anxiety of influence, Gilbert and Gubar view female writing as a confrontation of women authors with a masculine tradition of writing. Since the history of literature is mainly that of a patriarchal tradition, woman writers generally occupy little place in it. According to the view suggested by Gilbert and Gubar, a woman writer fears that she may not be able to establish her own tradition although she strives to distinguish herself, by creating her own discourse, from the patriarchal law that entails the subjugation of women. Her desire is not to follow a precursor male model but to find a female one. It is not an anxiety in the sense that a woman writer cannot be creative, but more that she may fear the way masculine authoritative voices break into her work, carrying patriarchal norms and values that might be deeply internalised in her mind. Having said that, although the male precursor stands for "authority," he cannot "define the ways in which she experiences her

own identity as a writer" (Gilbert and Gubar 48). Thus, she must gird herself for challenging the precursor's discourse and interpretation of her and in order to establish her own model as a female author that is in contrast with the precursor's projections of her. As Gilbert and Gubar argue, "[i]n order to define herself as an author, she [the woman writer] must redefine the terms of her socialization" (48), a socialization which is patriarchal and demoralising for women. It is through writing that she tries to distance herself from male writers and thus creates the world anew. By the same token, Spark is explicitly concerned in this novel with what it is like to be a female author in a patriarchal society. This anxiety is most clearly manifested in the way that Lise is raped by a maniacal male, a sex offender, an action that is totally out of her control and outside her meticulously authored plan. Here masculine authority still shadows the female author and even her life in a final sense. Interpreted as showing Spark's Catholic submission to a higher authority – "just as behind Lise stands the author so behind the human author stands the great author of all" (Day 333), this could also be read as the anxiety of a female author towards a higher masculine authority, albeit a view no doubt coloured by Spark's experience of institutionalised Catholicism, where Lise's plot is subordinate to a higher authoritative power that is her author, Spark, who is, in turn, subordinate to another higher fully omniscient author: God. Spark's use of the third-person point of view that is not certain nor fully omniscient is here evidently deliberate and suggestive. It suggests the existence of a patriarchal authority, figured as a God-author who is above all, including Spark herself who is not omniscient, just as Lise cannot fully determine her fate within the authority of her own author's plot. Lise's failure in writing her life and death with full authority indicates Spark's anxiety about the extent to which she, as a female author, can achieve her own voice and author/ity in a patriarchal society.

Dying into Art: the Myth of the Author and the Woman Writer in the 1960s

> I want, I think, to be omniscient . . . I think I would like to call myself 'the girl who wanted to be God. (Plath *Letters Home: Correspondence, 1950-1963* 40)

Sylvia Plath falls into the Myth of the Artist as the only recourse to redeem the myth of the Eternal Feminine. The body is identified with "the source of that debarment from 'transcendence'" which de Beauvoir had read as the heart of the myth of immanence of the Eternal Feminine (Waugh "The Historical Context of Post-War British Literature" 50).[50] In de Beauvoir's terms, historically, women are immanent, looked upon as inferior, passive, static and as bodies, objects to which things happen, whereas men are transcendent, identified with mind, being active, creative, productive; throughout history, women have been deprived of transcendence by men treating them as objects: "it is consciousness, will, transcendence, it is the spirit; and it is matter, passivity, immanence, it is the flesh" (de Beauvoir 163). Nevertheless, as Waugh suggests, "[i]f there is one authorial construct that perhaps subsumes all others and proves most problematic for women writers in 1963, however, it is what Alvarez would later refer to as 'the myth of the artist', and there can be no understanding of either the year 1963, or the construction of the woman writer, without an engagement with this most central of myths" ("1963, London: The Myth of the Artist and the Woman Writer" 179). Al Alvarez's concept of the myth of the artist, that life and art might be viewed as indistinguishable – a perspective that he sees as unprecedented before 1945 – provides another starting point to examine a phenomenon articulated by a male critic who disavows

[50] As Waugh argues, "[i]n turning herself into words, Plath escaped one myth, only to fall willing victim perhaps, to the other" ("1963, London: The Myth of the Artist and the Woman Writer" 183).

gender politics and yet may be seen to carry enormous implications for thinking about authorship in relation to gender.

Alvarez opens his argument by pointing to the mad atmosphere of the post-war period, with its nuclear anxieties, wars, crises of identity and countercultural movements and contests the earlier emphasis of writers such as T. S. Eliot, T. E. Hulme and more recently Robert Conquest, taking a Classicist view of art as impersonal and something to be controlled intelligently. For Alvarez, the Holocaust changed all that: we have witnessed a barbaric and brutal madness culminating in the "twentieth-century innovation" of "the death camp" that led to the "efficient production of corpses" ("The Myth of the Artist" 195). For Alvarez, this casts huge doubt on the applicability and existence of reason as understood in the tradition of Western philosophy. This quality is what Alvarez sees in his own generation (of confessional poets), a tendency to live out their own works to the edge of their own extinction. This irrationality and madness also expressed itself, he believed, in the lives and art of Abstract Expressionists – including Jackson Pollock (whose personal life was one of hermeticism and alcoholism resulting in his death) – and with rebellious and anarchic paintings as well as confessional poetry. This generation Alvarez referred to as Extremists. By this he means the Plath generation of artists of the 50s and 60s who came to be known as the confessional poets, including Robert Lowell, John Berryman and Anne Sexton, all of whom committed suicide. Having befriended Plath, Alvarez first expanded upon the concept of the Myth of the Artist in an article of that name in 1980. He defines the myth as "the general belief – by the public as well as the artists – that the work and the life are not only inextricable but also virtually indistinguishable. Out of this, something new and disturbing emerged during the '60 and '70s and it is still around in a debased form. I call it the myth of the artist" (195-6)

Alvarez evidently regards Plath as one of a generation who founded the myth.[51] As opposed to the Eliot generation who called for the impersonality of art and the extinction of personality in the work of art, the Plath generation intermingled their inner life and worlds with their art work. It is a kind of art where "the barriers between the artist's work and his life are forever shifting and crumbling" (196).[52]

Alvarez also argues that in a science-dominated world where reason and rationality had been narrowly defined and overvalued, the Second World War and the Holocaust had cast a hugely negative shadow over the affirmation of humans as rational creatures. But even Alvarez fails to examine the specifically gendered sources of these women writers' recourse to the myth of the artist and their attempts through it to recover a sense of the sacred in a scientifically reductionist age, to add soul into a spiritless mechanical scientific-dominated world of rationality. Indeed science was fast encroaching on the human; where physics had led to the Bomb, biology was now articulating mind; with the emergence of the cognitive neurosciences in the sixties, the brain began to be viewed through the computational metaphors of information theory that had underpinned the idea of intelligent weapons in the 1940s; mind conceived as brain began to be regarded as a material machine wired for the transmission of information. In this light, creativity becomes nothing but "the firing of neurones and the play of electrical circuits" (180) and is now a mode of invention. The notion of the self is also reduced to material matter. For Alvarez, the dominance of this scientific worldview cast great doubt upon our perception of the self, free will and creativity, for it suggests we are no longer subjects capable of free imagination, but rather machines whose activities are determined not by a free-willing subject but by chemical materials such as hormones and electrical and neural currents in the brain. Consequently, thanks to the

[51] "The myth is based, I think, on the terrible precedent set by Sylvia Plath and the tragic way in which her life and her art complete each other" (Alvarez, "The Myth of the Artist" 196).
[52] Given that, "Lowell was a manic depressive, Berryman and Jackson Pollock were alcoholic, Plath and Rothko were depressed to the point of psychosis" (Alvarez, "The Myth of the Artist 195).

advancements of neuroscience, the idea of human as an autonomous free-willing subject who is able to create is changed into a machinic "automaton" that can innovate only through transmitting different pathways of nerve impulses. Herein lies one important context for the revival of the myth of the artist in the 60s for madness becomes not only a conduit for social protest but also a consolatory myth for the replacement of human creation by mechanical invention.[53]

In addition, the Cartesian dichotomy of mind and body, or put differently, matter and spirit, another form of reductionism that divides human beings into two substances, also therefore exacerbated the traditional association of women with the body or what de Beauvoir calls immanence – a passivised object to which things happen – and men with mind; creativity, associated with mind is therefore appropriated as masculine genius and the myth of the artist re-establishes itself as a mode of artistic frenzy that might articulate everything that a science obsessed culture elides and disavows. Waugh also points to the Post-Cartesian tendencies in the persistence of remnants "of ensoulment within a dualistic definition of mind and body"; however, they "have gradually been supplanted by an evolutionary perspective that reduces mind to the materiality of brain, and brain to the digital connections of information technology" ("Creative Writers and Psychopathology: The Cultural Consolations of the Wound and the Bow" 178). In the absence of divinity as well as creativity and in a time of intensified scientific rationalism, the woman writer too is attracted to the myth of the savage god, the myth of the "mad" artist, seduced by and appropriating the myth of the artist, in its anti-rationalist figuration of the creator. The move is evidently a more dangerous one for the woman writer, as we have already seen in Spark's dark portrait of the demise of Lise as she embarks upon her career of authorship.

[53] The idea of a scientific-dominated spiritless world was depicted and prophesied earlier by artists such as Charlie Chaplin, of course, in the form of a man who works on an assembly line, undergoes transformation and loses his individuality so the self becomes a machine or a cog in a more elaborate mass productive machinery and who ends up with a nervous breakdown in *Modern Times* (1936).

The revival, and popularity, of the myth of Dionysus amongst the woman writers of the 60s, especially Plath, as a savage dying god that generates spiritual madness might be viewed therefore as a reaction against a scientised culture and its myths of progress in the wake of the atrocities of the Holocaust and the ways in which mechanical invention has seemed to deprive the world of spiritual meaning. Such a mechanical world also seems to require the reduction and effacement of the self and its concept as a free willing subject who can imagine, create and make autonomous decisions. At a moment just prior to the rise of intellectual dominance of anti-humanist discourses of post-structuralism and postmodernism, "[t]he art and literature of the present overwhelmingly presents the humanist self as vanishing" (Waugh, "Creative Writers and Psychopathology" 180). Yet responding with the idea of the frenzy of the artist is curiously complicit with a prevailing scientism in the sense that both the mad person and the automaton are no longer regarded as subjects fully responsible for their actions. Hence, whilst the discourse that emerges as the outcome of advances in neuroscience and biomedicine in general focuses upon and buttresses the view of humans as chemically determined machines, the woman writer shares the cultural turn to the myth of creative madness which owes more to the myth of Dionysus.

In "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming," Sigmund Freud posits the creative energy which comes in the form of fantasy in human's dissatisfaction, that is, unfulfilled dissatisfied desires and wishes. Accordingly, any form of fantasy is the fulfilment of an unquenched wish or desire which dare not be expressed overtly. Freud compares the day-dreamer to creative writers in that a present occasion in the life of the writer triggers a past memory of a desire whose fulfilment may now be achieved in the work of art (151). In addition, if this unfulfilled wish or desire that drives the creative writer to originate a work of art intensifies and the writer loses the ability to discern the fantastic work from the reality – as a child does a game from reality very well – the consequence might be a kind of madness where the ability to

distinguish between the two by mentally creating an alternative equally real world declines. Freud's explanation of creative art is a parable of creation: rational order emerging out of the material chaos of the drives. Freud posits the source of creativity in man's psychic pain and suffering: "the essential *ars poetica* lies in the technique of overcoming the feeling of repulsion in us which is undoubtedly connected with the barriers that rise between each single ego and the others" (153). Edmund Wilson, in "Philoctetes: The Wound and the Bow" (1941), juxtaposes the myth of Philoctetes[54] standing for the wounded suffering artist who is able to master pain through creating a bow, with Freud's positing of creativity on the back of suffering and pain. For Wilson artist is the sacred sufferer who reminds a barren culture of its spiritual losses. In Sophocles's treatment of the story, Wilson argues, he sees "a cool observation of the behaviour of psychological derangements" (260) and considers Philoctetes "a parable of human character" (263) who has been endowed with a "divine gift", the magical and transformative bow; the work of art is an act of theodicy.

So, Alvarez's idea of the artist as the wounded god draws upon the same lineage as Wilson and especially on Nietzsche's reworking of the myth of Dionysus. In the scientific view of the human as a soulless spiritless machine and the view of the artist as having lost creative powers, now replaced by invention and mechanisation, the unfulfilled desire of the artist and the artist's creativity take the form of self-destruction; a recourse to mythopoeia in order to give this mechanical world a hint and reminder of the sacred. If the modern world has lost a redemptive aesthetic, only through dissolution of the self might the artist's psyche be reborn, renewed and liberated. This is evident in a range of post-war art, made explicit in the paintings and sculptures of auto-destructive artists such as Gustav Metzger, who also coined the term and expressed the concept in "Machine, Auto-Creative and Auto-Destructive Art" in 1962. Alvarez insists that "the whole of twentieth-century art has been dedicated to

[54] Philoctetes is a hero whose virulent infection from a snake bite becomes odorous leading to his isolation and the creation of a bow, the only instrument with which the Greeks can win the war.

the service of this earthbound Savage God who, like the rest of his kind, has thrived on blood-sacrifice. As with modern warfare, enormous sophistication of theory and technique has gone into producing an art which is more extreme, more violent and, finally, more *self-destructive* than ever before" (Alvarez *The Savage God: A Study of Suicide* 188 emphasis added). Metzger's technique of spraying acid on nylon canvases led to a process of self-creative formations that simultaneously self-disintegrated. The idea of the machine that self-destructs became a potent figure for the self-suicidality of a society obsessed with the machine and its extension to the human conceived as Cyborg. Whereas for male modernists like Beckett, madness is no way to redemption,[55] for some women writers in the 1950s and 1960s, the myth of the artist becomes again powerfully seductive. If women are defined already as irrational, why not turn the myth against itself and iterate its gender implications?

It might be argued that women writers of the 1960s are pitched between a postmodern dissolution of the self as the creator God of the myth of the artist, and the urge to transcendence through a more controlled and politically directed feminist construction of the self. In *Letters Home: Correspondence, 1950-1963* Mrs Plath quotes from Sylvia: "I want, I think, to be omniscient . . . I think I would like to call myself 'the girl who wanted to be God'. Yet if I were not in this body, where *would* I be? But, oh, I cry out against it. I am I – I am powerful, but to what extent? I am I" (40). In the fashion of the savage god, Plath, along with Esther in *The Bell Jar*, undergoes a suicide attempt that in the novel is represented as a dissolution of the Eternal Feminine so that a new self, a written and writing self, a self as author, might be reborn. It is through madness, the process of disintegration, that Plath will reconstruct her self through writing that explicitly performs the myth of the artist. As Ann Stevenson puts it:

[55] "Beckett too fears that without the mythopoeic framework of creation, creativity may simply be 'invention', but he refuses to take flight into madness as a consolatory myth. His art is wrought out of a reflection on the problems of living and writing in a culture where invention is becoming all. Beckett's writing is an ethical response to the misery of living in a world no longer sacred" (Waugh, "Creative Writers and Psychopathology" 179).

> Haunted by a fear of her own disintegration, she kept herself together by defining herself, writing constantly about herself, so that everyone could see her there, fighting and conquering an outside world that forever threatened her frail being. It is not clear how much of Sylvia Plath's existential anxiety can be traced to her social isolation as a girl and how much to her father's death, which occurred when she was eight. (3-4)

The wound of madness in a de-humanised soulless post-war world becomes the driving force of creativity. The aftermath of the Second World War and the revelations of the Holocaust, the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Korean War as well as the US entering the Vietnam War, and suspension of democracy under the indictment of communism, led Plath to brood over the process of democratisation in America.[56] Esther Greenwood links the electrocution of the Rosenbergs with her own electrotherapy, seeing both as sharing a purpose of brainwashing non-conformists. The novel starts with Esther's words:

> It was a queer, sultry summer, the summer they electrocuted the Rosenbergs, and I didn't know what I was doing in New York. I'm stupid about executions. The idea of being electrocuted makes me sick, and that's all there was to read about in the papers--goggle-eyed headlines staring up at me on every street corner and at the fusty, peanut-smelling mouth of every subway. It had nothing to do with me, but I couldn't help wondering what it would be like, being burned alive all along your nerves. (*The Bell Jar* 1)

Esther identifies herself with Ethel Rosenberg as a kind of dissident simply because she is a woman who finds herself unfitted to the patriarchal world of power politics in which she finds herself. In the case of the Rosenbergs there was physical elimination, but in the case of Esther everything she experiences seems an imposition to try to make her conform; when she

[56] Plath notes how freedom is denied to those accused of being communist sympathisers and how democratic values are suspended under such indictment such as the government's different mechanisms of censorship to silence any non-conformism.

resists conformism, the system eliminates her. Women are expected to fit into ready-made categories that absorb their individual identities. For Esther, Electroconvulsive Therapy is conflated with the image of brainwashing, a licensed state attempt to make her conform, to extract the seat of her identity, to take away her free will and her freedom as an artist, because she is a woman. Her identification with the Rosenbergs is that both are forced to become passivised objects to which things happen, with neither authority, nor control. The novel shows the suffocating, sickening and deathly atmosphere of the world around her where she sees "[m]irage-gray at the bottom of their granite canyons, the hot streets wavered in the sun, the car tops sizzled and glittered, and the dry, cindery dust blew into my eyes and down my throat" (1). The same idea reverberates in Plath's journals with even more directly palpable anger evident in her diction: "[t]hey're really going to mash the world up this time, the damn fools. When I read that description of the victims of Nagasaki I was sick" (*The Journals of Sylvia Plath, 1950-1962* 40).

For Esther, the concept of brainwashing also persists in the idea of marriage and childbearing. As she contemplates, "maybe it was true that when you were married and had children it was like being brainwashed, and afterward you went about numb as a slave in some private, totalitarian state" (Plath *The Bell Jar* 81). Writing is an intellectual act as opposed to marriage that deprives her of intellect. She is in a quandary, having to choose between marriage and its mores and the kind of conformism analysed by Betty Friedan, and the possibility of having an intellectual life as a writer that will attract the opprobrium conferred upon the "brainy" woman – as de Beauvoir so well knew – that she is unfeminine, a monster. Her quandary is symbolised in the fig tree: "I saw myself sitting in the crotch of this fig tree, starving to death, just because I couldn't make up my mind which of the figs I would choose. I wanted each and every one of them, but choosing one meant losing all the rest, and, as I sat there, unable to decide, the figs began to wrinkle and go black, and, one by one, they

plopped to the ground at my feet" (73). She foresees her enslavement in the kitchen by imagining marrying Constantin which means "getting up at seven and cooking him eggs and bacon and toast and coffee and dawdling about in my nightgown and curlers after he'd left for work to wash up the dirty plates and make the bed" and doing all other bodily house chores, "a dreary and wasted life for a girl with fifteen years of straight A's" (80). She sees the woman in a marriage as a passive tool of pleasure that must "flatten out underneath his [the groom] feet like Mrs. Willard's kitchen mat" (80). Serving men in the kitchen which is "hell"; its "viciousness" is "venomous", as described in "Lesbos" (338-39) a dehumanisation that renders a woman a domestic utensil. To refuse and to author a life through writing, however, risks a different kind of dehumanisation: as Gilbert and Gubar would later observe, the domestic Goddess becoming instead a monster excluded altogether from the human species.

For Plath, her anger is fueled by the spectacular end of the dream of America as a land of democracy where everyone can practice free will: "the fake, country-wet freshness that somehow seeped in overnight evaporated like the tail end of a sweet dream" (*The Bell Jar* 1) as Esther observes. As Janet Malcolm puts it in *The Silent Woman* (1994), "Plath embodies in a vivid, almost emblematic way the schizoid character of the period. She is the divided self par excellence" (16).[57] Plath in her journals too points to the atrocity towards the nonconformist by referring to the dominant phobia towards Communism:

> Why do we electrocute men for murdering an individual and then pin a purple heart on them for mass slaughter of someone arbitrarily labelled "enemy?" Weren't the Russians communists when they helped us slap down the

[57] Janet Malcolm describes the atmosphere and mood as such: "The nineteenth century came to an end in America only in the 1960s; the desperate pretense that the two World Wars had left the world as unchanged as the Boer War had left it was finally stripped away by the sexual revolution, the women's movement, the civil rights movement, the environmental movement, the Vietnam War protests. Sylvia Plath, Anne Stevenson and I came of age in the period when the need to keep up the pretense was especially strong: no one was prepared – least of all the shaken returning G. I.'s – to face the post-Hiroshima and post-Auschwitz world. At the end of her life, Plath looked, with unnerving steadiness, at the Gorgon; her late poems name and invoke the bomb and the death camps" (15-6).

> Germans? And now. What could we do with the Russian nation if we bombed it to bits? How could we "rule" such a mass of foreign people – we, who don't even speak the Russian language? How could we control them under our "democratic" system, we, who even now are losing that precious commodity, freedom of speech? (*The Journals of Sylvia Plath, 1950-1962* 40)

In *The Bell Jar*, she anatomises the paltry acceptable space opened for women as authors in the world of fashion writing epitomised in *Lady Magazine* with its required posturing for photos and parties and its suffocating insider world. It is after one of the *Lady Magazine*'s parties that she is poisoned. Esther becomes sick, mentally and literally, in recognising how women's agency and identity is lauded and circumscribed as she becomes merely a commodity for the fashion industry. She describes posturing for a photo in *Lady Magazine*, once more using a de-humanised diction to suggest this process of de-humanisation: [58]

> But undressing in front of Buddy suddenly appealed to me about as much as having my Posture Picture taken at college, where you have to stand naked in front of a camera, knowing all the time that a picture of you stark naked, both full view and side view, is going into the college gym files to be marked A B C or D depending on how straight you are. (*The Bell Jar* 65)

This sham and pretence is overwhelming, from the Realpolitik of the anti-communist state to Buddy Willard's treatment of Esther that is a figure for the commodification of women and their incarceration in bodies owned – literally in marriage or the publishing or fashion industry – by men. Esther says, "Buddy Willard was a hypocrite" (49), and continues to explain what it is that irritates and makes her angry, a revelation that coincides advertently in

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[58] Esther derides the decline of humanity by exposing the stupidity of the extravagant fashion life style and how the schoolgirls match the colour of their dress with their books: "[h]er [Doreen's] college was so fashion conscious, she said, that all the girls had pocketbook covers made out of the same material as their dresses, so each time they changed their clothes they had a matching pocketbook. This kind of detail impressed me. It suggested a whole life of marvelous, elaborate decadence that attracted me like a magnet" (Plath *The Bell Jar* 5).

the novel with the day a woman gives birth to a baby: "Buddy kissed me again in front of the house steps, and the next fall, when his scholarship to medical school came through, I went there to see him instead of to Yale and it was there I found out how he had fooled me all those years and what a hypocrite he was. I found out on the day we saw the baby born" (58). Indeed, "it wasn't the idea of Buddy sleeping with somebody that bothered me. . . . What I couldn't stand was Buddy's pretending I was so sexy and he was so pure, when all the time he'd been having an affair with that tarty waitress and must have felt like laughing in my face" (67).

Esther views this de-humanisation process and sexism as institutionalised and dominant both in academia and the world of letters and in the home and the hospital: across all spaces of birth, working, living and dying. While witnessing a woman giving birth and after Buddy explains to her that the woman has been taking drugs for ease of delivery and *forgetfulness* of the pain, she concludes that she "thought it sounded just like the sort of drug a man would invent" (62). At the birth-giving table Esther sees, like Ethel Rosenberg in the electric chair, "a dark fuzzy thing appear" (62). The whole picture and the diction including "disinfectant," "awful torture table," "metal stirrups," "instruments and wires and tubes" and the woman "making this *unhuman* whooing noise" with "an enormous spider-fat stomach" are all de-humanised (61 emphasis added). Describing the woman giving birth, Esther says, "the baby's head stuck for some reason, and the doctor told Will he'd have to make a cut. I heard the scissors close on the woman's skin like cloth and the blood began to run down--a fierce, bright red" (62). The process of delivering a baby with pain is the novel's key image of creation. Likewise, she humorously regards academia as another diminishing patriarchal institution that reduces women to nothing but letters, formulas and abbreviations with opportunity for neither imagination nor creativity. She reports the science instructor planning his own authorial debut, a physics book "written by Mr. Manzi to explain physics to college

girls, and if it worked on us he would try to have it published" (32). Physics for women, authored by a man:

> That's what gave me the idea of escaping the next semester of chemistry. I may have made a straight A in physics, but I was panic-struck. Physics made me sick the whole time I learned it. What I couldn't stand was this shrinking everything into letters and numbers. Instead of leaf shapes and enlarged diagrams of the holes the leaves breathe through and fascinating words like carotene and xanthophyll on the blackboard, there were these hideous, cramped, scorpion-lettered formulas in Mr. Manzi's special red chalk. I knew chemistry would be worse, because I'd seen a big chart of the ninety-odd elements hung up in the chemistry lab, and all the perfectly good words like gold and silver and cobalt and aluminum were shortened to ugly abbreviations with different decimal numbers after them. If I had to strain my brain with any more of that stuff I would go mad. I would fail outright. It was only by a horrible effort of will that I had dragged myself through the first half of the year. (32-3)

For her, America is a place where your *free will* is taken away from you especially as a woman. The medical/psychiatry profession is viewed, especially by Plath, as a key representative of institutionalised discrimination against women, a realm where the deviants are made either to conform or be eliminated through the intervention of the machinic and the biological: lobotomy, ECT, psychotropic drugs. This is manifest in Esther's description of undergoing ECT and the lobotomy (the surgical removal of the front part of the brain) that her friend Valerie undergoes and to which Esther reacts: "I looked at Valerie in awe, appreciating for the first time her perpetual marble calm" (185). In this case, lobotomy functions as bringing forgetfulness – like the drugs administered to the pregnant woman –

here inducing another kind of numbness and perpetual mental death. Esther's near final description associates snow with forgetfulness and death, reminding us of a similar image that ends James Joyce story "The Dead":

> I remembered the cadavers and Doreen and the story of the fig tree and Marco's diamond and the sailor on the Common and Doctor Gordon's wall-eyed nurse and the broken thermometers and the Negro with his two kinds of beans and the twenty pounds I gained on insulin and the rock that bulged between sky and sea like a gray skull. Maybe forgetfulness, like a kind snow, should numb and cover them. (127)

Esther's further descriptions of ECT reinforce the dehumanisation of the process, a doubling and amplitude of what society has already achieved in reducing women to bodies:

> Doctor Gordon was unlocking the closet. He dragged out a table on wheels with a machine on it and rolled it behind the head of the bed. The nurse started swabbing my temples with a smelly grease. As she leaned over to reach the side of my head nearest the wall, her fat breast muffled my face like a cloud or a pillow. A vague, medicinal stench emanated from her flesh. "Don't worry," the nurse grinned down at me. "Their first time everybody's scared to death." (138)

The nurse is described as an object/material who is compared to a pillow and whose breast smells with a "medicinal stench", a "machine," reeking of "smelly grease," seems her prosthetic extension, with "metal plates" placed on two sides of her head, by a "strap" and "wire" (138) that convert Esther too into a Cyborg. The ECT process reminds Esther of when she decided to move her father's "old metal floor lamp" to her room and suddenly a flash shook her so that her screams soared into the air "like a violently *disembodied spirit*" (139 emphasis added). All are indications of how women are exposed to different types of

machines and how things happen to them, depriving them of their agency. Ann Stevenson observes how the processes, seem "almost as *barbaric* as the *rituals* of eighteenth-century Bedlam" (47 emphasis added). Also, it is estimated that today about "70 per cent of ECT patients are women" and its side effects still include *memory loss* (Rudorfer *et al.* 1868), systematically wiping out memory and connection with the present, and inducing a profound state of passivity. ECT recharges the battery as if a human is a machine whose functionality might be revived via recharging.

Therefore, in the novel, psychiatric treatments become a symbol of the institutionalised violence against women. It is hardly surprising therefore that Plath is attracted to the myth of the artist or the idea of a redemptive aesthetic, a theodicial concept of authorship as a consolation for pain. At the age of fifteen she wrote:

> I thought that I could not be hurt;
> I thought that I must surely be
> impervious to suffering –
> immune to mental pain
> or agony.
> My world was warm with April sun
> my thoughts were spangled green and gold;
> my soul filled up with joy, yet felt
> the sharp, sweet pain that only joy
> can hold.
> . . . .
> Then, suddenly my world turned gray,
> and darkness wiped aside my joy.
> A dull and aching void was left

> where careless hands had reached out to
>
> destroy
>
> my silver web of happiness. . . . ("I Thought That I Could Not Be Hurt" 33-4)

Plath falls into the myth of the artist in order to dissolve a ready-made identity fashioned by a politically state controlled but economically neo-liberal consumer society that reduces human beings to "the peanut-crunching crowd" as she calls it in "Lady Lazarus" (15); once dissolved she can re-fashion herself through art. That is why in her poems she often invokes Goddesses and heroic or mythic figures who create through divine madness. As she confirms, and the words might have been put into the mouth of Spark's character, Lise, "Dying is an art, like everything else / I do it exceptionally well" (15). At the end of the poem, she captures the image of a dying phoenix: "Out of the ash / I rise with my red hair / And I eat men like air" (17).[59] It is only through suicide and dying into art that she can achieve perfection as if she accomplished a significant task. This invocation of godlike images allows her entry as a woman into the position of Creator, but it is a very dark pathway to authorship.

This invocation is present in the novel, as well as in Plath's personal life that Stevenson addresses. As she says, "Sylvia's memory, in other words, served the purposes of her myth-art; she revised her life constantly to suit her art. In 'Ocean 1212-W' she needed action on the part of the sea; in a paternal fashion nature itself had to demonstrate that Sylvia was of the ocean's godlike lineage, a chosen daughter of the Colossus and therefore 'not forever to be cast out'" (14). Stevenson also notes that any time Sylvia faced a predicament in life, she would go through some kind of suicide attempt intended to work as purgation. This comes more often than not in the form of returning to a foetus in a womb or a womblike place like a bathtub: "Then a hot bath, shampoo – urge to clean house – will vacuum

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[59] "I feel like Lazarus: that story has such a fascination. Being dead, I rose up again, and even resort to the mere sensation value of being suicidal, of getting so close, of coming out of the grave with the scars and the marring mark on my cheek which (is it my imagination) grows more prominent: paling like a death-spot in the red, wind-blown skin, browning darkly in photographs, against my grave winter-pallor. And I identify too closely with my reading, with my writing" (Plath *The Journals of Sylvia Plath, 1950-1962* 149).

tomorrow: substitute spiritual purges - all afternoon noting critical books" (Plath *The Journals of Sylvia Plath, 1950-1962* 245). The same concept of bathtub as a womb and a newly born babe reverberates in *The Bell Jar* too when Esther feels like having a bath: "[t]here must be quite a few things a hot bath won't cure, but I don't know many of them. Whenever I'm sad I'm going to die, or so nervous I can't sleep, or in love with somebody I won't be seeing for a week, I slump down just so far and then I say: 'I'll go take a hot bath'" (Plath *The Bell Jar* 18). The "modern coffin-shaped tubs" (18) is a place that gives a new birth to her. Then she continues,

> I lay in that tub on the seventeenth floor of this hotel for-women-only, high up over the jazz and push of New York, for near onto an hour, and I felt myself growing pure again. I don't believe in baptism or the waters of Jordan or anything like that, but I guess I feel about a hot bath the way those religious people feel about holy water. I said to myself: "Doreen is dissolving, Lenny Shepherd is dissolving, Frankie is dissolving, New York is dissolving, they are all dissolving away and none of them matter any more. I don't know them, I have never known them and I am very pure. All that liquor and those sticky kisses I saw and the dirt that settled on my skin on the way back is turning into something pure." The longer I lay there in the clear hot water the purer I felt, and when I stepped out at last and wrapped myself in one of the big, soft white hotel bath towels I felt pure and sweet as a new baby. (19)[60]

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[60] Plath once again draws upon the metaphor of sacrifice and describes her resurrection, her rising again: "[s]tretching out on the rock, *body* taut, then relaxed, on *the altar*, I felt that I was being raped deliciously by the sun, filled full of heat from the impersonal and colossal god of nature. Warm and perverse was the body of my love under me, and the feeling of his carved flesh was like no other - not soft, not malleable, not wet with sweat, but dry, hard, smooth, clean and pure. High, bonewhite, I had been washed by the sea, *cleansed*, *baptised*, *purified*, and dried clean and crisp by the sun. Like seaweed, brittle, sharp, strong-smelling – like stone, rounded, curved, oval, clean - like wind, pungent, salty - like all these was the body of my love. An *orgiastic sacrifice* on the altar of rock and sun, and I *arose* shining from the centuries of love, clean and satiated from the consuming fire of his casual and timeless desire" (*The Journals of Sylvia Plath, 1950-1962* 61 emphasis added). References to bathing as an act of purgation as well as resurrection and her craving for it are many in her personal journals: "And typing out a thesis report. Very black. Last night - aching, dazed, too numb to feel or

Plath becomes "the poet heroine of her own myth," in her biographer, Stevenson's, terms when she explains Plath's yearning for purification (28). Having read Buddy's letter, she decides to write a novel: "I saw myself sitting on the breezeway, surrounded by two white clapboard walls, a mock orange bush and a clump of birches and a box hedge, small as a doll in a doll's house. A feeling of tenderness filled my heart. My heroine would be myself, only in disguise. She would be called Elaine. Elaine. I counted the letters on my fingers. There were six letters in Esther, too. It seemed a lucky thing" (116). Sylvia – also six letters – is the heroine of her own plot, her own myth. Elizabeth Bronfen in *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic* (1992) contends that in Plath's writings:

> The imagined own death makes up the inspirational source and the thematic content of this poetry. Given that the death they invoke carries their own gender, they themselves take on the dual function of the referential object and addressee of the poetic utterance. In this act of autopoesis muse and creator coalesce such that the woman writer is liberated from her reduction to the merely inspirational function, which assigns to her the task of being mediatrix [a woman who is a medium between God and His creatures], material or mirror for another's creation [as in the case of Judith for Woolf]. Plath and Sexton cite conventional conception of feminine death so as to recode these radically in such a way that death emerges as an act of autonomous self-fashioning. The theme in their poetry is neither muse nor a repression of death but rather feminine death as the creative resurrection of the represented woman. (401)

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cry, I took a hot bath: therapy: the kinks wore out, and I rose purged, for a day, of the sticky collection of sweat and exudings, powdered, in a fresh-laundered torn white-cotton collection of sweat and exudings, powdered, in a fresh-laundered torn white-cotton nightgown with tiny purple roses sprigged over it" (255).

Thus, the woman writer creates her own muse/myth, replacing the Creator God, and then becomes the heroine of her own mythology. In other words, her invocation is to herself rather than to an outside masculine Muse.

This penchant for resurrection reaches its climax when Esther witnesses a woman giving birth and the same principle is applied to her. The description of one of her attempted suicides by taking in pills is conflated with another image of a womb giving birth. In fact, by destroying her body in order to rise like a phoenix, she turns herself into words. The destruction of the immanent body and its stereotyped representations is closely linked with it achieving transcendence by the act of creating and turning herself into words. Similarly, she invokes the myth of Dionysus in "Lady Lazarus" through the explicit image of a sphinx that perishes in its body and rises from its ashes and that of Jesus of Nazareth bringing Lazarus back from death by a direct allusion; whereas Lazarus was a man, Plath appropriates the narrative as a woman. This cycle of death and rebirth is also manifest in the novel.

The novel is fraught with the recurring image of dirt – a kind of metaphorisation for her own bodily sense of herself – that causes Esther physical and mental breakdown and leads her through a process, in different forms, of purgation. All the dirt suggests how impurity dominates this whole world of materialisms – from the political sphere, where nonconformism is not tolerated, to Buddy Willard's sickening hypocrisy. Confronted with her own cultural lack of power, each time she is rendered overtly impotent, Esther feels impure and feels the need to rid herself of her impure body. When she wakes up in the morning, Esther still expects to see "Doreen's body lying there in the pool of vomit like an ugly, concrete testimony to my own dirty nature" (Plath *The Bell Jar* 21). In a letter to her mother, Sylvia writes, "'*Oh, Mother, the world is so rotten! I want to die!* Let's die together!'" (*Letters Home: Correspondence, 1950-1963* 124). The dirt of the world is also embodied in the putrefying objects that decay, like the crabmeat or caviar that upsets her stomach or the

cadaver that rots, unlike poems that take on an ethereal afterlife. Buddy calls a section of a poem "a piece of dust" (Plath *The Bell Jar* 52) and Esther in her imagination answers back by saying, "'[s]o are the cadavers you cut up. So are the people you think you're curing. They're dust as dust as dust. I reckon a good poem lasts a whole lot longer than a hundred of those people put together'" (53). Where medicine fails in the curative, poetry may succeed, for she does not "see that doctoring all that dust [people] was a bit better than writing poems people would remember and repeat to themselves when they were unhappy or sick and couldn't sleep" (53).

In the same fashion, confronting Eric and brooding over the idea of sleeping with him, Esther assumes he might "be a good person to go to bed with, since he had already done it and, unlike the usual run of boys, didn't seem *dirty-minded* or silly" (75 emphasis added) as opposed to a dirty-minded person like Buddy. What is intolerable to her is "the idea of a woman having to have a single *pure* life and a man being able to have a double life, one *pure* and one not" (77 emphasis added). Similarly, describing her attempted suicide in the bathroom, she gives us an image of herself as a foetus lying in the hot water of a womb-like tub imagining "the redness flower from my wrists, flush after flush through the *clear* water" (142 emphasis added). This process of purgation requires a rebirth; therefore, she always identifies herself with "those babies in the jars that Buddy Willard showed me had gills, he said. They went through a stage where they were just like fish" (151). For her committing suicide in the tub, drowning herself in the salty water[61] like that of a womb, or taking pills all fashion the image of a womb and "secret earth-bottomed crevice. A few old, rotting fireplace logs blocked the hole mouth" suggesting the image of the vagina and herself crouching "at the mouth of the darkness, like a troll" (162) as the foetus.

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[61] A similar image is given in "Medusa" where she is "sick to death of hot salt" of the womb and would like to get rid of it (Plath "Medusa" 60).

Esther feels her brain and intellect trapped and locked in "a glassy surface" thing (120) like a bell jar that needs to be lifted up to gain agency and transcendence and not to be seen in terms of body. The image of the bell jar dominates, from the "unhuman-looking" cadavers that "smelt like old pickle jars" to "big glass bottles full of babies that had died before they were born" (59). Feeling "stuffed farther and farther into a black, airless sack with no way out" (123), she longs for a way out, to be reborn, to uplift "the bell jar, with its stifling distortions" (230) as "[t]o the person in the bell jar, blank and stopped as a dead baby, the world itself is the bad dream" (227).

A similar way to emancipate herself from the associated immanence is Esther's vomiting out the viscera. After watching a movie, Esther feels "peculiar" and "in terrible danger of puking. I didn't know whether it was the awful movie giving me a stomachache or all that caviar I had eaten" (39) which finally ends up with vomiting in the toilet feeling like "losing my guts and my dinner both" (41). The story of the movie seems to remind Esther of her own treatment as a mistress by the hypocrite Buddy. The image of disembowelling of entrails is conjured up again when Esther says, "[m]y favorite tree was the Weeping Scholar Tree. I thought it must come from Japan. They understood things of the spirit in Japan. They disemboweled themselves when anything went wrong" (132). Thus, when anything goes wrong, the order must be restored through escaping the source of corruption, the body – putrefying and passive and finding new life as writing. The birth of the author thus requires the death of the female body. Rising like a sun extremely fresh and clean, she gives the following description:

> The sun, emerged from its gray shrouds of cloud, shone with a summer brilliance on the untouched slopes. Pausing in my work to overlook that pristine expanse, I felt the same profound thrill it gives me to see trees and

> grassland waist-high under flood water – as if the usual order of the world had shifted slightly, and entered a new phase. (228)

Esther once again associates her body with sickness and abjection, shamed flesh, as she is about to vomit: "[t]he sickness rolled through me in great *waves*. After each *wave* it would fade away and leave me limp as a wet leaf and shivering all over and then I would feel it rising up in me again, and the glittering white torture-chamber tiles under my feet and over my head and on all four sides closed in and squeezed me to pieces" (41 emphasis added). This sickness is brought to her body like all women's bodies through the invisible waves, undetectable to the eye, that mortify the flesh and empty out the mind.

Anne Stevenson in *Bitter Fame* claims that Plath self-harmed as a means to express the pain of inhabiting the shamed body of the woman. Esther breaks her leg while skiing – a fictionalised version of Sylvia's breaking her leg skiing – "then I thought, 'No, I broke it myself. I broke it on purpose to pay myself back for being such a heel'" (82). Indeed, put differently, it was Buddy Willard as the source of dirt with his dirty mind that made her break her leg intentionally so that the dirt receded and she felt purged and feel saintly again: "[a] dispassionate white sun shone at the summit of the sky. I wanted to hone myself on it till I grew saintly and thin and essential as the blade of a knife" (94).

In line with the image of a womb and foetus, the novel draws upon the image of a woman encapsulated in a dead skin that she needs to shed. The image of moulting suggests Esther's attempts to emancipate her feminine identity from the patriarchal associations of femininity. The image of wearing a fur coat in a fur show "certainly did seem stupid. I have never cared for furs" (27). It is interesting that Anne Sexton committed suicide wearing a fur coat, drinking vodka, locked in a garage, poisoned by carbon dioxide – all conjuring up the images of womb, dead skin and resurrection. While posing for a photo, Esther "felt limp and betrayed, like the skin shed by a terrible animal. It was a relief to be free of the animal, but it

seemed to have taken my spirit with it, and everything else it could lay its paws on" (98). The soft encased in the hard, shut in, is the figure of femininity in the novel: the baby in a jar; leg in a plaster; cervix inside the contraceptive dome. Shedding this carapace, skin, fur, this immanence is viewed as the route to redemption. The myth of the artist is reborn in Plath – come to feminist recognition too early – as a privatised suicidal aesthetic that stands in for the possibility of a revolutionary politics that is not yet to come. There is a politics in the novel, but it is one of resistance and negation.

Esther hates "the idea of serving men in any way" as she does the shrinking "little shorthand symbols," in a book her mother gave her, which are "just as bad as let *t* equal time and let *s* equal the total distance" (72). She aims at her authorship, autonomy and independence: "[t]hat's one of the reasons I never wanted to get married. The last thing I wanted was infinite security and to be the place an arrow shoots off from. I wanted 'change and excitement and to shoot off in all directions myself, like the colored arrows from a Fourth of July rocket" (79). But transcendence is always something shooting off, never associated with embodiment and embeddedness in a culture that makes authorship a viable proposition for women.

In *The Haunting of Sylvia Plath* (1991), Jacqueline Rose suggests this is why "Sylvia Plath haunts our culture. She is – for many – a *shadowy* figure whose presence draws on and compels" (1 emphasis added). Plath wrote at a time when the women's movement was not yet underway and influential liberated writing women such as Greer were yet to arrive. It is Plath's writing, the return of the dead – the women writer like Plath – that haunts our culture; it is indeed this return as/through writing that still haunts us. Plath's ghost still haunts the house of patriarchy first and foremost in her writing as Maya Angelou's image of dust rises above all her oppressors as she shows in the first stanza of her famous "Still I Rise" (1978): "You may write me down in history / With your bitter, twisted lies, / You may trod me in the

very dirt / But still, like dust, I'll rise" (41). But this rising and longing for a reconstruction of feminine identity coincides with destruction; literally so in the case of Plath and Sexton. But for the next generation too, an oscillation between critique and dissolution (postmodern and metaphorical) is still regarded as the paradoxical route to authorship. Too bad that in that originating moment of critical theory, Barthes, Derrida and Foucault paid so little attention to the condition of the woman writer.

Finding an Authorial Voice in the 1960s: Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* and Laing's *The Divided Self*

One of the key aspects of the radical Counterculture of the 1960s was a movement that David Cooper, himself a psychiatrist, in *Psychiatry and Anti-psychiatry* (1967), referred to as "anti-psychiatry," a sustained diatribe against orthodox psychiatry's paradigms of treatment and medication which encompassed figures as various as the psychiatrists David Cooper, Thomas Szasz and R. D. Laing. Collectively, they provided a hugely influential critique of the medicalisation of madness, the notion of "mental illness" and the psychiatric institution as autocratic and oppressive. The coercive implementation of harsh and barely clinically evidenced treatments including lobotomy, electroconvulsive therapy, insulin shock and enforced hospitalisation were all called into question as authoritarian, oppressive, controlling and excluding. Anti-psychiatry was a key reference point of the countercultural critique of institutionalization, instrumentalisation and scientism and although taking its cue from French philosophy, especially phenomenology and existentialism, came to be identified with the more popular image of the Counterculture, with experimentation with psychedelic or recreational drugs and music that altered the "normal" state of consciousness, with the advocacy of open, free sexual relations, premarital sex, homosexuality and the normalisation of contraception. Though anti-psychiatry began in Europe, it resonated with the hippy cultures of New York City's Greenwich Village and San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district.[62] Its ethos was taken up in a wide variety of spaces: in the first nonfiction pornography manuals and in publications such as *Sex and the Single Girl: The Unmarried Woman's Guide to Men, Careers, the Apartment, Diet, Fashion, Money and Men* (1962), a

[62] The movie, *Psych-Out* (1968) that is set in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district represents the mood of the era by depicting a group of hippies and their open relationships and one-night stands as well as psychedelic recreational drugs and music.

nonfiction book that, as the title indicates, encouraged and advised women to engage in premarital sexual relations and to be financially independent.[63]

Although anti-psychiatry had serious intellectual roots in European post-war philosophy, especially existentialism[64] and phenomenology, its psychiatrist advocates were also looking for an alternative to what was called "mental illness" and they regarded the label itself as a myth; as Szasz argued in *The Myth of Mental Illness* (1961) and in *The Manufacture of Madness* (1970) serious conditions such as those labeled schizophrenia should be regarded rather as a type of behavior and not mental illness. "The concept of mental illness," to use Szasz's terms, "is analogous to that of witchcraft" (Szasz *The Manufacture of Madness: A Comparative Study of the Inquisition and the Mental Health Movement* xxiii). He adds:

> Now I propose to show that the concept of mental illness serves the same social function in the modern world as did the concept of witchcraft in the late Middle Ages; in short that the belief in mental illness and the social actions to which it leads have the same moral implications and political consequences as had the belief in witchcraft and the social actions to which it led. (xxiii)

For Szasz, the label "mental illness" imposed on the individual, functions as equivalent to the designation of drapetomania, a term adopted by Samuel A. Cartwright that supposedly referred to a condition that caused American slaves to flee captivity in the mid-nineteenth century. For Szasz, disease or illness categories referred to those conditions attributable to physiologically based pathogens and not to behavioural conditions or uncategorisable states of mind. As he put it:

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[63] Joan Garity's *The Way to Become the Sensuous Woman* also known as *The Sensuous Woman* (1969) was another nonfiction book that was published on the skill of tongue in carrying out anal sex.

[64] David Cooper co-authored *Reason and Violence: a decade of Sartre's Philosophy* (1964) with R. D. Laing which is an indication of the influence of Jean-Paul Sartre's philosophy of existentialism.

> Disease is a bodily disease. Gould's medical dictionary defines disease as disturbance of the function or structure or organ or a part of the *body*. The mind (whatever it is) is not an organ or part of the body. Hence, it cannot be diseased in the same sense as the body can. When we speak of mental illness, then, we speak metaphorically. To say that a person's mind is sick is like saying that the economy is sick or that a joke is sick. When metaphor is mistaken for reality and is used for social purposes, then we have the makings of myth. The concepts of mental health and mental illness are mythological concepts, used strategically to advance some social interests and to retard others, much as national or religious myths have been used in the past. (*The Second Sin* 97)

Szasz continues, "If you talk to God, you are praying; if God talks to you, you have schizophrenia. If the dead talk to you, you are a spiritualist; if you talk to the dead, you are a schizophrenic" (101). In fact, disease is what people *have*, whereas behaviour is what they do. A similar lament is articulated by R. D. Laing in *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness* (1960) where he argues that, "except in the case of chronic schizophrenics I have difficulty in actually discovering the 'signs and symptoms' of psychosis in persons I am myself interviewing. I used to think that this was some deficiency on my part, that I was not clever enough to get at hallucinations and delusions and so on" (28). Towards the end of his book, Szasz asks for the freedom of psychiatry, its liberation from the state or what he calls the "therapeutic state." In "The Therapeutic State: The Tyranny of Pharmacy" (2001) Szasz holds that, "[c]onfronted with the problem of 'madness', Western individualism was ill prepared to defend the rights of the individual: modern man has no more right to be a madman than medieval man had a right to be a heretic" (496). In other words, Szasz is asking for psychiatry to be freed from the state that functions in effect as a version of a theocracy. In

his words, "[f]reedom of religion means freedom from religious domination and persecution. Similarly, freedom of medicine means freedom from medical domination and persecution" (*The Second Sin* 117). Hence, traditional psychiatry as an institutionalised means of suppression of behaviours and of unwarranted authority over private lives should, in his sense, be "secularised."[65]

R. D. Laing's *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness* (1960), a phenomenological study of schizoid conditions and schizophrenia, in particular, was an influential inspiration for the British women writers of the 60s, especially Doris Lessing, although again Laing's focus was neither on gender nor on women in particular. Laing defines the schizoid person as one whose personality and individuality is split both with regards to the world and to himself [sic] (19) conceived as a core interiority. Such a person then "does not experience himself [sic] as a complete person but rather as 'split' in various ways, perhaps as a mind more or less tenuously linked to a body, as two or more selves, and so on" (19). This psychological split leads to the crisis of what Laing calls the person's "existential splits" (21).

Applying, or appropriating, Laing's ideas in the understanding of the work of key women writers of the time, for whom "madness" is taken to be a key political theme, one might liken the condition of the woman writer to that of Laing's schizoid or schizophrenic in the sense that the woman writer effects a paranoiac condition strategically as a consequence of her lack of control but ultimately as an extreme means by which to gain the control of which she has been deprived by patriarchy. As Laing puts it, "[i]f the individual cannot take the realness, aliveness, autonomy, and identity of himself and others for granted, then he has to become absorbed in contriving ways of trying to be real, of keeping himself or others alive, of preserving his identity, in efforts, as he will often put it, to prevent himself losing his self"

[65] The same concern is reiterated in *The Manufacture of Madness* where Szasz compares the role of Institutional Psychiatry to Inquisition in Christianity.

(44-5). By the same token, in a patriarchal society with dominant masculine norms where women's individuality and self and consequently identity are not recognised but instead again and again denied, women have to undergo some experience of a kind of madness – that of the schizoid or schizophrenic or what might now be termed the schizo-affective – in order to regain autonomy, control and identity of their own. In still keeping a kind of skewed attachment to the world through madness, they prevent the relation of their "true" interior lives from becoming entirely detached from the world so that they themselves, in what Laing regards as the true identity, or authentic self, will not be completely lost.

Laing maintains that Freud's conceptualization of man as a dynamic play of ego, superego and id is not adequate for describing the human relation to another human and to the world in which s/he lives. Having criticised Freud's abstract concept of man as inadequate, he continues:

> Unless we begin with the concept of man in relation to other men and from the beginning "in" a world, and unless we realize that man does not exist without "his" world nor can his world exist without him, we are condemned to start our study of schizoid and schizophrenic people with a verbal and conceptual splitting that matches the split up of the totality of the schizoid being-in-the-world. Moreover, the secondary verbal and conceptual task of reintegrating the various bits and pieces will parallel the despairing efforts of the schizophrenic to put his disintegrated self and world together again. (19-20)

He goes on to differentiate between the idea of man as a person and man as an organism, arguing that such conceptualization leads to two different outcomes, for this differentiation in nomenclature is the product of two different "intentional acts" (21) to use the phenomenological term. To the contemplating mind, the question is raised: what if one is seen not as a person but as an organism? Depending on which of these you are designated or

have internalised, you are the object of a different intentional act. In other words, as Laing has it, "[o]ne's *relationship* to an organism is different from one's relation to a person" (21). As a person, one holds responsibility and autonomy whereas viewed as an organism one is deprived of one's intentions and agency but instead is ruled by atoms and cells. In other words, the theory of a man as an organism excludes one's wishes, intentions, plans, decisions and choices. Thus, such a theory depersonalises one's personality.

Laing goes further in order to criticise the science that views man as an organism and as mad in the terms of being an organism as equivalent to the way that people who regard themselves as machines or animals are considered to be mad. To use Laing's terms, "why do we not regard a theory that seeks to transmute persons into automata or animals as equally crazy?" (23). Put differently, such a theory or science functions similarly to a depersonalised schizoid condition or leads to a state of depersonalisation that is most often associated with schizophrenia. Given the reduction of woman to a biological body as in de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* and the consequent association of women with the necessity of nature conceived as a machine, one might speculate that such is the condition recognized themselves by women writers in the 1960s. Not surprisingly, their fascination with madness is part of a feminist politics that takes shape before the manifestoes of the seventies and becomes the condition that is unnamable or the problem with no name also identified by Betty Friedan in 1963: the madness – often hidden, insidious – that is "being woman" in the new scientised, commercialised, progress-obsessed but entirely patriarchal culture of the 1950s and 1960s.

Laing's central contention is the presupposition of the existence of a true authentic self with an autonomous identity[66] that is one's fundamental identity or being and that he differentiates from those performative or false selves or personalities that are erected in order

[66] "Each has his own autonomous sense of identity and his own definition of who and what he is. You are expected to be able to recognize me. That is, I am accustomed to expect that the person you take me to be, and the identity that I reckon myself to have, will coincide by and large: let us say simply 'by and large', since there is obviously room for considerable discrepancies" (Laing *The Divided Self: A Study of Sanity and Madness* 36).

to negotiate a world that is hostile to the terms and conditions of the authentic, interiorised self. For Laing, this essential splitting of inner and outer "selves" or self and masks is central to the development of the mental condition labeled schizophrenia; the schizophrenic split in this fashion undergoes a process of depersonalisation, constantly building alternative false selves in order to protect the inner authentic self and to forestall its annihilation and/or harm while feeling a constant acute anxiety and sense of being under threat in a world that feels radically unsafe. As an explanation, he points out that the schizophrenic develops different personalities – false selves – as a consequence of a profound anxiety created by "ontological insecurity," that is, "the partial or almost complete absence of the assurances derived from an existential position" (39). This is a self-defence mechanism, a matter of survival in the world.[67] Nonetheless, Laing describes a further problematic in Hegelian terms: these false selves are acknowledged by the outside world and other people, so a paradox that arises here is that the existence of the true self is still profoundly under threat since it is not recognised or confirmed by the outside world that instead affirms the false or performing selves. Hence, the schizophrenic tries to distance the true self further to avoid extinction and eventually distances the self to such an extent that it is in danger of complete dissolution; this is the condition of the schizophrenic's initially divided self that ultimately produces finally a complete loss of a sense of being a self or of "ipseity." The dissolution of the self or the disjunction between the self and personality might result in impersonation or role playing, that is, the creation and playing the role of alternative personalities as a refuge from being engulfed. The schizophrenic's "self-relationship becomes a pseudo-interpersonal one, and the self treats the false selves as though they were other people whom it depersonalizes" (74).

[67] "If the individual cannot take the realness, aliveness, autonomy, and identity of himself and others for granted, then he has to become absorbed in contriving ways of trying to be real, of keeping himself or others alive, of preserving his identity, in efforts, as he will often put it, to prevent himself *losing his self*" (Laing, *The Divided Self* 42-3 emphasis added).

This personality of the individual that the outside world is experiencing is therefore not a true self-expression but a series of impersonations.

Expressed in the language of existentialism, this authentic core self, according to Laing, has responsibilities as well as the capacity to make free choices and is "a self-acting agent" (22) and accordingly omnipotent. When one's freedom and the sense of being omnipotent in the real world are denied to a person, this individual detaches from reality and creates a phantasy world of his or her own where s/he feels autonomous and potent as the outside real world poses threats to his/her existence. As Laing states:

> In this position the individual experiences his self as being more or less divorced or detached from his body. The body is felt more as one object among other objects in the world than as the core of the individuals own being. Instead of being the core of his true self, the body is felt as the core of a false self, which a detached, disembodied, "inner," "true" self looks on at with tenderness, amusement, or hatred as the case may be. (69)

Almost at the time of writing *The Golden Notebook*, in England, *The New Left Review* emerged (out of the aftermath of the Suez Crisis in 1956, the invasion of Egypt by Israel, Britain and France, and the Hungarian revolution of 1956) by merging two journals, *Universities and Left Review* and *The New Reasoner*. It was a political magazine launched in 1960 out of the New Left, with Stuart Hall as its first editor-in-chief and a co-founder; Lessing was on the editorial board of the latter. R. D. Laing also published articles in *The New Left*. It was an era of repercussion: the Second World War and the Cold War aftermath, the full discovery of the horrors of the holocaust and the atomic bomb and genetic mutations passed on to the next generation. This had led to The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (members of which included Lessing and Bertrand Russell who joined in with the first anti-nuclear marches in London) and also to Operation Hurricane (the detonation of the first

atomic bomb by Britain in 1952) followed by testing Tsar Bomba, the largest and most powerful atomic bomb ever tested in history and 1500 times more powerful than the bombs that had destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki combined. Beyond this, the Korean War (1950 to 1953) and the rise of the power of the Soviet Union all inflicted Lessing's generation with a sense of a world dangerous, fragmented and divided. This atmosphere of the time found resonance in *The New Left Review* and its politics, its writers feeling a renewed commitment to an activism that might raise consciousness for political and social change. This penchant for political change was echoed in art with a focus upon its function as a political means in *Declaration*, a collection of essays written by a group of committed literary figures, including Lessing herself as well as Colin Wilson, John Osborne, Kenneth Tynan and Bill Hopkins (some of whom had become known as the angry young men) and published in 1957.

In "Ways without a Precedent" in the same collection, Bill Hopkins criticises the literature of the last decade for its lack of contribution to positive change and accuses the writers of downgrading themselves into "ordinary entertainers" (133). Hopkins's frank, straightforward and vitriolic castigation from the beginning of the article reflects the degree of dissatisfaction with the literature of the time: in particular, it takes a view of modernism as no longer relevant to the times. Modernist works, by implication, as he avers, "do not educate us a scrap, nor do they offer any great insight into the tumult of our time" (133). He asks for "a radical change" (134) and therefore implicitly an alternative literature that does reflect the turmoil of a new moment in history, a vital literature that might be a regenerative force for change in society. He is not in favour of a type of literature that only reports on society in order to be speculative. "If there *is* a task for the writer, it is to stand up higher than anyone else and discover the escape route to progress" (Hopkins 137).

A similar obsession reverberates in Lessing's essay "The Small Personal Voice" which was also first published in *Declaration*. With notable astuteness, she epitomises this

new call for the writer to assume an apostleship of non-conformism and to take up literary arms against the political quietism that ignores the range of national and international crises. She begins by expressing her sympathy with nineteenth-century novelists as moralists who care about the condition of the world and she argues that "the realist novel, the realist story, is the highest form of prose writing; higher than and out of the reach of any comparison with expressionism, impressionism, symbolism, naturalism or any other ism" (Lessing "The Small Personal Voice" 14). She wonders, though, whether this kind of literature, one that is written "under the banner of committedness" (13) cannot again be renewed to reflect the present moment where making moral judgements is no longer a straightforward or easy task.[68] But she is avowedly critical of communist propagandist literature, and expresses her concern that "propagandist literature, religious or political, is as old as literature itself, and has sometimes been good and sometimes bad. Recently, it has been very bad; and that is why the idea of committedness is in disrepute" (13). Likewise, Anna, as the main character of *The Golden Notebook*, herself a writer who is suffering from a writing block, echoes the same obsession and anxiety when she tells Saul that whenever she is about to write, she is haunted by someone who impedes her. The voice "could be a Chinese peasant. Or one of Castro's guerrilla fighters. Or an Algerian fighting in the F. L. N. Or Mr. Mathlong. They stand here in the room and they say, why aren't you doing something about us, instead of wasting your time scribbling?" (Lessing *The Golden Notebook* 318).

This view, that regards writing as a waste of time and scribbling, however, also represents the dominant communist agenda of how writing should be turned into a mode of activism. The communist idea of any other kind of literature as a waste of time is expressed

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[68] In "The Small Personal Voice," Lessing points to the fact that things have become uncertain and that "[w]ords have become so inadequate to express the richness of our experience that simplest sentence overheard on a bus reverberates like words shouted against a cliff. One certainty we all accept is the condition of being uncertain and insecure. It is hard to make moral judgements, to use words like good and bad" (14).

in Hopkins, in the aforementioned article;[69] Hopkins had sympathies with the party. So although Lessing wants to defend the literary and its capacities, she is aware of writing as a political intellectual at a moment when the dominant radical political view is that unless writing contributes directly to social change and in this way follows the communist agenda, it is to be regarded, politically, as a waste of time. This is Anna's dilemma in Lessing's novel: she is a writer who holds onto none of these current political beliefs about writing but who cannot either simply turn a blind eye to what is happening in the world and adopt a liberal view of art: the novel represents Anna's and her author's search for an alternative. This is why – like Lessing when she set out to write the novel that includes Anna – she suffers from writers' block. Consequently, in the Black Notebook, she questions the validity of realism as well as modernism, reflected in Anna's criticism of her own novel *Frontiers of War* that fails to portray authentically and accurately the political situation (48); Anna calls its tone, "a lying nostalgia" (34), but "'Nostalgia for what?", she wonders, and she would "rather die than have to live through any of that again" (78). She criticizes the sentimentalist emotions fermented and aroused by her previous novel as opposed to the effect that she would like a novel to exert upon a contemporary audience: deconstructing the normative rather than romanticising the past, to go forward rather than turning backward. She does not want to be sentimentalist but visionary and speculative. Jeannette King in "*The Golden Notebook* and Reflexive form" (1989) reads the novel as a critique of the realist convention of writing in exhaustive detail and suggests that it "demonstrates that distrust of Realism as a series of conventions" (37).

Anna is also concerned with finding her own true self amongst what she sees as those forces being exerted upon her by the dominant ideology; following realist conventions prevents her from finding her authentic self in a patriarchal milieu where she plays no

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[69] Hopkins enumerates three major duties or responsibilities that a writer should have in line with social change: "First, that a writer's duty is to urge forward his society towards fuller responsibility, however incapable it may appear. Second, a writer must take upon himself [*sic*] the duties of the visionary, the evangelist, the social leader and the teacher in the absence of candidates. Third, that he understands the impossible up-hill nature of a crusade and counters it by infusing in everything he creates a spirit of desperation" (145-46).

significant role in furthering social change and is regarded only as a secondary partner, mostly sexualised, to the political activists who make the actual decisions. This is further analysed in the Red notebook, which is Anna's account of her experience, and Lessing's by implication, in the Communist Party during the 1950s. She gives an example of her experience of giving a lecture to party members when she finds herself stammering and can no longer proceed:

> Since I have been in the Party, my "Party work" has consisted mostly of giving lectures on art to small groups. I say something like this: "Art during the Middle Ages was communal, unindividual; it came out of a group consciousness. It was without the driving painful individuality of the art of the bourgeois era. And one day, we will leave behind the driving egotism of individual art. We will return to an art which will express not man's self-divisions and separateness from his fellows but his responsibility for his fellows and his brotherhood. Art from the West..." to use the useful catchphrase "-becomes more and more a shriek of torment from souls recording pain. Pain is becoming our deepest reality..." I've been saying something like this. About three months ago, in the middle of this lecture, I began to stammer and couldn't finish. I have not given any more lectures. I know what that stammer means. (Lessing *The Golden Notebook* 176)

Anna falters because she is aware of uttering the already set-up ideology of the Communist party towards art that contributes not to liberation but to nourishing further conflict and warfare; consequently, she cannot continue with her own self-deception. She is aware of simply echoing the Communist Party's creed when Molly represents the party's abhorrence of emotion in favour of a view of reality as simply facts, to which Anna then retorts, "[d]o you realise how many of the things we say are just echoes? That remark you've just made is an

echo from communist party criticism" (23). She also criticises a novel that was written in the same fashion by a worker and which she now sees as sentimental, dishonest and beguiling:

> If that useful imaginary man from Mars (or for that matter, a man from Russia) should read this book he would get the impression that (a) the cities of Britain were locked in deep poverty, unemployment, brutality, a Dickensian squalor; and that (b) the workers of Britain were all communist or at least recognised the Communist Party as their natural leader. This novel touches reality at no point at all. (Jack described it as: "communist cloudcuckoo spit.") It is, however, a very accurate re-creation of the *self-deceptive myths of the Communist Party* at this particular time; and I have read it in about fifty different shapes or guises during the last year. (173 emphasis added)

That is why she is not satisfied with practising realism anymore – social realism – and has stopped writing as she no longer wants simply to be propagandist, fearing there is no freedom to speak in her own voice and that she is condemned as a socialist in the current regime simply to express the already set-up ideologies. Such art cannot but belie the world which is cracking up, more and more fragmented and chaotic. When Tommy asks her what is "in those diaries," Anna replies, "'They aren't diaries.' 'Whatever they are.' 'Chaos, that's the point'" (22).

She notices letters written by different members of the Communist party from when she was a member and they look identical in terms of "the style, the phrases, the way words were linked together" (27) although the writers of the letters "didn't know, any of them, the others had written" (26) and so she wonders what kind of stereotype she is herself: "surely the thought follows – what stereotype am I? What anonymous whole am I part of?" (27). Hence, finding her new self more detached and distanced from the Anna of *Frontiers of War*, she begins the process of consciously deconstructing and splitting herself into different selves by

putting them into the different notebooks that she calls chaotic in order that she can begin to praise the true authentic voice from the false stereotyped selves that the patriarchal society has already set up for her: "In each [notebook], the first page or two showed broken scribblings and half-sentences. Then a title appeared, as if Anna had, almost automatically, divided herself into four, and then, from the nature of what she had written, named these divisions" (30). Anna is performing on herself the kind of Laingian strategy of madness, pushing the manufactured false selves of conformity into ever more extreme positions so that exposed as lies they may begin that dissolution into authentic madness that might allow the true self to emerge.

Anna's interrogation of what part of the whole she belongs to and her situation as a woman in the party leads her into a kind of dark night of the Soul, a phase of schizophrenic madness and depersonalization. The feeling of not being in control, of not being part of the situation, results in a detachment from her surrounding context and from her body and the environment. Lessing is consciously deploying Laing's political reading of madness in her fictional deconstruction of the self. In describing how this process works, Laing holds that:

> The dissociation of the self from the body and the close link between the body and others, lends itself to the psychotic position wherein the body is conceived not only as operating to comply with and placate others, but as being in the actual possession of others. The individual is beginning to be in a position to feel not only that his [*sic*] perceptions are false because he is continually looking at things through other people's eyes, but that they are playing him tricks because people are looking at the world through his eyes. (*The Divided Self: A Study of Sanity and Madness* 144)

When you reach this point, your thoughts do not belong to you anymore: this is the case for Anna as she looks back on herself and sees another Anna with whom she can no longer feel

identical or attached as "the 'Anna' of that time has now become a kind of enemy, or like an old friend one has known too well and doesn't want to see" (*The Golden Notebook* 78). She is aware of this split in her personality and notices it when she talks to Molly about politics: "It occurred to me today, that when I talk to Molly about politics, I never know what person is going to reply – the dry, wise, ironical political woman, or the Party fanatic who sounds, literally, quite maniacal. And I have these two personalities myself" (82).

The fact that Anna, together with all the women in the novel, is treated as secondary, an object of sex, intensifies, endorses and seals the false selves that society imposes on her and consequently causes her existential anxiety.[70] She ruminates that the reason for joining the party is that,

> I came home thinking that somewhere at the back of my mind when I joined the Party was a need for wholeness, for an end to the split, divided, unsatisfactory way we all live. Yet joining the Party intensified the split-not the business of belonging to an organisation whose every tenet, on paper, anyway, contradicts the ideas of the society we live in; but something much deeper than that. Or at any rate, more difficult to understand. I tried to think about it, my brain kept swimming into blankness, I got confused and exhausted. (82)

Brooding over her experience in the Communist party, Anna reflects, "I played the role of 'the *leader's girl friend*' – a sort of cement, an *ancient role* indeed. And of course if any of my relationships with these people had had any depth, I would have been disruptive and not conciliatory. And there was Maryrose, who was the *unattainable beauty*" (43 emphasis

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[70] "The feeling of reality is generally ignored by recent work on emotion and feeling. However, it is a theme in the work of certain phenomenologists, such as the early Heidegger, who claims that experience presupposes an 'attunement' [Befindlichkeit] (1962, p.172), a feeling of belonging to a world that is taken for granted in everyday life. According to Heidegger, it is 'mood' that attunes one to the world and gives things their taken for granted meaning. He also claims that everyday attunement can be disrupted and that it collapses completely in the mood of 'anxiety'. Given that attunement underlies the very sense of Being-in-the-world, anxiety presents 'the nothing'" (Ratcliffe 51).

added). Anna's existential feelings, to use the philosopher Matthew Ratcliffe's terminology, are taken away from her in the condition and atmosphere of patriarchy where she feels she is no longer an entity shaping political or social change. This "ancient role", of course, is the view of women as the eternal feminine, as bodies, as immanence, to recall Simone de Beauvoir's terms, and therefore given stereotyped duties such as those of Eve whose only existence is as a tool of pleasure and serenity for Adam. Both Anna and Maryrose here are referred to as possessed by men rather than owning their own names. They are non-entities. Her way of explaining the relationship between men and women indicates the ongoing story of the instrumentalisation of women. Drawing on the sexological vocabulary introduced by Masters and Johnson in the 1950s, in her story in the yellow notebook, Anna speaks about Ella's orgasmic experience with Paul and how she first experiences vaginal orgasm. But she also speaks about how she is exploited by Paul who can only give her clitoral orgasms. Although Ella finds it exciting, "there was always a part of her that resented it" and regarded as "substitute and fake" (109). This very scene is followed by a professor's "scientific discovery" of the female orgasm, where it is proved that there is "no physiological basis for a vaginal orgasm in women" (110), a quasi-scientific statement that Ella rejects and finds ridiculous insisting that every woman knows what the reality is. In a way, she points to the science as patriarchal totally excluding women's own experience. The difference lies in the quality of the emotional experience not the reduction of sex to the mechanics of the biological body. The difference between the two concerns the woman's experience of emotions involved in a loving versus an exploitative relationship. Relevant again here is Laing's insight into how schizophrenia develops in vulnerable persons when they are treated instrumentally as objects. As he puts it, "[i]n the face of being treated as an 'it', his [*sic*] own subjectivity drains away from him like blood from the face. Basically he requires constant confirmation from others of his own existence as a person" (*The Divided Self: A Study of*

Sanity and Madness 46-7). Anna, similar to other women in the novel, is treated as a nonentity even in the place of political activism that is supposed to challenge social division and fragmentation, in the communist party; it is not surprising that her existential insecurities are compounded in every area of her experience: personal, political and social.

In a patriarchal community where her autonomy is denied and her free will is felt to have been taken away from her, she enters what Laing calls a condition of ontological insecurity. Anna's description of the relationship between Ella and George in her story accords with her own experience as well as Lessing's in the Communist party:

> The last few weeks with George were a nightmare of self-contempt and hysteria, until at last she left his house, to put an end to it, to put a distance between herself and the man who suffocated her, imprisoned her, apparently took away her will. He then married the woman he had made use of to bring Ella back to him. Much to Ella's relief. (*The Golden Notebook* 92)

What Laing is saying is what Lessing is experimenting with in the novel: demonstrating how society forces us to construct false selves. The more we are forced into these selves, the more disconnected we become. Existentialism insists that we have to make a choice to make a self. One choice is to deconstruct those false selves and accept the risk that this might throw you into madness. But, it may be that you have to go through madness in order to discover what you are, your authentic self. As Laing has it, "[m]adness need not be all breakdown. It may also be break-through. It is potentially liberation and renewal as well as enslavement and existential death" (*The Politics of Experience, and, the Bird of Paradise* 110). Here comes the paradoxical function of madness especially for the woman writer who has to go through an existential death in order to make a breakthrough and to create the possibility of social change. She is splitting herself into different selves to find her own authentic self. Therefore, the novel is pitched between Sartre's existentialism, that there is a core self and that this can

be liberated only by making a choice, and a postmodernist or deconstructionist view that there is no such core and that this concept is in itself essentialist so that the self is never more than a continuous process of making of selves and making authentic choices in one's performances of them. Lessing, however, shows madness not as fragmentation or as illness but as strength, a way of breaking down patriarchal norms. If you are living in a time when everything is cracking up, how can you reflect the reality of the world in which you are living? In other words, there is a kind of sanity in madness. What she tries to get across is that in such a chaotic situation if you act sane, you are just covering up and are consequently being inauthentic. Thus, the form of the realist novel does not allow her to split her false selves and search for the authentic one; in other words, it does not give her the opportunity of being mad.

After modernism, the left turned towards social realism in a Lukacsian kind of way as the best kind of political literature. Lessing's first novels, *The Grass is Singing* (1950) and *Retreat to Innocence* (1956), are written in this manner of social realism. But her dissatisfaction with modernism too is because its style of interiorisation is perceived by her as no longer able to provide an opportunity to contribute to social change and, more importantly, to help find a true self. Being part of the New Left movement in the 50s and 60s, Lessing carries forward these concerns to interrogate them fully in *The Golden Notebook*. The novel starts with the "Free Women" frame written in a very conventional third person narrative that later on turns out to be a novel written by Anna Wulf that contains all the notebooks, but with which she is dissatisfied and through which Lessing can articulate her own dissatisfaction with the conventional forms of the novel. This frame proceeds through a starkly conventional realism but where its linear progression is broken up and interspersed by the other notebooks that Anna has written and kept and that culminate in the experience of psychosis of the golden notebook.

Nick Bentley in "Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*: An Experiment in Critical Fiction" expands on how the novel explores "the relationship between literary form and politics" (44). Nevertheless, as expressed in Anna's concerns, she looks for an alternative way of writing, in terms of both form and content, which can both further the political/cultural change and oppose the individual bourgeois self-expression of modernism, which for her is nothing but pettiness,[71] yet still avoid falling back into the communist propagandist agenda. Lessing maintains the idea that the author has a responsibility towards her society and that literature is "an instrument of change for good or for bad" ("The Small Personal Voice" 16). The writer's work, therefore, is "an architecture of the soul, and it is a phrase which none of the old nineteenth-century novelists would have shied away from" (16). The concern echoes itself both in Anna's words in the Black notebook and in the form and structure of the novel itself. In short, instead of going back to modernism, Lessing draws upon a form of deconstructive and existentialist confessionalism putting herself, as the writer, Anna, into the text.

Lessing's commitment is to pushing art and literature into the political sphere once again in order to posit for the new post-war world "the individual conscience in relation to the collective" (22). In politicising the modernist idea of the impersonality of the author in order to move literature to the political left, she moves from a modernist position where aesthetic value is of cardinal significance and from a realism concerned with questions of morality to her own mode of the post-modern. This type of experimental novel has sometimes been referred to as the anti-novel, in that in interrogating its own forms it allows an interrogation of the relations between aesthetic forms and political and social structures called up through those forms. In *The Golden Notebook*, Lessing uses literature as a weapon to explore and

[71] Although not satisfied with the realist way of writing, Lessing is not inclined to turn back to modernism and she criticises the modernist novel by comparing the hero of *Room at the Top* with Stendhal's heroes: "But the hero of *Room at the Top*, whose values are similar to Stendhal's heroes, who understand, as clearly as Julien Sorel when he is allowing himself to be corrupted, does not see himself in relation to any larger vision. Therefore he remains petty" (Lessing "The Small Personal Voice" 23).

challenge the normative. She takes upon, and Anna goes through, the idea of Laing's split personality as a way of liberating herself from realism and modernism and their dogma, viewing them as two inadequate means for her to construct and express her true self/voice as a woman writer. She explores the problem of the novel in the increasingly fluid and fragmented society of the early 1960s and in doing so she reconsiders her own position as an author, specifically a female author and that leads her to experiment with different forms. The question of what is this "I" and the "self", in the context of a novel that interrogates its own being, is part of a larger question of what is the author, what is the responsibility of an author and how does the author role function, especially in the new world of the mid-twentieth-century.

Before Lessing began her career, however, Simone de Beauvoir's concept of the Eternal Feminine in *The Second Sex* (1953) had already illuminated how stereotypes that perpetuate false roles have been assigned to women, who are therefore viewed as matter not intellect. Accordingly, part of Anna's quest for authenticity involves her trying to break these false stereotypes imposed upon her in order to reach what might be considered a more authentic or true self. She therefore voluntarily undergoes a process of depersonalisation normally associated with psychosis. Depersonalisation involves a sense of detachment from the embodied self and the subsequent creation of other "selves" who appear to look on at the body from a spectatorial position outside it. Like Esther, Anna's sympathy for the Rosenbergs, running a petition for them, is an indication of her self-identification as a passive object "in an atmosphere of suspicious disgust" (Lessing *The Golden Notebook* 81). The depersonalisation, the detachment from the body, however, is preserved in her fictionalisation of her experience in a world of fantasy or the imaginary (transcendence). Since characters have to be concretised and imagined in the mind of the reader, however, and perhaps according to convention, taken for real people. Anna is able to exist in the readerly

imagination as a woman not engulfed by and limited to her body, but as a set of characters representing Anna's multiple selves as a result of her intellectual and artistic bravura performance. Simone de Beauvoir's idea of the Eternal Feminine, bears affinities with what Laing remarks of the existence of the true autonomous self in that the myth of the Eternal Feminine is *the* false self for women; it is this myth, that is challenged and undermined by Anna through the fictionalisation of herself, that allows Lessing herself to revisit the myth of the artist in its gendered implications.

In Anna's ongoing novel, when Paul returns to his woman, Ella cannot help imagining the woman out of Ella's jealousy which leads her to create a made-up version of this woman's personality and self.

> She [Ella] slowly, involuntarily, builds up a picture in her mind of a serene, calm, unjealous, unenvious, undemanding woman, full of resources of happiness inside herself, self-sufficient, yet always ready to give happiness when it is asked for. It occurs to Ella (but much later, about three years on) that this is a remarkable image to have developed, since it does not correspond to anything at all Paul says about his wife. So where does the picture come from? Slowly Ella understands that this is what she would like to be herself, this imagined woman is her own shadow, everything she is not. (105)

Ella depends upon Paul and "cannot imagine living without him" (105). In creating Ella, Anna can explore how this degree of dependence and emotional attachment causes ontological anxiety and "a black cold fear," as Ella names it, (105) in her leading her to create/imagine this "other woman, the third, as a sort of safety or protection for herself" (105). As Laing speaks of schizophrenia, it "is *a special strategy that a person invents in order to live in an unlivable situation*" (*The Politics of Experience, and, the Bird of Paradise* 95). Likewise, Anna comes to see how she creates Ella – or put differently, projects her self

into Ella – to overcome her existential anxiety or uncertainty. Hence, Anna impersonates multiple Annas (selves) as a manoeuvre to preserve existential security and to safeguard her own inner core self against the destructive and annihilating siege of imposed selves that extinguish her individuality. Anna hence becomes cognizant of the fact that sticking to any ideology is the extinction of individuality.

Ella herself is a projection of Anna the character but she is, herself, a novelist who is written by Anna the novelist. And then Anna the writer of Ella (who also acts as Anna the character or projection of Anna) becomes the critic/reader of the very self she has created (or split from her other selves). Many reverberating references are created in order to effect this distanciation especially in the Black notebook where Anna is commenting upon her own novel *Frontiers of War* and in the Yellow notebook where she combines the manuscript of an ongoing novel with self-reflexive criticism. Anna talks about and comments upon Ella, the projection of one of her selves, and her actions and in doing so distances herself from her other self, observing and commenting on it (Ella) and therefore inscribes an autonomous existence for the other self, detached from her own. In reviewing her own novel, Anna comments, "[i]t is as if this novel were already written and I were reading it. And now I see it whole I see another theme, of which I was not conscious when I began it" (Lessing *The Golden Notebook* 107). "And yet I, Anna," as she continues, "like Ella with Paul, refused to see it. Paul gave birth to Ella, the naive Ella" (107). And when she is attracted to a man, Anna the observer/critic of the present time "can assess the depth of a possible relationship with him by the degree to which the naive Anna is re-created in me" (107).

By taking the multiple roles of Anna the writer and Anna the critic and then by splitting herself and creating Ella (one of Anna's selves) and analysing them all, Anna tries to distance her own sense of herself as a "self" from those imposed on her. In one respect, it could be argued that the act of writing a story in itself (or at least writing in this

postmodernist experimental fashion) is inherently a process of splitting different multiple selves. Characters are projections and concretisation of voices or selves – voices which are first disembodied and detached from the author and then are given new attires by being embodied in imaginary bodies, as autonomous agents. Thus, first Anna goes through a process of disembodiment. She first disembodies her selves and distances her own constructed, deliberately split, selves from her own real physical body and she embodies these selves by projecting them onto the page (let there be Ella, and there was Ella) as characters like Ella or multiple Annas in different times in separate notebooks. Likewise Lessing does so by creating Anna as the projection of her own multiple selves. Lessing draws on Laing's ideas to suggest how the condition of schizophrenia and madness is an articulation of the essential processes of becoming and being a woman writer. This enables her to first explore and discover what it means to say that one has a self and then to explore ways of defending the processes of authentic selfhood from the imposition of false selves.

This strategy of splitting her protagonist into multiple selves, a way of distancing and exploring the creative process with its particularly troubling inflections for the woman writer, might also be compared with Brecht's alienation (estrangement) effect. Coming from a leftist background like Brecht, Lessing too is concerned with laying bare ideologies and discourses, whether those of normative "common sense," or of counter-ideologies such as communism or those of orthodox psychiatry or patriarchy. What Jeannette King describes is what Lessing is practising here in the novel:

> As long as a familiar discourse is employed, readers will accept the representation of the reality inscribed in it, without worrying about the relationship between that discourse and the "truth" it is encoding. There is no way for the writer to control the way in which this discourse will be read, unless there exists a prior readiness in the reader to distance oneself from

> ideological practices. Or, unless the writer produces a context, a norm, against which the parody can be measured, which is in effect what the multiple discourses of *The Golden Notebook* provide. (47)

Her splitting manoeuvres and experimentation with structure and form such as the use of metafictional commentary within and upon her own text or the juxtaposition of real events (newspapers extracts) with fiction, enable Anna (and Lessing by implication) to raise readerly awareness of discursive false consciousness as it structures the everyday real. But Lessing alternates between deconstructive understanding of subjectivity and textuality and a more purely Laingian sense of the idea of recovering a true lost self. However, a totalising and perennial detachment is threatening to her existence because it inevitably creates ontological anxiety and the feeling of a loss of touch with external reality. This is the problem for the woman writer of the period: the risk and necessity of deconstructing subjectivity in order to arrive at a possibility of truly "authoring" oneself and of taking up a newly constructed role of professional author too. The risk as in Plath lies in Lessing's perception of the need for self-dissolution, for undoing a patriarchalised femininity before reauthorisation might begin. The process is fraught with anxiety and a necessary, further alienation. As Geritt Glas (2003) notes, a major type of anxiety "centres around the theme of *unconnectedness*" from, or "an incapacity to connect" to, the world (238). Thus, she keeps headlines and the notebooks to forestall the development of a total disconnection from the past and from social and political external realities. Hence, "[t]he individual," that is the schizophrenic, as Laing maintains, "oscillates perpetually, between the two extremes, each equally unfeasible" (*The Divided Self: A Study of Sanity and Madness* 53).

Anna enters a Laingian condition of authentic madness as a deliberate strategy. Insanity is an authentic protest against the dominant ideology that manufactures women as mad. Anna notices many women going mad despite their apparent normal life:

> Five lonely women going mad quietly by themselves, in spite of husband and children or rather because of them. The quality they all had: self-doubt. A guilt because they were not happy. The phrase they all used: "There must be something wrong with me." Back in the campaign H. Q. I mentioned these women to the woman in charge for the afternoon. She said: "Yes, whenever I go canvassing, I get the heeby-jeebies. This country's full of women going mad all by themselves." (Lessing *The Golden Notebook* 85)

The novel itself enacts a therapeutic process that is explored through the articulation of the process of turning experience into a novel. There is a parallel development in the novel between, as the novel has to have a structure, exploding the conventional form of the novel and trying to find a way to see madness as a means of dissolving the false divisions of the self. Lessing's idea of experimentalism is produced out of a Laingian understanding. The invention of the diaries and then the invention of the separate notebooks, and turning the characters into various versions of the self, all become ways of showing that realism itself might be regarded as another vehicle of what Laing calls the false self-system. Realism as manifested in the outer frame of the novel, "Free Women," is the false self of the novel itself that gives either no insight or produces emotions not congruent with the postmodern era. To become aware of and to get behind that false self-system requires working to expose those forms and structures. Lessing develops a kind of anti-novel structure as a means to explore how you might articulate an anti-false self. In searching for the possibility of becoming authors and women, Lessing, like Plath and Spark, find themselves searching to create new experimental modes of writing, new genres and a language adequate to articulate the contradictions and paradoxes that inevitably render that quest both playful and existentially dangerous.

Chapter 3: Postmodernist Fiction, Madness and Agency

Hearing Voices in Samuel Beckett's *The Unnamable* (1953)

> It issues from me, it fills me, it clamours against my wall. It is not mine. I can't stop it, I can't prevent it, from tearing me, racking me, assailing me. It is not mine, I have none: I have no voice and must speak, that is all I know. It's round that I must revolve, of that I must speak - with this voice that is not mine, but can only be mine, since there is no one but me. (Or if there are others, to whom it might belong, they have never come near me.) (Beckett 309)

Who is speaking? Whose voice is it that speaks through him/her? Does it exert an independent agency and is it a purely disembodied voice? What is certain is that the speaker is not able to locate the voice. It is an unattributed sourceless but intrusive voice. He is experiencing a voice's split condition, neither inside not outside. He has no power and authority over it and feels forced/obliged to speak. The Unnamable's condition is similar to that of the Kleinian infant for whom there is the good voice and the bad voice. The good voice is the voice of the other become that of the self and the bad voice is the voice that belongs to the self but is recognised as the voice of the other, as Steven Connor suggests (*Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* 32). By inference, Connor extends this Kleinian infant condition to arrive at a more general conclusion that, "[i]dealized voices of all kinds derive their power, prestige, and capacity to give pleasure from this willingness to hear other voices as one's own" (32). Perhaps Connor is right when he says that the reason why we intend to sing along with a singer is to make it our own and consequently take pleasure in it (10): to turn it into a good voice, in other words. Whereas the good voice is the equivalent of pleasure, the bad voice is creepy, intrusive, "racking," "assailing," "tearing," to use the

Unnamable's own words, annoying, unrelenting, unremitting and eerie. As this chapter will argue, the Unnamable's attempts (and possibly those of Beckett, by extension) in writing and speaking of authorial voice and hearing experiences in *The Unnamable* (1953) is to overcome his/her ontological insecurity in a universe that is generated out of his head and yet achieves an uncanny kind of independence. It is an attempt to dissipate the uncanny, the creepiness, of the voice that is a consequence of unattributable, disembodied, and therefore, unlocatable features. The novel might be read as an early manifestation of what later emerges as the poststructuralist critique of the humanist concept of the self and authorship: its contestation of clear authorial agency and intention reveals a dissolution of the humanist conceptualisation of authorship. It is also a therapeutic attempt to put the dismantled elements back into place in order to overcome the consequent ontological insecurity that this dissolution generates. This is done through a kind of quasi-corporeality that Steven Connor calls "the vocalic body" ("Violence, Ventriloquism and the Vocalic Body" 80; *Dumbstruck* 35).

At some point in our life, we all have experienced, one way or another, the natural phenomenon of hearing the voice. For instance, name hearing is a natural sensation that everyone might go through such as when they have the impression that their name is heard in public whereas the sound actually comes from an inhuman source such as the wind blowing through a passage. As Ralph Hoffman has it, "your occasional illusionary perception of your name spoken in a crowd occurs because this utterance is uniquely important. Our brains are primed to register such events; so on rare occasions the brain makes a mistake and reconstructs unrelated sounds (such as people talking indistinctly) into a false perception of the spoken name" (Hoffman). Hearing our name, we turn our head and begin the excavation to find the source, as the voice implies the existence of a body that houses that source. Another example would be what G. Lynn Stephens and George Graham call "*delusions of reference*" which occur in schizophrenic patients. As they explain, "the subject may have

overheard another saying 'Give cancer to the crippled bastard' but may mistakenly believe that the speech was directed at him" (16). To be unable to locate the voice is to feel less in control and consequently to become anxious since a disembodied voice carries an uncanny effect and is consequently experienced as more authoritative. Connor mentions historical accounts of ghostly voices when for example the voices of dead children are heard from cellars, dungeons, vaults, or when Alexandre Vattemare would make cadavers seem to speak in an act of ventriloquism in the nineteenth century. He speaks of the frenzy and dread that these voices would raise in people as they would "testify to the dread of premature burial that would bubble up at intervals during the 19th century" (*Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* 258). We normally tend to feel insecure at voices whose source and origin is not locatable. As Connor puts it, "[s]ound, and especially the sound of the human voice, is experienced as enigmatic or anxiously incomplete until its source can be identified, which is usually to say, visualized" (20).

If it is the unlocability of the voice that creates the uncanny effect then that is all the more compounded if the voice is heard more frequently, even incessantly. The condition is further exacerbated if the voice hearer finds him or herself in a universe where there is no other who might ascertain one's existence; this becomes a powerful source of ontological insecurity. Such is the condition of the Unnamable. He is entirely alone: "I alone am man and all the rest divine" (Beckett 302). *The Unnamable* shows the "breakdown of the Cartesian *Cogito*, which Lacan also recognises" (Stewart 108), reaching its climax in the existential crisis of the Unnamable himself. As the Cartesian *Cogito ergo sum* implies, when we doubt, we can be sure that we doubt. And if doubt is a form of thinking, then we can be sure of the existence of the subject who does the thinking because there has to be a subject that does the thinking. Accordingly, the existence of the thinking subject is undoubtable. It also implies that thinking is the representation of being. "'I think' is equivalent to representation; 'I am',

naturally, to being" (Burke *The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida* 69). To use Descartes's own words:

> Then too there is no doubt that I exist, if he is deceiving me. And let him do his best at deception, he will never bring it about that I am nothing so long as I shall think that I am something. Thus, after everything has been most carefully weighed, it must finally be established that this pronouncement "I am, I exist" is necessarily true every time I utter it or conceive it in my mind. (64)

Therefore, this thinking being becomes a firm and undoubtable foundation on which to build the subject's knowledge of the world – because "I am, I exist – that is certain. But for how long? For as long as I am thinking" (18). Yet, the Unnamable is an example of a dissociation of *Cogito ergo sum* as the narrator cannot presume s/he is the subject of the act of thinking. As the Unnamable says from the very beginning, "I seem to speak (it is not I) about me (it is not me)" (Beckett 293). The speaker doubts that s/he is the subject who does the thinking/speaking. When the speaker's consciousness breaks down and is no longer able to attribute to the self the projections of its own consciousness, s/he is therefore incapable of ascertaining his/her own agency, authority and existence; hence occurs the complete dissolution of the Cartesian *Cogito*.

But, what causes this experience to happen so often, more frequently than is generally considered "normal"? Why does this disembodiment happen so that a source and a place has to be found for this disembodied voice? A convincing answer, as Stephens and Graham suggest, is that it happens when self-consciousness breaks.[72] To be self-conscious is to have self-awareness that the feelings and thoughts are your own, that you own them, a process called introspection. However, if this self-awareness dissipates, you begin to doubt that your thoughts and feeling belong to you and come to assume that there are other agents who have

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[72] Stephens and Graham's main argument is that "sometimes, when self-consciousness breaks down or becomes disturbed, it appears to the self-conscious person as if *other* selves or agents are involved in his or her stream of consciousness" (2).

entered your consciousness. Thought insertion and hearing voices are two forms of alienation or what Stephens and Graham call "*alienated self-consciousness*" (4). The thinker is still self-conscious as he or she is aware of the experiences, be they thoughts or voices, but assumes they are coming from an alien source. In other words, such experiences are attributed, by the subject, "to another person rather than to the subject" (4). In thought insertion – which is very common among schizophrenic patients – they may be quite conscious that they are the subject where the thoughts happen – "They regard them [the thoughts] as occurring within their ego boundaries" (126) – but believe that some other subject has put the thoughts in their mind. As Stephens and Graham explain:

> The subject regards the thoughts as alien not because she supposes that they occur outside her, but in spite of her awareness that they occur within her. Her distress arises not (as Freud or Sims would have it) from loss of ego boundaries and uncertainty about whether things are inside or outside the boundary, but from her sense that her ego boundary has been violated and that something alien has been placed within it. (127)

Accordingly, voice hearers understand the subjectivity of the hallucinatory thoughts; however, they deny they are the author (producer or projector) of the thoughts and therefore infer that such thoughts must have come or been put in their mind from and by other subjects.

It could be inferred from Stephens and Graham that if subjectivity does not negate the thought insertion, there must be a split between subjectivity and agency both of which constitute the founding conditions of authorship. In other words, authorship is here understood as bound up with conditions of subjectivity and agency.

> We propose that the sense of agency and the sense of subjectivity represent distinct strands or components of self-consciousness, and that it is possible for these strands to unravel or break apart. More specifically, I may experience a

> thought as *subjectively* but not *agentically* my own. This possibility is realized in experiences of thought insertion and voices. Recognition of the distinction between the senses of subjectivity and agency helps to make the experiences intelligible. (153)

Subjectivity is a self-awareness of one's consciousness and its process, of the subjectivity of thoughts and voices (that is, the awareness that they occur in the subject). Agency, on the other hand, is a sense of controlling one's own thoughts, feelings and emotions. It is "[m]y sense that *I think* a certain thought involves more than the sense that the thought occurs in me. It also consists in a sense that I am *author* of that thought, that I carry out the activity of thinking" (8-9 2nd emphasis added).[73] Consequently, authorship – to be the author of one's own thoughts, feelings, emotions, voices, etc. – might be defined with regard to a particular combination of subjectivity and agency. In the absence of any of the elements, authorship is lost.

In voice hearing experiences too subjectivity might be kept in the sense that the subject recognises the existence of the voices in his/her consciousness but s/he is unable to attribute them; hence, deterioration of agency. Therefore, it could be said that our sense of self-consciousness works with regards to both that subjectivity and agency which also make up authorship. Nonetheless, a sense of alienation, which could be regarded as one level further away from authorship, occurs when the subject locates the voices (thoughts, emotions, etc.) in other agents: others are the authors of the voice. As Stephens and Graham suggest, "in externality and alienation the sense of agency breaks apart from the sense of subjectivity. In alienation, in addition, the sense of agency places the agency in another" (155). In explaining

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[73] Stephens and Graham give an example to elucidate the difference between subjectivity and agency. If a person raises my own arm, the act of raising occurs in or to me (my arm), therefore I am the subject. Yet, I am not the perpetrator of the act. As they have it, "admitting that a thought occurs in my mind while insisting that somebody else thinks that thought is like insisting that somebody else raised my arm" (153). They continue, "[h]e is the agent who carries out the arm movement, even though the movement happened in or to my body" (154).

why alienation occurs in the subject, for example in the case of voice hearing, Stephens and Graham propose that the subject confuses their own imaginary introspective inner voices with hearing another person's speech. S/he cannot tell their own introspection from "a perceptual experience of someone else's speech" (33-4). In other words, introspection is confused with perception of external objects and events.

Strikingly similar to the agentless patient who hears voices is the condition of the Unnamable who holds onto a certain level of self-awareness of thoughts and voices but is not necessarily able to self-attribute them. As the Unnamable self-consciously puts it, the voice "issues from me, it fills me, it clamours against my wall. It is not mine" (Beckett 309). Rather s/he mislocates them but in a therapeutic act creates characters such as Mahood through the substantiation of the voices: "I'll call him [the voice] Mahood instead . . . . It is his voice which has often, always, mingled with mine, and sometimes drowned it completely" (311). Moreover, the novel itself is exemplary of the critique of the Romantic humanist conception of authorship, before poststructuralists like Derrida and Barthes give shape to theories of the death of the author. Beckett masterfully shows that if the world is no longer the place where the subject might ascertain the structure of existence, he or she turns the attention inwards. The subject becomes hyper-reflexive and hyper-aware of their own introspection which is highly likely to result in the dissolution of the self and therefore of authority.[74] Sass defines hyperreflexive qualities as "acute self-consciousness and self-reference, and . . . alienation from action and experience" (*Madness and Modernism: Insanity in the Light of Modern Art, Literature, and Thought* 8); hence, the hyperreflexive person is alienated from their own thoughts, feelings, voices and consequently authorship.[75] The speaker, referred to as the

[74] Shaun Gallagher calls this process of hyper-reflexivity "metarepresentation" which results in a false ascription of thoughts: "In metarepresentation the patient may start to ascribe the thought to some particular force or individual and report that it is inserted" (228).

[75] As Sass clarifies, "[t]he term 'reflexive' refers to situations or processes whereby some being, especially an agent or self, takes itself or some aspect of itself as its own object of awareness" ("Schizophrenia, Self-

Unnamable, has self-awareness that s/he is alone but is simultaneously overwhelmed by voices whose origin is not known although they occur in or to him/her. He keeps wondering where these voices and thoughts come from: "These notions of forbears, of houses where lamps are lit at night, and other such: where do they come to me from? And all these questions I ask myself? It is not in a spirit of curiosity: I cannot be silent. About myself I need know nothing" (Beckett 296). His wonder in the form of questions is not epistemological but ontological. If the speaker manages to find the answer, s/he will restore or find agency and authority or his/her ontology will stay under the threat of annihilation.

The voices that the Unnamable hears are disembodied and therefore perplexing. They express awe and are uncanny and therefore have authority as well as agency over the speaker. The feelings of perplexity and fear – "[s]o there is nothing to be afraid of. And yet I am afraid: afraid of what my words will do to me, to my refuge, yet again" (305) – are due to the fact that the voices appear in the absence of external stimuli. As he wonders:

> But when, through what channels, did I communicate with these gentlemen? Did they intrude on me here? No, no one has ever intruded on me here. Elsewhere then. But I have never been elsewhere. But it can only have been from them I learnt what I know about men and the ways they have of putting up with it. It does not amount to much. I could have dispensed with it. I don't say it was all to no purpose. I'll make use of it, if I'm driven to it. It won't be the first time. What puzzles me is the thought of being indebted for this information to persons with whom I can never have been in contact. Can it be innate knowledge? Like that of good and evil? This seems improbable to me. Innate knowledge of my mother, for example, is that conceivable? Not for me. (299-300)

Experience, and the So-Called 'Negative Symptoms'" 152). Therefore, self-reference is when one's self becomes an object of its own scrutiny.

The speaker, like the schizophrenic, thinks that thoughts and voices have been put into his/her mind as s/he has no innate knowledge; nor does he relate to thoughts and voices. Like the schizophrenic, his/her doubts, confusion, fear, stem from his failure to make a match between his own intentions and those of the thoughts/voices. Mladen Dolar says of the intentionality of the voice that "[t]he voice is something which points toward meaning, it is as if there is an arrow in it which raises the expectation of meaning, the voice is an opening toward meaning" "with an inner intentionality" (14). Therefore, the problem arises when the voices and thoughts deny expression (representation) of the speaker's state of mind, intentions and feelings and underlying beliefs. As Stephens and Graham clarify, "[i]ndeed, perhaps on some occasions a person fails to find an intentional explanation for a given thought because there isn't one. Thoughts may occur in her that do not express, or do not express suitably, any of her underlying intentional states" (170).[76] The expressive or Romantic theory of art has it that words directly express thoughts and feelings coming from consciousness; the Romantic theory of authorship might be seen to be founded on such assumptions. In Beckett's work it manifestly undoes itself.

Contrary to the expressive theory, here the speaker is oscillating between mediumship (implying lack of authorship) on the one hand and agency on the other. He is pitched between having no control over the voices as well as being their slave, and an attempt to master them through materialising and entering a dialogue with them. As for the first, the voices are the speaker's master: "I have never spoken enough to me, never listened enough to me, never replied enough to me, never had pity enough on me. I have spoken for my master, listened for the words of my master never spoken: 'Well done, my child, well done, my son, you may stop, you may go, you are free, you are acquitted, you are pardoned, never spoken" (Beckett

[76] "Whatever one's view of Hoffman's detailed account, his assumption that a thought occurring in my mind might fail to impress me as expressive of my underlying beliefs and desires is quite plausible" (Stephens and Graham 171).

312). The Unnamable feels a medium through which the disembodied voices get uttered and heard:

> Ah if I could only find a voice of my own, in all this babble, it would be the end of their troubles, and of mine. That's why there are all these little silences, to try and make me break them. They think I can't bear silence, that some day, somehow, my horror of silence will force me to break it. That's why they are always leaving off, to try and drive me to extremities. But they dare not be silent for long, the whole fabrication might collapse. (351)

This shows the speaker's attempt to gain agency, to find his/her own voice amongst all the voices which forces him/her to utter: "Sometimes I say to myself, they say to me, Worm says to me, the subject matters little, that my purveyors are more than one" (353).

A disembodied voice is more authoritative; it generates obedience in the audience. As Connor explicates:

> And yet it is precisely because of this that we seem to have become much more able to mistrust our eyes than our ears. Thus, if a god or a tyrant wants to ensure unquestioning obedience, he had better make sure that he never discloses himself to the sight of his people, but manifests himself and his commands through the ear. Do we not call such a person a *dictator*? *Ex auditu fides*, as St Paul puts it in Romans 10:17 – from hearing comes belief. The very word "obedience" derives from the Latin *audire*. (*Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* 23)

In a similar vein, Pythagoras had his instructions and religious ceremonies held behind a curtain for his pupils merely to hear so they could not see him. This created authority and compelled obedience for his students as the voice was disembodied. The disembodied voice whose origin is not locatable is more likely to be experienced as a kind of strange authority.

Yet, unlike Pythagoras's students, for the Unnameable, the voices are not physical wave sounds; nor do they occur in his/her own subjectivity, nor outside his/her consciousness. They are also happening incessantly without his/her volition. Thus they take on a ghostly character.

Now, in order to overcome these authoritative disembodied voices, to fix them and even disobey their commands (not worrying about the dire consequences such as punishment or death), one way is to materialise and substantialise them, to give them body by turning them into a fully-fledged character in the act of writing. At a certain point, the Unnamable starts to name a few of the voices: Mahood, Worm, Murphy, Molloy. In other words, characters are the embodiment of the dislocatable disembodied voices and thoughts:

> I'll call him Mahood instead, I prefer that, I'm queer. It was he told me stories about me, lived in my stead, issued forth from me, came back to me, entered back into me, heaped stories on my head. I don't know how it was done. I always liked not knowing, but Mahood said it wasn't right. He didn't know either, but it worried him. It is his voice which has often, always, mingled with mine, and sometimes drowned it completely. Until he left me for good, or refused to leave me any more, I don't know. Yes, I don't know if he's here now or far away, but I don't think I am far wrong in saying that he has ceased to plague me. (Beckett 311)

Interestingly, substantialisation of verbal/auditory hallucinations is not only a source of character development by writers but also a therapeutic technique employed by Professor Julian Leff. In 2014, he initiated a research project to help schizophrenic patients transform their disembodied voices into characters that feel more embodied. His aim, and his colleagues', was "[t]o encourage them [the patients] to engage in a dialogue with the avatar" ("Computer-Assisted Therapy for Medication-Resistant Auditory Hallucinations: Proof-of-

Concept Study" 428). As Leff expounds, "[t]hese people are giving a face to an incredibly destructive force in their mind. Giving them control to create the avatar lets them control the situation and even make friends with it" (qtd. in Brauser). Rather than suppressing the voices, an act which is futile and ineffective, they engage in a dialogue in the course of a few weeks during which "the avatar progressively changes from being persecutory to becoming appreciative and supportive" (Leff *et al.* "Avatar Therapy for Persecutory Auditory Hallucinations: What Is It and How Does It Work?" 167). This is precisely what the Unnamable does in the novel by creating a fictional figure out of the voices.

In failing to recognise oneself as the author of one's own voices, the writer, in the same vein, tends to get other agents involved, to look for other sources of production. This inclination to postulate the involvement of others, as it could be argued, is due to the person's tendency to locate unattributable thoughts, feelings and voices in order to overcome the creepiness of sourceless voices and thoughts, which might finally end in a complete dissociation of the self and loss of the sense of being. Often voices are condescending, destroying the person's self-esteem and confidence.[77] Likewise, the Unammable observes the voice as enumerating his/her shortcomings and failures:

> When he was away I tried to find myself again, to forget what he had said, about me, about my misfortunes, fatuous misfortunes, idiotic pains, in the light of my true situation, revolting word. But his voice continued to testify for me, as though woven into mine, preventing me from saying who I was, what I was, so as to have done with saying, done with listening. And still today, as he would say, though he plagues me no more his voice is there, in mine, but less, less. And being no longer renewed it will disappear one day, I hope, from

[77] As Stephens and Graham explain: "Some patients find it difficult to make out what their voices are saying. Usually, though, they report the very words and even the manner (sneeringly, consolingly, threateningly, and so on) in which the voice conveys its message. Subjects typically also report that the voice addresses them directly or makes special reference to them. They regard the message as salient to their person or circumstances" (14).

> mine, completely. But in order for that to happen I must speak. Speak. (Beckett 311)

Talking of the speaker's misfortunes and failures, making him/her feel idiotic, the voice is an impediment in his/her way towards self-realisation: "who I was." Yet, the materialisation of the voice through its transformation into a character and the authorial act of entering into a dialogue with it helps curb its pestering features – "Ah if only this voice could stop!" (58) – to overturn the master/slave relation of power, in the hope that one day it will totally disappear. As the speaker says, "'I want all to be well with you, do you hear me?' That's what he keeps on dinning at me. To which I reply, in a respectful attitude: 'I too, your Lordship'. I say that to cheer him up, he sounds so unhappy. (I am good-hearted, on the surface.)" (16). However, to aim at the goal, the Unnamable has to "speak," that is, to write, to substantialise the disembodied voices. Perhaps the speaker is aware that all is his/her invention: "I invented it all, in the hope it would console me, help me to go on, allow me to think of myself as somewhere on a road, moving, between a beginning and an end - gaining ground, losing ground, getting lost, but somehow in the long run making headway" (17). Therefore, it could be inferred that writers turn a destructive force – that threatens to destroy the very integrity of the self – into a creative one through characterisation and fiction. Dialogue with hallucinatory voices transforms them into characters, as in the case of Avatar therapy, and creates a system of differentiation so that the self might ascertain its existence in opposition to, or with regards to, the other. As Milton Rickels says of the novel, "[o]ne may begin by defining the work [*The Unnamable*] as a recreation of the search for the self" (134).

Steven Connor argues that although voices are produced by bodies, they also give shape to bodies as we can hardly imagine a voice without a body. Thus, the voice has a kind of quasi-corporeality that he calls "the vocalic body." It is "the idea – which can take the form of dream, fantasy, idea, theological doctrine, or hallucination – of a surrogate or secondary

body, a projection of a new way of having or being a body, formed and sustained out of the autonomous operations of the voice" (Connor *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* 35). The idea of a body formed out of the autonomous voice occurs when the voice we hear is attributed to another being, not to ourselves. Therefore, "a disembodied voice must be inhabited in a plausible body" (*Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* 35).[78] Thus, voices result in the production (materialisaiton) of bodies. Similarly, Elizabeth Barry suggests that the novel is a product of, and then reversal of, an anti-incarnation process. As she has it, "[t]his is a kind of anti-Incarnation, as Bruno Clément has pointed out, making flesh back into word – simply words on the page (Clément, 370)" (*Beckett and Authority: The Uses of Cliché* 149). Similar to the embodiment of God's word in Christ, she concludes that Beckett imagines "the protagonist as God himself" in *The Unnamable* (151) and gives a few examples such as "a few puppets" that the speaker has and can "scatter" "to the winds" (Beckett 1) to support her argument.

This anti-incarnation or materialisation of voices is achieved through writing, telling stories. Daniel Dennett in *Consciousness Explained* (1991) argues that story-telling is an act of creation, protection and definition of our self in a similar vein to that of a spider as it spins webs and that "[o]ur fundamental tactic of self-protection, self-control, and self-definition is not spinning webs or building dams, but telling stories, and more particularly concocting and controlling the story we tell others – and ourselves – about who we are" (*Consciousness Explained* 418). Nevertheless, he explains that unlike the professional story teller, "[o]ur tales are spun, but for the most part we don't spin them; they spin us. Our human consciousness, and our narrative selfhood, is their product, not their source" (*Consciousness Explained* 418). Therefore, one could argue that hearing voices and turning them into stories is a capability.[79]

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[78] "[P]henomenologically, the fact that an unassigned voice must always imply a body means that it will always partly supply it as well" (Connor *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* 36).

[79] Marco Bernini calls this capability an "imaginary engine." As he puts it, "[i]f inner speech is the raw material for hallucinatory phenomena, it is also at the centre of our imaginary engine – supporting our simple need for, as

Yet, turning voices into characters and stories and entering a dialogue with them, risks experiencing the self as fundamentally split, so losing more and more the sense of agency and authority as the self-conscious subject becomes an object of its own scrutiny. The climax of the breakdown of consciousness and the consequent loss of agency is manifest in the following humorous passage:

> Who says "That proves my innocence"? He says it. Or they say it - yes, they who reason, they who believe. No, in the singular: he who lived, or saw some who had. He speaks of me, as if I were he, as if I were not he (both), and as if I were others (one after another). He is the afflicted. "I am far, do you hear me?" He says I'm far, as if I were he - no, as if I were not he: for he is not far, he is here. It's he who speaks. He says it's I, then he says it's not, I am far. Do you hear him? (Beckett 84)

The ultimate confusion of a person who is seriously struggling to find his/her agency through desperately locating the referents of pronouns might look strangely comical. This results in a signifier with no identified signified. As a case in point, the two "I"s in "He says it's I, then he says it's not, I am far" are not locatable. We cannot be sure to whom they refer. By the first "I" is he [the voice] referring to himself or does he refer to the speaker, the Unnamable? Who is the "I" of "I am far"? Such effect is intensified due to the use of free indirect speech as the first "I am far" is a direct quotation, where we understand the speaker is the voice talking to the Unnamable. However, immediately after the quotation, it is not clear who is speaking.

This is backed up by Elizabeth Barry's argument that Beckett uses middle voice sentences to suggest agentless subjects and to question agency. As she explains, "[t]he

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the homonymous text by Beckett portrays, an intimate Company (1980) in the inaccessible dark of our subjectivity" ("Samuel Beckett's Articulation of Unceasing Inner Speech"). Likewise, Waugh refers to it as "visionary genius" and "a negative capability" examples of which are Hilary Mantel and Woolf: "For writers like Woolf and Mantel, afflicted in body and mind, haunted by voices, but gifted with kinds of visionary genius, the profession of novelist, the performance of a necessary negative capability, might be the only way of feeling that one is indeed a self" ("Hillary Mantel and Virginia Woolf on the Sounds in Writers' Minds").

position of the middle voice, as the name suggests, between active and passive forms, allows it to function in the construction of what might be called agentless sentences" ("One's Own Company: Agency, Identity and the Middle Voice in the Work of Samuel Beckett" 116). A middle voice sentence is one that is grammatically active but suggests the passive. A couple of examples are: it feels good; it sounds good. The agentless sentences suggest the agentlessness of the text itself. The novel ends with agentless voice(s) which supports Barthes' dictum that "writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin" ("The Death of the Author" 146):

> "You must go on.
>
> I can't go on.
>
> I'll go on" (Beckett 93).

It is not clear to whom or to what the pronouns refer. Are they disembodied voices in the Unnamable's head with which the Unnamable does not identify? Is the first or the second "I" the embodied voice of the Unnamable? They have lost their referents. As Derrida observes, [t]he absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely" ("Structure Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" 91).

Thus, the speaker hears self-produced but alien and intermittent ghostly voices. Because they do not echo the person's underlying intentional state, they are viewed as autonomous – "[p]erhaps there are others here, with me" (Beckett 57) – due to the person's self-consciousness breaking down: "These voices are not mine, nor these thoughts, but the voices and thoughts of the devils who beset me" (41). Therefore, the speaker feels the loss of an autonomous self-contained unified self and consequently tries to locate them, to find bodies for them. Yet, if the source is found, anxiety does not necessarily disappear as the problem of how others are able to put their thoughts/voices in him/her still remains an enigma. Writing, conceived thus, although an attempt to materialise the voice, agency and

authority, is a cancellation of authority. On the one hand, it is an attempt to (re)locate the voice and give it body (substantialisation similar to Avatar therapy) but it is also a place where all origins are lost. Although being able to substantialise the voices, the Unnamable is still wavering between mediumship (being the medium of others' voices) and agency.

The Novel in the Age of Roland Barthes

> I do not know. This story I am telling is all imagination. These characters I create never existed outside my own mind. If I have pretended until now to know my characters' minds and innermost thoughts, it is because I am writing in (just as I have assumed some of the vocabulary and "voice" of) a convention universally accepted at the time of my story: that the novelist stands next to God. He may not know all, yet he tries to pretend that he does. But I live in the age of Alain Robbe-Grillet and Roland Barthes; if this is a novel, it cannot be a novel in the modern sense of the word. (Fowles *The French Lieutenant's Woman* 85)

The cover of the second edition of John Fowles's *The French lieutenant's Woman* (Panther Books 1971) proclaims its contents to be "[t]he internationally bestselling novel of Victorian sexuality." Yet, it could be argued that the novel is more about fiction (the creative process) and authorship than Victorian sexuality per se. It is a novel about alternative parallel universes that includes the idea of fiction as one such universe. John Fowles's *The French lieutenant's Woman* (1969) is an attempt to answer the question of what it is like to be an author in the age of Roland Barthes, when the author is announced dead. Most of the selected novels discussed so far are written before the rise of Theory and the dictum of the death of the author as exemplified in Jacque Derrida's "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" (1966), Michel Foucault's "What is an Author?" (1969) and Roland Barthes' "The Death of the Author" (1967) in the 1960s. John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* might be seen as a self-conscious understanding of the historical function of the novel contemporaneous with or shortly after the death of the author debate in literary theory. Reiterating Foucault's emphasis on the author as a historical function, Fowles endeavours to demonstrate performatively in the novel that the author is a function which

needs to be historicised: that authorship is historical and the author is, indeed, still alive, but with a different function in the new historical context of the late twentieth century. In addition, Barthes' concept (and birth) of the modern scriptor might be understood to have been put into practice and as it were brought to life in this novel. Furthermore, Fowles investigates what it means to be an author in an age haunted by the discovery of the double helix structure of DNA and its implications for concepts of authorship. Fowles's educational background in French and his influence by Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialist and Marxist tendencies facilitate his re-evaluation of the novel as a medium that has always and still might bring political and democratic change. In this light, *The French lieutenant's Woman*, it can be argued, is a place where author and reader negotiate democratically via text.

Although Fowles's pre-occupation with freedom has been well documented (for instance in Richard P. Lynch's "Freedoms in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*" (2002) and also partially in Dwight Eddins's "John Fowles: Existence as Authorship" (1976), to name but two), issues such as the function of the author in the age of the death of the author and the view of the novel as a democratic space of negotiation between the author and reader through the textual medium, have remained oddly underexplored in academic scholarship. They beg further investigation. More significantly, as one of the most well-known and earliest literary examples of the counter-insurgence against what would soon become the critical orthodoxies of the death of the author debate, the novel might be seen as a turning point in the history of fiction, thereby compelling some account of what it seems like to write and be the author of fiction at this moment in literary history.

The influence of Sartre and the French *nouveau roman* is evident throughout Fowles's writing. His education in French at Oxford opened up to Fowles the new French philosophies of existentialism and existential Marxism together with their revised notions of freedom and democracy, as well as offering new formal modes with which to develop stylistic experiment.

In "Notes on Writing a Novel" (1968), Fowles emphasises the importance of the discovery of these new forms and their significant impact on the ongoing development of the novel genre ("Notes on Writing a Novel" 91). Studying at Oxford paved the way for him to think seriously of choosing writing as profession. Like Doris Lessing, Fowles was preoccupied with how to write a political novel without falling into the stale clichés of didacticism as in socialist realist and propagandist Marxist works. For Sartre, literature must bring political change. It should be a vehicle through which the oppressed find a voice and the elite are encouraged to act politically and ethically, as he argues in *What is Literature?* (1948). Sartre coins the term "committed writing" to refer to this politically active writing. "The 'committed' writer," as Sartre has it, "knows that words are action. He knows that to reveal is to *change* and that one can reveal only by planning to *change*. He has given up the impossible dream of giving an *impartial* picture of Society and the human condition" ("What Is Writing?" 37 emphasis added). Committed means that the writer cannot be politically neutral or impartial in any respect and therefore has a responsibility: to bring about change for the better. Such writing gives hope to, and motivates, ideals of a free democratic society. "One does not write for slaves," Sartre avers. "The art of prose," as he continues, "is bound up with the only régime in which prose has meaning, democracy. . . . Writing is a certain way of wanting freedom; once you have begun, you are committed, willy-nilly" ("Why Write" 69). Writing is equal to the desire for freedom. And if you are a free democratic person, you should allow others equally to think for themselves.

In addition to the influence of Sartre and the French *nouveau roman*, Fowles shares with John Barth that what he sees as the present mode of fiction is inappropriate, failing to respond to the age.[80] Fowles too is pre-occupied with the function of the novel in the present

[80] The *nouveau roman* (or alternatively anti-novel to use Jean-Paul Sartre's terminology) is a French novel of the 1950s that marks a radical departure from the established features and conventions of the traditional novel as best solidified in literary realism (such as linear narrative and plot, third person omniscient narrator, simple description of an unequivocal universe and imposition of determinate meaning on events), whose main

time and what that means for authorship as a concept. As Foucault puts it in "What is an Author?" (1969), published a few months earlier than *The French lieutenant's Woman*, authorship is an historical construct and function. His main argument is that the author is not a unified concept but has undergone continuous changes in function throughout history. A key factor in inserting changes in the function of the author is the nature of the episteme, the web of dominant discourses that come to define and contain the intellectual possibilities of an era. Having no interest in the individuality or subjectivity of the author as such, writing "is a space into which the writing *subject* constantly disappears" ("What Is an Author?" 175 emphasis added), Foucault focuses upon the difference between the author name as a real name and the author name as a function within a political economy. As he elucidates: "[t]he author's name is not . . . just a proper name like the rest" (178). On the contrary, it has "a classificatory function" in the discourse (178). Therefore, the author's name is constructed in the interstices of a given cultural context and its function changes according to the specific pressures of the moment and the dominant discourses of science, philosophy and politics. Fowles's need and tendency to flamboyantly historicise the novel by foregrounding the problems of constructing historical narratives retrospectively arises in connection with a sense of historical and political committedness that regards the function of authorship as contingent on circumstances and therefore, at every moment, a choice and a construction.

Although influenced by Robbe-Grillet and other romanciers, "[t]he English *nouveau roman*," Fowles believes, "doesn't work" in the English context (Campbell and Fowles 459). Therefore, he looks for a different means to allow him, while keeping the idea of experimenting with new styles open, to explore other issues, specifically those of a political

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proponent, Alain Robbe-Grillet, established its ethos. In *For a New Novel* (originally published in 1963) he complains that "the novel, however, has fallen into such a state of stagnation" and cannot "survive for long without some radical change" (17) in a world which "is neither significant nor absurd" (19); hence, the novel as it stands, he implies, is failing to acknowledge the necessities of the present age. Therefore, he calls for a new form of novel which moves away from anthropomorphism: "Our world, today, is less sure of itself, more modest perhaps, since it has renounced the omnipotence of the person, but more ambitious too, since it looks beyond. The exclusive cult of the 'human' has given way to a larger consciousness, one that is less anthropocentric" (29).

and historical nature, that the phenomenological formalism and self-consciousness of the French *nouveau roman* seems to resist. His views on writing from a committedly pure Marxist position are similarly sceptical. As he puts it, "I have no faith in socialist realism. I sincerely hope the Marxist element in this country will grow, but I don't think you can put Marxism across in a novel" (Campbell and Fowles 469). Fowles's own brand of commitment – to bringing positive change by understanding the forces that construct present social, political as well as literary currents – is to be achieved, he believes, only through explicitly historicising the concept and function of the author to show that it is constructed in a given cultural and historical context, whilst experimenting with style and form to produce what Linda Hutcheon terms historiographic metafiction.

Linda Hutcheon flags up *The French Lieutenant's Woman* as a key example of historiographic metafiction in her influential *A Poetics of Postmodernism* (1988) and *The Politics of Postmodernism* (1989). She defines this sort of novel as "those well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages" (*A Poetics of Postmodernism* 5). This type of novel "incorporates all three of these domains: that is, its theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs (historio*graphic meta*fiction) is made the grounds for its rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past" (5). Thus, bringing history into fiction helps re-think the concept of the author as a historicised phenomenon. In *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, the Victorian age provides fertile ground from which to examine the difference between the present moment and the historical or superceded both in terms of history and literary forms. One might say that the novel sets out self-consciously to interrogate the historical function of the novel in the light of the new continental energies of the death of the author debate. In the novel, Fowles seems to reiterate Foucault's idea that the author is still alive but has a different function; influenced by Sartre, Existentialism and

Marxism, Fowles is preoccupied with the tension between the desire for individual freedom and the historical and political forces that seem to constrain it and sets out to investigate these through subjecting the nineteenth-century authorial conventions to the gaze of more modern ideas concerning possession, freedom, and the idea of curating a life as well as a fictional world with its own co-created, but somehow independently existing, inhabitants.

In the novel, Fowles reflects specifically, therefore, on the creative process in the age of the death of the author. The narrator's self-reflexive commentary on the creative process reiterates Barthes' dictum that reading as well as writing is a process of dynamic self-creation. As the narrator puts it:

> We also know that a genuinely created world must be independent of its creator; a planned world (a world that fully reveals its planning) is a dead world. It is only when our characters and events begin to disobey us that they begin to live. When Charles left Sarah on her cliff edge, I ordered him to walk straight back to Lyme Regis. But he did not; he gratuitously turned and went down to the Dairy. (*The French Lieutenant's Woman* 86)

The author is still god but the god-function in this new age is different: he has to allow the work to take on its own complex dynamics, a kind of autopoeisis, or he is at risk of producing a mechanistic, planned and therefore dead world. The author's function now is "to mix writings, to counter ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any of them" (Barthes 149). The author, or modern scriptor to use Barthes' term, only compiles or curates multiple textualities, so meaning in the text is a construct arising not out of a predetermined intentionality but autopoetically out of the freeplay of intertextuality. In other words, the modern scriptor's function is consciously to play voices off against each other dialogically, creating a space for negotiation and dialogue – a democratic manifestation – between the author, reader and the text. Accordingly, the reader is born as an active participant in the

creative process, fully entering the negotiation/dialogue eschewing the dictatorial voice of conventional omniscience.

In Fowles's eyes, to deny the freedom of the reader would point to a concept of the writer as establishing a master/slave relationship with the reader, one that is despotic and undemocratic. On the one hand, Fowles wishes to grant freedom to his characters (especially his female protagonist): not for nothing is Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1879) echoed throughout the novel. For Ibsen's Norah leaves her family with no clear sense of a future, only the desire for freedom; but within the context of Norwegian nineteenth-century society, she has no future, no horizon: her future is doomed. Likewise, Victorian heroines like Tess, Madame Bovary and Maggie Tulliver (in *Mill on the Floss*) are rebellious Victorian female characters who try to escape their doomed fate but all fail due to powerful forces of heredity and environment. In contrast, Fowles's heroine, Sarah, refuses the doll's house and resists the discourses of heredity and environment that circumscribe her behaviour as a woman and an artist. Her accepting the title of the French lieutenant's whore, her rejection of marrying Charles, of having children, of being possessed solely by love as duty and obligation to the other, are all indicative of her rebellious free character, "An outcast" (157). Sarah says, "'[s]ometimes I almost pity them [other women]. I think I have a freedom they cannot understand. No insult, no blame, can touch me. Because I have set myself beyond the pale. I am nothing, I am hardly human any more. I am the French Lieutenant's Whore'" (153). But her predicament would have gone unheard and she would have become invisible, suffering a kind of death, had she not made a story, becoming a *cause célèbre* in the process. Her storytelling contributes also to setting Charles free and making others realise the grounds for her rejection of Victorian conventions. As Richard P. Lynch puts it, "[t]here is only the option of pretending to be what she is not (the French lieutenant's woman) as a means of rejecting socialization in a social reality she cannot accept as a verification of her identity"

(54). It is to make others – including Charles – realise that all gender stereotypes and assumptions about madness and hysteria and melancholia that Dr Grogan speaks of with Charles are simply means to circumscribe the free spirit of those who seek to rebel against societal constraints.

Dr Grogan dwells on the erotic dangers of the madwoman, painting a conventional enough picture of the Victorian hysteric, with her compulsion to seduce men, adducing the story of a woman who pretended she had pain in her breast and had both healthy breasts removed or the story of a girl who put a stone into her own bladder (Fowles *The French Lieutenant's Woman* 203), all done to manipulate and arouse the sympathy of others. The narrator gives the reader detailed information on a case, calling up expectations in the reader by mimicking the medical authority of the time which will be later shattered:

> Matthaei had already had the intelligence to write down the dates on which the more obscene letters, culminating in the attempted rape, had occurred. They fell into a clear monthly – or menstrual – pattern. After analyzing the evidence brought before the court, the Herr Doktor proceeds, in a somewhat moralistic tone, to explain the mental illness we today call hysteria – the assumption, that is, of symptoms of disease or disability in order to gain the attention and sympathy of others: a neurosis or psychosis almost invariably caused, as we now know, by sexual repression. (201-2)

Affected by Grogan's accounts, however, with their seemingly scientific authority, Charles interprets Sarah's behaviour as an attempt to gain love and security. Again the narrator seems to feign complicity suggesting that Charles's thoughts, before the enlightenment of Dr Grogan's medical account, were defective so that he was not able to "see mental illness of the hysteric kind for what it is: a pitiable striving for love and security" (204). Charles therefore first identifies himself with the wronged men of Grogan's accounts (204).

Yet, it is Sarah's story-telling that brings Charles to a realisation of a different set of intentions behind her actions, opening his eyes to oppressive conventions that stereotype the independent and passionate woman as mad or hysterical. Charles soon realises that both he and Dr Grogan are misguided, victims themselves of the gender-stereotyping medical orthodoxies of their time. As he leafs through the book Dr Grogan introduced on the subject of hysteria, we are told that "Charles saw fewer parallels now with Sarah's conduct" (205). Story-making is not simply fiction-making but in its capacity to construct parallel universes where different assumptions hold sway, it is also equal to world-creation and therefore freedom-granting.

But if the notion of freedom and democracy is to be distributed through a society and become the ethos of a new world, it must be disseminated through that world. That is, characters should come to treat each other in a democratic way or be exposed as wanting if this is not the case. More importantly, the creator of those characters must equally find a way to give each their freedom and in so doing discover his or her own: without reciprocity, as Sartre well knew, the master-slave dialectic will trundle on. As the narrator has it, "[i]n other words, to be free myself, I must give him, and Tina, and Sarah, even the abominable Mrs. Poulteney, their freedom as well. There is only one good definition of God: the freedom that allows other freedoms to exist. And I must conform to that definition" (86).[81] In a replication of the relations at the level of discourse, in the histoire of the novel, Sarah as author allows Charles to realise his freedom and acts freely via her own storytelling. Her story of having slept with the French lieutenant and being his whore is just a strategy to set Charles free from all the Victorian conventions and incumbent mores that surround and determine his life but

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[81] Linda Hutcheon would read the lines as: "This is the meaning of power and of the god-game. The novelist is a creating god-figure, but freedom, not authority, dominates his image. It is this freedom that Sarah too has, and in order to retain it, she too must give her creature his freedom. Her freedom lies in her existence in another world, as an imaginative construct, a fiction of her own making" (*Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* 67).

which otherwise he cannot see: the most draconian of which is the Victorian concept of duty as central to morality. As the narrator informs us, "[d]uty, agreeable conformity to the epoch's current, raised its stern head" (48).[82] Lynch argues that "[n]arrative freedom, the 'freedom' of fictional characters (or the illusion of it) from their authors, is a metaphor for freedom from God, a precondition for existential freedom in Fowles and Sartre" (51). Likewise, Hutcheon realises that almost at the end of the novel "Charles perceives that fiction-making is a freedom-inducing act, not an act of possession, of planning, of control, as it is here" (*Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* 63).

Yet, Fowles does not stop at the level of characters for he wishes, ostentatiously enough, to create a space in which the reader is free too. This active interaction between the reader and the writer might also be traced back to Sartre's view that the reader should be free:

> Thus, the author writes in order to address himself to the freedom of readers, and he requires it in order to make his work exist. But he does not stop there; he also requires that they return this confidence which he has given them, that they recognize his creative freedom, and that they in turn solicit it by a symmetrical and inverse appeal. Here there appears the other dialectical paradox of reading; the more we experience our freedom, the more we recognize that of the other; the more he demands of us, the more we demand of him. ("Why Write" 58)

This negotiation and dialogue with the reader is established through acknowledging the presence of the reader via direct address by the narrator. The common technique here is the

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[82] Examples of the Victorian conformity and concept of duty could be found almost everywhere in the novel. In Chapter Five, the narrator describes Ernestina, her beauty, how much she despises and fears sex but that Sarah was unforgettable. As the narrator describes the Victorian age, marriage, having children were out of duty: "[m]ost women of her period felt the same; so did most men; and it is no wonder that duty has become such a key concept in our understanding of the Victorian age – or for that matter, such a wet blanket in our own" (Fowles *The French Lieutenant's Woman* 30).

narrator's frequent intervention and direct address to the reader: "Just as you may despise Charles for his overburden of apparatus, you perhaps despise him for his lack of specialization" (Fowles *The French Lieutenant's Woman* 46-7), is a case in point. This also brings the reader, together with the author, from the outside as if taking up a position within the world of the fiction as characters who are both absent and present – absent, because the reader does not actually appear in the novel, but present because s/he is addressed and talked to as if part of its world as well as part of a world outside. The narrator goes further, enters the text, transgressing ontological boundaries to appear as a character in the world, one that Charles can actually see. He is the bearded man in the train in the final chapter. He flips a coin to decide before he jumps into the arena: "But then, at the very last moment, a massively bearded face appeared at his window. The cold stare was met by the even colder stare of a man in a hurry to get aboard" (346). The suspense created before revealing the stranger as the narrator himself establishes him in the mind of the reader as ontologically equal as a fictional character. If the narrator appears as an observant within the text, it follows that the reader is equally fictionalised as a character within the text, reminding us of the famous revelation of Jorges Luis Borges "that if the characters of a fictional work can be readers or spectators, we, its readers or spectators, can be fictitious" ("Partial Magic in the *Quixote*" 187). The same maxim is echoed by John Barth too: "when the characters in a work of fiction become readers or authors of the fiction they're in, we're reminded of the fictitious aspect of our own existence" (166).

Yet, just as the narrator is writing and describing the narrator (the bearded man) by referring to him in the third person, we have split selves or the paradox of self-reference as exemplified in "Borges and I," rather than a unified subjectivity: a distantiation created between the speaking narrator and the described narrator-character. Besides, according to the narrator's own democratic maxim, characters should be free. That would subject the narrator-

as-character to the same law. Accordingly and paradoxically, the narrator cannot control the narrator's thoughts, emotions and actions as well as identity and/or subjectivity. The following passage, in which the narrator is addressing the reader, makes this paradox of self-reference clearer:

> And the "I," that entity who found such slickly specious reasons for consigning Sarah to the shadows of oblivion, was not myself; it was merely the personification of a certain massive indifference in things – too hostile for Charles to think of as "God" – that had set its malevolent inertia on the Ernestina side of the scales; that seemed an inexorable onward direction as fixed as that of the train which drew Charles along. (Fowles *The French Lieutenant's Woman* 295-96).

This "I" functions as a deictic that provides a void to be filled in by the reader. In the process of reading the text, the reader identifies with the "I" and is therefore also reader as well as, at the very least, the narrator of the text. The reader also becomes fictionalised, contextualised and therefore subject to the dynamics of the particular language game. Consequently, the "I" of the narrator is free, beyond the possession and control of himself. As the passage suggests, therefore, the autonomy of subjectivity is lost and laid bare as an illusion. As "language knows a 'subject' not a 'person'" (Barthes "The Death of the Author" 148), we would never know who the narrator is. Is he the author, only a narrator or a character within the novel who appears before Charles in the train, or all three?

This also brings up the problem of the identification of the narrator with the author. Can we identify the narrator's voice with Fowles himself, especially when the voice shifts and can be attributed to multiple entities including the reader, and seems therefore lost somewhere amidst unstable entities and contexts? Likewise, Sarah in the third version of the ending of the story, recounts her story in what might be identified as an authorial voice. Her

tone is similar to that of a creator talking to her creature, making and then destroying her own creature:

> "I did not mean to *make* you so. I meant to do what was best. I had abused your trust, your generosity, I, yes, I had thrown myself at you, forced myself upon you, knowing very well that you had other obligations. A madness was in me at that time. I did not see it clearly till that day in Exeter. The worst you thought of me then was nothing but the truth." She paused, he waited. "I have since seen artists *destroy work* that might to the amateur seem perfectly good. I remonstrated once. I was told that if an artist is not his own sternest judge he is not fit to be an artist. I believe that is right. I believe I was right to *destroy* what had begun between us. There was a falsehood in it, a –" (Fowles *The French Lieutenant's Woman* 383 emphasis added).

Here Sarah's voice could be that of the author, a surrogate author, revealing his or her own writing techniques and strategies. So Hutcheon states that "Sarah is the narrating novelist's surrogate within the core fictional world" because "she creates her own story, her own identity" and also stipulates that "the narrator is not Fowles himself" (*Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* 67). Nonetheless, sometimes the author's novelistic techniques are revealed by the narrator (as mentioned earlier) and sometimes by Sarah, as in the above passage. Besides, in the confrontation of Charles with a prostitute called Sarah, the narrator tells us that she is the surrogate of Sarah Woodruff, the main character: "As for Sarah [Woodruff] ... the other Sarah [the prostitute] had been her surrogate, her sad and sordid end, and his awakening" (Fowles *The French Lieutenant's Woman* 287). Again, as readers, we are unable to ascertain whether this is the narrator's commentary on the characters or is a free indirect speech revealing Charles's point of view. Read as Sarah's surrogate and taking Hutcheon's point into account, Sarah the prostitute is the surrogate of Sarah Woodruff who is

the surrogate of the author in the above quotation. Therefore, the text is like Borges' library with mirrors that reflect the image infinitely, creating only an illusion of reality. This perfectly demonstrates how the authorial voice is lost amongst other voices and how the voice might appear one minute to find its source in the narrator and in another that of a character. Similar to Barthes' notable enquiry in the beginning of his essay, an astute reader might ask: who is speaking? Of course we will never know since "writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin" ("The Death of the Author" 146); for "it is language which speaks not the author" (147). In other words, if we are not able to locate the authorial voice, the implication is that there is no authorial voice – as singularly expressive of an antecedent and unified and autonomous being – to be found.

Nevertheless, Fowles acknowledges in the novel that freedom itself is an illusion, a significant understanding of this type of fiction that Lynch overlooks in his essay. As he puts it elsewhere, "I do try to give them freedom, yes, but only as a game, because pretending your characters are free can only be a game. The reality of the situation is that you're sitting with a pencil and at any point you like you can strike out developments in the book" (Campbell and Fowles 456). The author is still a God but not in the humanist image:

> It's silly to say the novelist isn't God, cannot pretend to be God, because the *fact* is that when you write a book you are potentially a tyrant, you are the total dictator, and there's nothing in the book that has to be there if you want to knock it out or change it. Then you have a comparatively free choice about it, and it's very difficult for a character in the book to stand up and say, you cannot do that, or, I demand that that line be changed. (463).

Having said and practiced that, Fowles plays with the idea of the author as God. He shows that both are illusions. Therefore, when the narrator tells us that he ordered Charles "to walk straight back to Lyme Regis. But he did not; he gratuitously turned and went down to the

Dairy" (Fowles *The French Lieutenant's Woman* 86), we would never know if he really ordered him and whether Charles literally did not follow the order or if this is just an illusion of nonconformism on the part of the character.

This fluidity and dynamism of the text as a space for dialogue also echoes Barthes' anatomical metaphor. Barthes talks of the text as "body writing" ("The Death of the Author" 147), a "tissue of signs" and a "tissue of quotations" (149), which suggest a live organism as opposed to the idea of the humanist author that makes the text fixed, dead, and therefore exhausted in an encompassing and controlling intentionality. Here an understanding of the discovery of the double helix structure of DNA and its implications in literary theory and practices including *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is a fruitful context to examine. The discovery of the double helix ladder structure and function of DNA as carrying genetic codes with the help of x-ray in the 1950s, that self-transcribes and regenerates itself, was a milestone in the history of science. It paved the way for more advancements like the mapping of the human genome. The discovery of the double helix and the mode of transmission of natural selection was taken to confirm that there is no fate predetermined, pre-planned and pre-written by a supernatural being or Designer that controls and decides the game of language (or genes), but that it is chance and necessity that determine the 'script of life'. In other words, thanks to the discovery, the God who is designer of living organisms is replaced by a differential, freeplay of randomness and necessity that is encoded into the very basis of life or DNA. Its mechanisms of translation, transcription, replication and mutation have the implication that life itself is self-regenerating without the necessity and presence of an intelligent creator. It is autopoetic, regenerating itself and changing through random mutation.

Thus, it is no surprise that Roland Barthes draws upon the metaphor of the body to refer to the text as it no longer requires a prior genetic agent as God or Man. As Barthes puts it, where "the author enters into his own death, writing begins" (147), a writing which is

alive, dynamic and that constantly regenerates itself differentially. In other words, everything becomes a script. To use Patricia Waugh's terms, "everything - truth, authors, selves, bodies, history and even DNA - became a vast intertextual network of virtuality and linguistic exchange" ("Postmodern Fiction and the Rise of Modern Literary Theory" 66). Thus, DNA becomes writing, a coded script that goes through the process of transcription, translation and/or replication:

> Just as the concept of intertextuality in its post-Barthesian mode eradicates the concept of authorial intentionality, so too have the scientific accounts of natural selection and the language of DNA reduced bodily life to a play of chance and necessity where life itself becomes a writing machine writing itself – a library of Mendel – to use Daniel Dennett's play on Borges' metafictional story "The Library of Babel" (originally published in 1941).[83] Selves are collision sites of codes, in Lyotard's terms, through which messages pass and flow. The body too is written and inscribed by texts, codes, traces, endlessly replicating, deferred, reiterated and reinscribed. The text becomes the real. Nature, written in three billion coded letters, is now an endless play of signifiers, free of authors, and available for re-inscription. (68)

This is the scriptoral metaphor that Borges is taking on in his labyrinthine world where everything is replicated and (re-)constructed through self-replicating mirrors as well as Fowles in the novel in question. The Auto-destructive artists like Gustav Metzger, Jean Tinguely and the post-Second World War Abstract Expressionist movement in the US whose practitioners like Jackson Pollock were under the influence of the idea of democracy and liberation also took up such ideas. The technique of drip painting, for example, allowed

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[83] In *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life* (1955) Daniel Dennett, a philosopher and cognitive scientist, compares the set of protein sequences to the library of Babel and uses the concept of the library to imagine and explain all possible genetic sequences or "the library of Mendel" (107) as he calls it.

Abstract expressionist painters to form random and spontaneous shapes on the canvas, beyond his/her control.

In the same vein, Barthes' anatomical metaphors that explain how texts work are followed by similar tropes in Fowles. There is a quote, for example, from Martin Gardner's *The Ambidextrous Universe* as a prologue, a paratext, in the beginning of the last chapter that reads, "[e]volution is simply the process by which chance (the random mutations in the nucleic acid helix caused by natural radiation) cooperates with natural law to create living forms better and better adapted to survive" (Fowles *The French Lieutenant's Woman* 394). The author's function, it might be argued, is similar to that of natural radiation, capable of causing random mutations in the body of the text, but no longer its omniscient designer in a planned universe. Fowles's narrator here, then starts to talk about a generally accepted rule of writing that an author should not introduce any but minor characters in the final chapter, but he does precisely that and reveals that the new character is actually himself, who has appeared earlier and has just a minor role:

> I did not want to introduce him; but since he is the sort of man who cannot bear to be left out of the limelight, the kind of man who travels first class or not at all, for whom the first is the only pronoun, who in short has first things on the brain, and since I am the kind of man who refuses to intervene in nature (even the worst), he has got himself in – or as he would put it, has got himself in *as he really is.* I shall not labour the implication that he was previously got in as he really wasn't, and is therefore not truly a new character at all; but rest assured that this personage is, in spite of appearances, a very minor figure – as minimal, in fact, as a gamma-ray particle. (394).

As we know, although gamma rays are tiny particles, they are capable of ionising other atoms and thus bringing about changes in the DNA structure of a cell. Yet, neither the text nor the

narrator nor the author is an omniscient being but is rather a result of randomness: a tiny diversion/distortion in the plot leads to complete different ends (fates for the characters). To survive as a novelist (and for the novel) in the age of Roland Barthes, of the discovery of the double helix structure of DNA, the author should appear as a natural radiation, a small but intervening particle in the body text. The author is a novelist-character, a fictional character, who only gives the flow of the story its impetus. The author inscribes its effect but the created result (characters and meaning) is beyond its control and volition as it has its own freedom.

The French Lieutenant's Woman offers multiple parallel endings that do not arrive chronologically. The narrator emphasises that he would like to put them simultaneously and if one comes before the other that does not mean it happens first; it is but a limitation on the part of the narrator (or the assumed author). Having finished the Victorian ending, the narrator says:

> So I continue to stare at Charles and see no reason this time for fixing the fight upon which he is about to engage. That leaves me with two alternatives. I let the fight proceed and take no more than a recording part in it; or I take both sides in it. I stare at that vaguely effete but not completely futile face. And as we near London, I think I see a solution; that is, I see the dilemma is false. The only way I can take no part in the fight is to show two versions of it. That leaves me with only one problem: I cannot give both versions at once, yet whichever is the second will seem, so strong is the tyranny of the last chapter, the final, the "real" version. (348-49)

One ending is that Charles marries Ernestina and they will have children and live an unhappy life, a conventional Victorian ending. Another simultaneous ending is that Charles meets Sarah who has given birth to a child that turns out to be the product of their making love

together once and now both are in love with each other. A third, but not last, is that Sarah refuses to marry Charles and he is finally convinced to endure the situation.

Equally possible, multiple, parallel endings exist in line with the idea that suggests there is no pre-written, pre-planned intention as "a planned world is a dead world" (86) and that the one Fowles is working with is a live organism. The technique used here is what Derrida refers to as "under erasure" (*sous rature*) (146) in *Of Grammatology* (originally published in 1967). By that he means writing a word and then crossing it out without total deletion. What remains is a word which is crossed out. The result would be both the simultaneous existence and effacement of the sign. Many times in the course of the novel the narrator, who seems to assume the role of the author – but we cannot be sure – cancels what has he just told us. After the narrator reveals that Charles marries Ernestina and will live an unhappy life, the next chapter rescinds the events: "And now, having brought this fiction to a thoroughly traditional ending, I had better explain that although all I have described in the last two chapters happened, it did not happen quite in the way you may have been led to believe" (Fowles *The French Lieutenant's Woman* 295). The narrator continues:

> Charles was no exception; and the last few pages you have read are not what happened, but what he spent the hours between London and Exeter imagining might happen. To be sure he did not think in quite the detailed and coherent narrative manner I have employed; nor would I swear that he followed Mrs. Poulteney's postmortal career in quite such interesting detail. But he certainly wished her to the Devil, so it comes to almost the same thing. (295)

What the narrator implies is that the previous chapter and the Victorian ending were all Charles's thoughts that were inserted in through the technique of free indirect speech with some intervention and details from the narrator for the reader. Cancelling and rescinding the previous chapter has the effect of making the present chapter equally dubious and

questionable. Here the narrative echoes Barthes' point that the text is "a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture" ("The Death of the Author" 149). If the previous version was Charles's, as well as Sam's, hypothetical future, the new version the narrator offers is equally their hypothetical future. Perhaps the whole concept could be summarised in the narrator's own words – which could also be the voice of the author:

> I said earlier that we are all poets, though not many of us write poetry; and so are we all novelists, that is, we have a habit of writing fictional futures for ourselves, although perhaps today we incline more to put ourselves into a film. We screen in our minds hypotheses about how we might behave, about what might happen to us; and these novelistic or cinematic hypotheses often have very much more effect on how we actually do behave, when the real future becomes the present, than we generally allow. (Fowles *The French Lieutenant's Woman* 295)

This could be extended to the condition of all novels and stories. Fiction is a would-be future, not a reality, but what might potentially be the real as we imagine.

And the novelist is not the omniscient god but a person who provides the reader with materials to be able to imagine different possibilities of reality. Characters are only figments of imagination (348) and imagination broadens our sympathy. As the narrator has it, "[t]he novelist is still a god, since he creates (and not even the most aleatory avant-garde modern novel has managed to extirpate its author completely); what has changed is that we are no longer the gods of the Victorian image, omniscient and decreeing; but in the new theological image, with freedom our first principle, not authority" (86). The idea of the narrator jumping into the text as an observant character could be an allegory of the reader interacting with the

text. The reader is immersed in the text and starts a dialogue and interaction with other characters, an act which can widen the reader's scope of sympathy, as Charles develops and extends his understanding and sympathy for Sarah thanks to her liberating fiction. In addition, read in that light, the narrator's identity is once again slippery, shifting from being a narrator, an author (as he claims), to a character, to the reader. Writing becomes the space Barthes talks about where "the writing subject constantly disappears" ("The Death of the Author" 175). As the narrator says, "I do not fully control these creatures [characters]" (Fowles *The French Lieutenant's Woman* 87). The author in this novel is exactly what Barthes describes: the modern scriptor as bricoleur who brings together composites of things taken from different centres and cultures. By the same token, Fowles does not reject the idea of the author as creator; he just re-defines the concept.

Paranoia, Critical Anxiety and Authorial Voice in Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire*

> I believe it must be the policy of the United States to support free people who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures. (Harry Truman qtd. in McCullough 547)

Fully grasping the questions around authorship in Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire* (1962) requires historical contextualisation of its Cold War moment and its aftermath, because both exerted enormous influence upon what we call postmodernism and its modes of art. The culture-politics of the Cold War era from 1947 to 1991 is fundamentally defined by the ongoing bi-polarisation of the globe around the two super powers – the US and the Soviet Union – and the hysterical and paranoid atmosphere this bipolarity generated in American society and culture. It is an era during which power becomes more centralised as a consequence of anti-Communist policies adopted by the US government set up to contain the perceived threatened influence and spread of Communism as a political force equal to that of Fascism and Nazism. As Steven Belletto and Daniel Grausam put it, "[i]f Communism had once been imagined as a powerful alternative to fascism, midcentury history convinced some Western intellectuals that Communism and fascism were parallel forms of totalitarianism" (5). Postmodernism in the U.S. might be interpreted in large part as a backlash against this centralisation of power.[84] Questions of authorship in the novel might also be regarded as related to this political atmosphere and to the question of that solipsism which is so often the other side of paranoia. In *Pale Fire* too, authorship is examined as part of the consequences of the projection of Kinbote's own seemingly paranoid consciousness onto an external reality that it thus re-fashions. Paranoid-schizophrenia, oddly enough, again provides the grounds for

[84] Daniel Belgrad points to this centralisation of power, which "is a defining characteristic of modernity," "came to predominance in postwar society, profoundly shaping American life" and argues that "[t]he culture of the Cold War was profoundly affected by this, since both the United States and the Soviet Union were transformed in the mid-century by the rapid centralization of economic power and political authority" (59).

a re-fashioning of authorship. It could be suggested that the human in the postmodern era as epitomised in *Pale Fir*e is seen to inhabit a kind of paranoid-schizophrenic/solipsistic world oscillating between control as authorship, identity and agency, on the one hand, and lack of control and dissolution of the self on the other. This is a pattern that seems to be emerging across all of the fiction so far examined suggesting the extent to which authorship had come to seem truly, that is to say, existentially risky, dangerous, under threat, in this immediate post-war to 1960s period that immediately predates the theoretical debate. This opposition might then be mapped onto the tension explored in the novel between the critical and the creative as productive of the ontological anxiety of the author who experiences himself as displaced by the critic along the lines sketched out in David Lodge's essay "Literary Criticism and Literary Creation" (2002). Relating the narrower question of authorship to the broader Cold War politics of control of the period, in a novel that deals with a poet named Shade and his relations with a literary professor and critic, Kinbote, authorship might be traced and viewed as inscribed in the terms of a new ontological anxiety concerning not simply the conditions of the Cold War period but also the rise of an increasingly corporatized, aggressive and appropriative profession of literary criticism as a burgeoning academic discipline.

The Cold War, the Policy of Containment Culture and Paranoia

In the 1950s, as Communism was expanding around the world, American culture was represented in the discourse of the liberal right as pandering to a Communism that threatened the terror of seizing the nuclear arsenal of the US. This paranoid idea – paranoid especially in retrospect – was seeded, watered, and propagated by George F. Kennan, an American diplomat who served in the American embassy in the Soviet Union, articulated in an article which was published as "The Sources of Soviet Conduct" known as "X Article" in 1947, and

which found its way to Harry Truman's administration to shape the dominant policy of the time both during Truman's and Eisenhower's presidential terms. An avowed proponent and a member of the group called "The Wise Men"[85] which developed the policy of containment, Kennan's contention was that since America could not defeat the Soviet Union as they had nuclear power, it could restrict Communism's spread.[86] Gradually, Communism came to be understood as a form of totalitarianism, similar to Fascism and Nazism;[87] a view arising from the shift in understanding of the catastrophe of the Second World War, a shift of focus from Hitler to the idea of totalitarianism itself as the main cause of the holocaust.[88] Kennan's writings and ideas stimulated what came to be known as the "Truman Doctrine" (1947) – a foreign policy constructed to prevent the Soviet Union spreading its ideological influence. Truman, in an attempt to restrict the Soviet threat to Greece and Turkey, asked Congress for $400 million to contribute to the countries' military and economy, leading to the formation of The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1949. The date aptly marked the beginning of an enduring Cold War as America's foreign policy would sustain the conflict with the Soviets for the next few decades.

Accordingly, the policy of containment assigned the American administration to take control of cultural production by funding institutions such as the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). This was a response to Communism's expansion and

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[85] *The Wise Men: Six Friends and the World They Made* is a book, written by Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, which lists six influential American foreign policy makers in the period following the Second World War. The book reveals how they developed the policy of containment and helped establish institutions like NATO (1949).

[86] Kennan's major contention in "The Sources of Soviet Conduct" could be summarised in his own words that the "United States policy toward the Soviet Union must be that of a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies" (568).

[87] As Belletto and Grausam put it, "[t]he claim that Communism and Nazism were parallel forms of totalitarianism, in that both sought to organise every aspect of their population's lives, made possible an understanding of Communism not simply as an ideological argument about economics but as the enemy of humankind itself" (11).

[88] Hannah Arendt in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) argues that totalitarianism, whether Nazism or Stalinism, are "inhuman," that is, their goal is towards total domination of the globe and "total destruction of humanity" (*The Origins of Totalitarianism* viii). See Chapter Twelve. Likewise, Belletto and Grausam argue that, "[t]otalitarianism was bad because it imagined some life as subhuman, yet antitotalitarianism frequently racialized its ideological opponent, thereby ironically committing itself to the very dynamic it was ostensibly criticizing" (11).

influence in culture and the mass media. Accordingly, movies were made at the request of the administration or, for example, CIA[89] funded the literary magazine *Encounter* (1953-1991), as Communist tendencies in film production and the mass media were seen to be on the rise. This led to domestic surveillance and intolerance of any dissent: as a case in point, the magazine *Encounter* rarely published anything opposed to American foreign policy. As Belletto and Grausam argue, "'containment' has often functioned as a metaphor in literary studies, a way of registering anxiety about dissent, visibility, and surveillance" (9). The United States *Federal Bureau of Investigation* (FBI) also officially established its Counter Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) in 1956, which lasted until 1971. Its clandestine domestic aim was to monitor groups and individuals from minorities (the Communist party, the new left activists, anti-Vietnam war activists, feminist activists, anti-colonial movements, Black Power Movement, to name but a few) and it was under the command of the FBI director, J. Edgar Hoover, who required FBI agents to "expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, neutralize or otherwise eliminate" all those kinds of activities that were reckoned to be subversive (Hoover) – a sort of domestic surveillance also known as Hooverism. Put succinctly, COINTELPRO was established to counteract and sabotage domestic political dissidents and accordingly it targeted American citizens. A direct consequence of Hooversim was the creation of a blacklist "fingering over four hundred public employees for firing, most of them school and university teachers" (Maxwell 21). In line with that is the FBI's spread of influence and surveillance in literary productions, a phenomena or "agenda" that Maxwell calls "Total Literary Awareness" (23). An almost concurrent act was the creation of The Hollywood blacklist, active in the late 40s and 50s, set up to deny anyone accused of having communist affiliations or even tendencies and sympathies access to Hollywood productions. During the period, a mere allegation or refusal to cooperate with the FBI would suffice to ban

[89] The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was founded in 1947 under Harry Truman's presidency.

a screenwriter, director, producer, actor, actress and/or musician from Hollywood; The Hollywood Ten lists a number of those who were banned. The movie *Storm Center* (1956) is a critique of this policy/agenda of surveillance and censorship in its depiction of a librarian who refuses to cooperate with the local council to remove a banned book, presumed subversive, from the shelves.

The aim of all these agendas was to remove dissent and create public consensus, a movement away from a diverse multiplicity of powers and voices towards a more centralised form of power. Again, Belletto and Grausam comment on the concept of containment: "If the term [containment] means checking the spread of Communism around the globe, resulting in the Korean and Vietnam Wars and various interventions in the Middle East, Latin America, and elsewhere, it likewise names the construction of *domestic consensus*" (4 emphasis added). Both the US and the Soviet Union witnessed, and underwent, centralisation of power (both economic and political) in the twentieth century. In the US, this happened through these anti-dissent policies and as a result of the disappearance of small businesses due to the war's impact on the economy. As Daniel Belgrad argues, during the Second World War "[m]ore than half a million small businesses disappeared . . . at the same time that the federal government paid a hundred billion dollars in war contracts to just thirty-three corporations" resulting in a kind of oligarchic economic power (60). C. Wright Mills's 1956 essay "The Structure of Power in American Society" is an elaboration of this economic and political centralisation of power and it criticises the manipulation of public consent as a way of governing, as he doubts this consensus is gained out of reason rather than enforced obedience. He contends that "[t]he history of modern society may readily be understood as the story of the enlargement and the centralization of the means of power in economic, in political, and in military institution" (31). Hence, as he concludes, "if men do not make history, they tend increasingly to become the utensils of history-makers as well as the mere

objects of indeed seem less limiting" (31). Therefore, a key concept in understanding postmodernist works as a backlash against this period is their tendency to re-fashioning and cultivating the de-centralisation of authority in a culture which had become more and more centralised during the Cold War.

Ironically, the Cold War discourse – the containment culture – whose alleged aim was anti-totalitarian in defence of human freedom, was or became, increasingly autocratic as it created a similar condition in which the voices of dissent were dehumanised. This, for Leerom Medovoi, constituted a period of semi-racist war. As he puts it, "the Cold War itself became understood as a politico-cultural surrogate for race war, because the 'enemy' represented an ideological and terror-driven movement, not itself human, that in the 'second world' created vast, dehumanized zones of life" (167). According to this discourse, Communism was, to use Medovoi's term, a "parasite" (168), that needed to be eliminated. An example of the narrative of dissent as parasite, or as Medovoi calls, "an exampler of 'Red Scare' containment culture" (169), is Robert A. Heinlein's *The Puppet Masters* (1951) in which Earth is attacked by extra-terrestrial slug-like creatures who attach themselves to the back of human beings and thereby control them and manage to get power in some parts of America. Hence, parallels are made between these slug-driven people and communist sympathisers in that the former "are invisible enemies within the body politic . . . ." (169).

The fiction of the period experiments with what it feels like to live under the threat and paranoia of the Cold War. The paranoia of being constantly spied on and monitored, the idea that anyone can be a Soviet Union mole (secret agent, parasite, a contagion disease, according to the discourse) in the US administration, is portrayed in the movie *Salt* (2010). In other words, postmodernist experimentation is intertwined with the nuclear threat during the Cold War and its aftermath. The concern with the possibility of a total global nuclear war shifts the modernist concern with epistemology to that of postmodernist ontology. "This

unwitnessable fact of nuclear ending haunts these [postmodernist] novels and leads, I argue, to their signature textual difficulties" (Grausam 5). Postmodernist fictions' concerns are ontological, as a nuclear global war would leave no survivors at all. Such a war would result in the extermination of not one race but all of humanity. It would be "an instantaneous and total moment of destruction that leaves no witness and no record" (Grausam 11). As Jacques Derrida argues too in "No Apocalypse, Not Now (Full Speed Ahead, Seven Missiles, Seven Missives)" (1984), a nuclear war is a fable, "the signified referent, never the real referent" upon which reality is constructed as such a war would leave no life possible to talk and write about (23). Therefore, such fiction – fiction which is characterised in relation to a total nuclear war, a potential Third World War – cannot but be metafictive, self-conscious and self-reflexive, reflecting upon its own condition and ontological status as something precariously made.

This cultural paranoia around the Cold War coincided with the new ontological anxiety that the writer began to feel in response to the rise of literary institutions and criticism. Thus, metaphorically speaking, perhaps it is no coincidence that the literary critic is viewed and deemed an agent whose aim is to monitor, hijack and sabotage, censor or distort, the writer's text and, consequently, his identity and authority. The act of criticism/interpretation is deemed an act of distortion, sabotage of the writer's intention, to the extent that the writer might feel alienated even from his/her own text. Many clashes between the critic and the writer in the novels of the period, like William Golding's *The Paper Men* (1984), might be read in this light: the critic becomes the agent of the monologic or totalising and centralised state seeking to eliminate real diversity.

Solipsism or Schizophrenia or a Re-fashioning of Authorship

The Cold War created an atmosphere of paranoia and schizophrenia in the US due to the elaborate policy of containment that magnified the fear of the threat of a Third World War and the presence of espionage in an attempt to get hold of America's nuclear arsenal. Interestingly, Louis A. Sass, a literary critic and Professor of Clinical Psychology, contends that paranoid schizophrenia is a similar structure to and might be seen as, the obverse of a philosophy of solipsism, the view that I am the creator of everything around me and that the world is a reflection or construction of my mind. Paranoia is thus understood as the effect of a culture of narcissism consequent upon the suppression of difference.[90]

The Paradoxes of Delusion gives a detailed account of what has come to be the most famous case of paranoid schizophrenia in history: Daniel Paul Schreber who wrote and described his experiences in his *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*.[91] Sass, then, compares the case of Schreber and his experiences to Wittgenstein's philosophy of solipsism. Likewise, I shall argue that Kinbote, in *Pale Fire,* might be understood as undergoing the same process of schizophrenia/solipsism, in the broader context of suspicion and Cold war, by projecting his own consciousness on to external reality in order to gain some sort of agency while at the same time losing it.

In his Memoir, Schreber famously gives an account of how he wanted to have sexual intercourse as a woman and that the thought of this had been inserted in his mind from elsewhere, so the thought did not belong to him; he later attributed it to the doctor who practiced hypnosis and inserted the thought in him (thought insertion). He also talks of many people who give him information via divine rays. Later, he assumes that God has turned him

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[90] Two of Louis's works are dedicated to a new understanding of the problem: *The Paradoxes of Delusion: Wittgenstein, Schreber, and the Schizophrenic Mind* (1994) and *Madness and Modernism: Insanity in the Light of Modern Art, Literature, and Thought* (1992).

[91] Daniel Paul Schreber (1842-1911) was a judge diagnosed with a mental illness, later known as paranoid schizophrenia, which he described in *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*. The book was of special interest to Sigmund Freud who provided an interpretation of it that Schreber's hallucinations are a projection of his repressed inner drives. Freud's interpretation made Schreber's book influential in the history of psychiatry.

into a woman and sends rays to practice miracles on him. The aim of writing his Memoir is, he writes, to pose a question concerning under what criteria someone like him should be put into an asylum against his/her will. Sass argues that the traditional criteria of madness, insanity or psychosis – schizophrenia included – known as "poor reality-testing," does not fit the reported experience of paranoia, and cannot accordingly explain many schizophrenic patients' experiences, including those of Schreber. The widely accepted understanding of psychosis holds that the psychotic cannot distinguish between the world of reality and that of the unreal (Sass *The Paradoxes of Delusion: Wittgenstein, Schreber, and the Schizophrenic Mind* 2), but Sass, drawing on the work of Karl Jaspers, argues that the schizophrenic does not mistake his/her hallucinations and delusions for the real but, for him/her, as for Schreber, the delusional world has "a certain 'subjectivized' quality – that is, being in some sense the product of his own consciousness rather than enjoying an independent or objective existence (as the poor reality-testing formula implies)" and he contends that Schreber's experience is evidently akin to the philosophy of solipsism (8). For a solipsist only the self and its feelings and perceptions exist and are real. Hence, for Sass many of the detailed accounts of schizophrenic experience should be studied in the light of solipsism.

It was Wittgenstein, as Sass notes, who regarded solipsism as a kind of philosophical illness which occurs due to too much abstraction and self-awareness that in its turn leads to the person's detachment from action in real life. In the same vein, Schreber's schizophrenic experience "is a projection of his own overly convoluted and disengaged stance toward existence" rather than a belief in a higher form of reality (9). Also, schizophrenia is not the loss of rationality but a world created within the realm of rationality. The juxtaposition of Schreber and Wittgenstein (schizophrenia and solipsism) reveals that similar to the process of solipsism, or "disease of the intellect" to use Wittgenstein's terminology, madness is a consciousness that detaches itself "from the body and the passions, and from the social and

practical world, and turns in upon itself; it is what might be called the mind's perverse self-apotheosis" (12). According to Sass, the schizophrenic patient is, up to a point, able to make a phenomenological distinction between their delusion and real life hallucinations and perceptions. For example, in the case of hearing voices, the schizophrenic knows that the voices s/he hears are different from "real" perceived voices but still believes in them, and relies on them, perhaps even more because they originate from their own consciousness rather than from external reality.[92] Rather than confusing the two, these patients acquire the capacity of "double bookkeeping." As Sass puts it:

> It is remarkable to what extent even the most disturbed schizophrenics may retain, even at the height of their psychotic periods, a quite accurate sense of what would generally be considered to be their objective or actual circumstances. Rather than mistaking the imaginary for the real, they often seem to live in two parallel but separate worlds: consensual reality and the realm of their hallucinations and delusions. A patient who claims that the doctors and nurses are trying to torture and poison her may nevertheless happily consume the food they give her; a patient who asserts that the people around him are phantoms or automatons still interacts with them as if they were real. (21)

What actually happens in schizophrenic patients is a change in their perception of external reality. Similar to the solipsistic process, the patients' understanding and perception of time, place, identity and consciousness itself undergoes a dramatic change. In the philosophical doctrine of solipsism, this change of perception is referred to as "seeing-as" or "aspect seeing," to draw upon Wittgenstein's words. It refers to the ability to view things in multiple

[92] "One of Eugen Bleuler's patients was well aware that the voices he heard originated in his own ears, for he compared these voices to the sound of the sea that can be heard by placing a shell to one's ear. It seems that something about the hallucinations and delusions of such patients sets their delusional worlds apart from the realm of normal, consensual reality" (21).

ways, a phenomenological feature whose most famous example Wittgenstein gives in his *Philosophical Investigations* (1953): the duck-rabbit which can be viewed as either a duck or a rabbit but not both at once. "Aspect-seeing" is a change in perception. It is an ability to notice the unnoticed aspect of an object we are looking at. As Wittgenstein has it, "[t]he expression of a change of aspect is the expression of a *new* perception and at the same time of the perception's being unchanged" (196). What one is doing here is actually projecting meaning or concepts onto the picture: the concept of a duck or that of a rabbit. The real is how we perceive things to be. What changes is not the picture but the perception of it. As Wittgenstein explains, "I contemplate a face, and then suddenly notice its likeness to another. I *see* that it has not changed; and yet I see it differently. I call this experience 'noticing an aspect'" (196). The implication is that the existence of the whole world, anything around us, is dependent upon the viewer's perception; s/he is the source and centre. What is certain is one's own mind, anything else (the external reality and other minds) is uncertain. This is a feature of the philosophical trend of solipsism in that, for the solipsist, only the self is sure to exist and external reality might therefore not exist at all.[93]

However, an important note should be made here that a change in perception does not necessitate, or lead to, a change in all the qualities of the object but the solipsist keeps some features of the object such as colour. In the same vein, a schizophrenic patient like Schreber, keeps some objective qualities of the external world. As Sass articulates, "Schreber's perception of his own feminine aspect does not distort or deny the more objective qualities of the perceptual world: the very presence of hair on his chest and the size of his nipples is unaffected; only the prominence or meaning attributed to these parts of his anatomy is altered in the context of the feminizing seeing-as" (*The Paradoxes of Delusion: Wittgenstein,*

[93] In describing the solipsistic experience, Sass holds that "[e]verything, we might say, is felt to be an instance of seeing-as, of an aspect seeing that is in some sense willful and conceptual in nature; but in this case the aspects or interpretations seem to be the only reality there is. In this situation, any object of awareness tends to feel as if it depends on me in some special way, belonging to my consciousness as a private and somehow inner possession" (*The Paradoxes of Delusion: Wittgenstein, Schreber, and the Schizophrenic Mind* 36).

Schreber, and the Schizophrenic Mind 31). Wittgenstein also says that this seeing-as is affected or caused by acts of will in the sense that it is we who decides to see the duck or the rabbit. As Sass expands upon this, "Wittgenstein's point is not that seeing-as always respond to our will, or never changes against our will, but that to attempt to see a given aspect is an action that is not incoherent or illogical, and one that can at times be successful" (29).

Aldous Huxley's experience as described in detail in *The Doors of Perception* (1954)[94] seems to have qualities similar to both solipsistic experience and Schreber's schizophrenic experience. In this philosophical essay/book, Huxley expresses his intention of taking mescaline, which has hallucinogenic and psychedelic effects and consequently alters perception, as the mind is like a valve which limits perception (12) in the hope that the drug would help open the valve, that it "would admit [him] . . . into the kind of inner world described by Blake and AE" (6). His perception changes after taking mescaline (under the supervision of a psychiatrist[95] and in the presence of a friend) around noon; one and a half hours later he looks at a vase and sees a "miracle, moment by moment, of naked existence" (7). In a tour of a bookstore on the day of the experiment, he looks at some books and their paintings:

> The books, for example, with which my study walls were lined. Like the flowers, they glowed, when I looked at them, with brighter colors, a *profounder significance*. Red books, like rubies; emerald books; books bound

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[94] The title of the book is inspired by and taken from a sentence in William Blake's poem *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1793): "If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, Infinite. / For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern" (line 115-16).

[95] Humphry Fortescue Osmond, was a psychiatrist who was doing research on the useful applications of psychedelic and hallucinogenic drugs. He, together with a colleague, observed and noticed the similarities between LSD and some schizophrenic experiences and later concluded that the illness may occur as a distortion of the mind's perception. Having read Osmond's research, Huxley contacted him expressing his interest in the subject of his experiment as he considered mind to be restricting consciousness – an idea both reflected in his letter to Osmond and in *The Doors of Perception* (12). Osmond himself took peyote (a cactus from which mescaline is derived) before he attended a Native American Church ceremony and later published an account of his experience in *Psychedelics: The Uses and Implications of Hallucinogenic Drugs* (1970). This is common among many native tribes, such as native American people who take hallucinogenic plants in order to go through a spiritual experience and visit ghosts (a kind of shamanism).

> in white jade; books of agate; of aquamarine, of yellow topaz; lapis lazuli books whose color was so intense, so *intrinsically meaningful*, that they seemed to be on the point of leaving the shelves to thrust themselves more insistently on my attention. (9 emphasis added)

This section is reminiscent of Schreber's description of his femininity, that some objective qualities of an item are still kept (like Schreber's nipple size). What changes is the significance or meaning attributed to the objects being perceived. The same was true for Huxley as the colour and shape of the books are not altered. Red is still red but with "profounder significance."

Huxley explains that time and space lose their significance but that the object in question acquires a profound significance:

> Place and distance cease to be of much interest. The mind does its Perceiving in terms of intensity of existence, *profundity of significance*, relationships within a pattern. I saw the books, but was not at all concerned with their positions in space. What I noticed, what impressed itself upon my mind was the fact that all of them glowed with living light and that in some the glory was more manifest than in others. In this context, position and the three dimensions were beside the point. Not, of course, that the category of space had been abolished. When I got up and walked about, I could do so quite normally, without misjudging the whereabouts of objects. Space was still there; but it had lost its predominance. The mind was primarily concerned, not with measures and locations, but with being and meaning. (10 emphasis added)

Schreber describes another experience of sitting in a park motionless while wasps and other insects appear and he believes that they come into existence at the very moment that he looks

at them. The given texts are examples of seeing-as or aspect seeing experience. Schreber's perception of the people follows the same logic and he calls the events miracles. As Sass explains it, these (wasps or any other object) "rather than having a separate existence in themselves, they appeared and disappeared like pictures" (*The Paradoxes of Delusion: Wittgenstein, Schreber, and the Schizophrenic Mind* 33). Their existence, therefore, totally depends upon him, like a solipsist's view. "What would to the normal person have the quality of reality – existence independent of that of the self-as-subject –" Sass continues, "seems to have had for Schreber the ephemeral quality of something merely phenomenal" (33).

Put in a nutshell, the solipsist, together with the schizophrenic, keeps some objective qualities while, due to his/her altered perception, projecting his/her own (now altered) consciousness onto the object – the external world by implication. The similarity between the solipsist's and schizophrenic's experience is telling. Quite similar to Schreber's experience, solipsism "is a vision of reality as a dream, but with awareness of the fact that one is dreaming. For the solipsist, other people, other seeming centers of consciousness, are but dream personages, figments of the solipsist's own conscious activity and awareness" (34). What is of profound significance, and the only thing that counts, for the solipsist as well as the schizophrenic is the aspect, rather than the thing itself. Also, this aspect does indeed emanate from the perceiving consciousness but due to its alteration might be attributed to the thing in question. Things become subjectivised like William Wordsworth's description of daffodils in "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" (1807) upon which Huxley expatiates. In the solipsistic subjectivised world of Wordsworth, the colour yellow – which we might normally attribute to daffodils – takes on a subjectivised quality and appears to be of more profundity and significance with a richness – which is not normally associated with either yellow or daffodils – that is expressed in the word "golden" (306 line 4). The movement of the daffodils is consequently subjectivised and therefore personified: "dancing" (306 line 6). Huxley feels

he is going through the same experience as Wordsworth when he looks at the legs of a chair in a room: "Like Wordsworth's daffodils, they brought all manner of wealth – the gift, beyond price, of a new direct insight into the very Nature of Things, together with a more modest treasure of understanding in the field, especially, of the arts" (Huxley 15). This is an ability that artists are given, as Huxley infers:

> What the rest of us see only under the influence of mescalin, the artist is congenitally equipped to see all the time. . . . For the artist as for the mescalin-taker draperies are living hieroglyphs that stand in some peculiarly expressive way for the unfathomable mystery of pure being. (19)

This "expressive way" is common not only among solipsists and schizophrenics but also among the Romantic poets, as the example demonstrated. In other words, the concept of Romantic authorship and artistic creation relies upon the presumption (and consequently pre-existence by implication) of a self which projects its feelings and emotions onto the world/word. As M. H. Abrams puts it in *The Mirror and the Lamp* (1953), "[t]his way of thinking in which the artist himself becomes the major element generating both the artistic product and the criteria by which it is to be judged, I shall call the expressive theory of art" (22); hence, Abram's analogy of the Romantic poet as a lamp which generates illumination. Expressive, because it is the expression of the self's emotions and thoughts; accordingly, the artistic creation is the direct embodiment of the artist's feelings, thoughts and emotion. The similarity between what Wordsworth says of literature and the doctrine of solipsism as well as schizophrenic altered consciousness towards life is telling:

> Objects . . . derive their influence not from properties inherent in themselves, but from such as are bestowed upon them by the minds of those who are conversant with or affected by those objects. Thus, the poetry, if there be any in the work, proceeds whence it ought to do, from the soul of Man,

> communicating its creative energies to the images of the external world. (Wordsworth and Wordsworth 68)

Therefore, as Wordsworth implies it, poetry – literature – is an unmediated expression of the self; that is, it directly emanates from the self. Or, as Percy Bysshe Shelley in "A Defence of Poetry" (written in 1821 and published posthumously in 1840) calls it, it is "the expression of the Imagination" (838). This implies that the apotheosis of man (its mind, self, consciousness, etc.) is the author.

Nevertheless, there are paradoxes involved in regarding the solipsistic and schizophrenic process of projecting the self (its emotions, feelings and thoughts) onto the world. The more the solipsist (and the schizophrenic) tries to deny/doubt the existence of the outside world and focuses upon his/her own mind (consciousness), the less agency s/he feels due to the detachment of mind from the self when the self becomes an outside object of study. The paranoid-schizophrenic might then not attribute the projection to his/her own consciousness but to an outsider. Schreber relates some incidents to the rays and speaks of some thoughts as if they were inserted in him – not belonging to him. This is a result of detachment in one's personality. You create and project thoughts/feelings onto the external world but then consider them as objective reality, independent of you and consequently out of one's control and volition. The idea that the paranoid-schizophrenic is in a plight where s/he is always being monitored, traced, watched and constantly scrutinised or that s/he believes there are some forces who try to hurt him/her is an indication of this loss of agency and authority.

The solipsistic schizophrenic universe involves two paradoxical positions: one in which one feels omnipotent and the other in which one is subjugated. As Sass explains:

> His [the schizophrenic like Schreber] own consciousness plays two seemingly incompatible roles: for he [*sic*] experiences his own mind as the hub around

> which the universe revolves, the indispensable constitutor on which it depends, as if he were a sort of unmoved prime mover, but he also feels his own experience limited and constrained, like something contemplated and manipulated (perhaps even constituted) by some distant and ever-recording other mind. (*The Paradoxes of Delusion: Wittgenstein, Schreber, and the Schizophrenic Mind* 63)

This combination of a sense of omnipotence and abundant power on the one hand and the experience of powerlessness (with no volition) and of being enfeebled is a seemingly paradoxical characteristic of the schizophrenia and solipsism. What happens is that one puts consciousness (self) under a constant scrutiny, takes it as an object, as the only way to affirm the existence of consciousness is to experience it. Sass expands upon Wittgenstein's critique of solipsism:

> Wittgenstein thus shows that, if the solipsist is to hold onto his [*sic*] basic insight of the centrality of his own consciousness, then he cannot *just* have experiences; he must in some way *experience* his experiences, and this implies projecting himself into an external position – a vantage point he imaginatively occupies while still experiencing it as other and alien. (71)

This, accordingly, leads to what Sass calls "the vanishing of the I-sense into its objects" (70). In other words, one's (the solipsist/schizophrenic's) sense of the centrality of one's own consciousness in the world takes an opposite direction into the loss of the self and postulating the existence and presence of a second external consciousness, especially indicated and implied in thought insertion belief/feeling.[96]

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[96] Schreber's experience of his femininity in front of the mirror is given as an example of the solipsistic loss of the self "experiencing himself as 'represented-as' female, thus exemplifies the condition and paradox of solipsism. Here we have a man standing still, staring rigidly at a world that is, quite literally, a reflection of himself and a projection of his own mind (the feminized seeing-as), yet who, at this very instant, fails to recognize that the world before his eyes, a world he feels *as* subjectivized, is the product of his own consciousness" (Sass *The Paradoxes of Delusion: Wittgenstein, Schreber, and the Schizophrenic Mind* 72).

The Cold War and its Generated Paranoid-Schizophrenic Author in *Pale Fire*

Authorship in Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire* (1962) might fruitfully be studied in the light of the Cold War era and its culture, as well as the so-called philosophical doctrine of solipsism with its affinities with schizophrenia as elaborated earlier. But authorship at this historic moment – as in Foucault's author function – exists in the context of the rivalry between the writer and the critic which culminated in the mid twentieth century – as a result of the institutionalisation of literary studies – in producing an ontological anxiety for the writer concerning identity and being. The novel contains a poem entitled "Pale Fire", purportedly written by John Shade and commented upon by Dr. C. Kinbote, an acclaimed academic who has undertaken to publish it with his own commentary as he considers himself the most qualified for the task (he knows Shade intimately having lived as his neighbor). Kinbote later reveals that he is actually Charles the Beloved, the dethroned king of Zembla. The novel, written in 1962, might be read as exemplifying the mentality of the Cold War era and demonstrating how it feels to be an immigrant – especially one like Nabokov, a Russian immigrant – in the US under the containment culture, surveillance, the paranoia generated by the Cold War, a sense of unhomeliness, and of not belonging anywhere. Nabokov's work again suggests how the author enters a paranoid-schizophrenic/solipsistic process in order to gain agency and authority and to generate home and yet, paradoxically, loses both in the process.

The novel demonstrates how paranoia as a psychological illness was expanded into a social mood or condition during the Cold War era. As Alan Nadel has it, "[t]he trajectory of the Cold War literature, in other words, could be viewed as repositing paranoia from a psychological malady to a social condition" (178). Paranoia is an indication of the fear of the potential dangers of Communist sympathisers as well as a result of internalising the mechanisms of surveillance on the other – a sign that you are constantly under scrutiny,

always watched and monitored. The conversation among the academics – including Shade and Kinbote – over the latter's origin and identity exactly expresses this atmosphere of paranoid suspicion. The discussion revolves around who resembles whom. Kinbote describes the Head of the English Department as "the ignorant, and *always suspicious*" (Nabokov 209 emphasis added). As Shade tells colleagues, perhaps with an intention to appease suspicion: "'[t]ake my own case', continued my dear friend ignoring Mr. H. 'I have been said to resemble at least four people: Samuel Johnson; the lovingly reconstructed ancestor of man in the Exton Museum; and two local characters, one being the slapdash disheveled hag who ladles out the mash in the Levin Hall cafeteria'" (209). This implies how many times people had tried, in the past, to work out who – which spy perhaps – John Shade might look like. Then Professor Pardon, suspicious of the reds under his bed, brings up the topic with Kinbote and suspects that he comes from Russia:

> Professor Pardon now spoke to me: "I was under the impression that you were born in Russia, and that your name was a kind of anagram of Botkin or Botkine?"
>
> Kinbote: "You are confusing me with some refugee from Nova Zembla" [sarcastically stressing the "Nova"].
>
> "Didn't you tell me, Charles, that *kinbote* means regicide in your language?" asked my dear Shade.
>
> "Yes, a king's destroyer," I said (longing to explain that a king who sinks his identity in the mirror of exile is in a sense just that). (210)

Although Shade tries to divert attention by bringing up another subject, Professor Pardon's sense of suspicion is not quenched; he addresses Kinbote and still emphasies that: "'[y]ou do know Russian, though' said Pardon. 'I think I heard you, the other day, talking to – what's his name - oh, my goodness' [laboriously composing his lips]" (210). This unwanted compulsion

to hide one's true identity in exile is an indication of an excessive fear of being accused of espionage.[97] This reminds the reader again of the reds under the bed and the insidious threat of Communism during the Cold War period. Although Kinbote claims he comes from Zembla, a fantasy world, one can find affinities between it and Russia, as indicated in the given example of the names throughout the novel that sound Russian. Therefore, Zembla could be viewed as a fantastic projection of Kinbote's delusions as result of an altered consciousness brought on through his condition of displacement and alienation, delusions that are reified and objectified.

This could be read in the light of what Sass and others suggest concerning the schizophrenic/solipsistic mode of consciousness: that the patient's "double-bookkeeping" is not entirely a way of exiting the real world, for we see in the delusion elements which fit the present situation such as links to American and Russia at the time of the Cold War, but is fantasised into the forms of New Wye and Zembla.[98] Double-bookkeeping is indeed a combination of two realities: one of the external world and the other the product and projection of consciousness. The schizophrenic oscillates between the two worlds as does Kinbote by bringing facts (references to historical places and events like the Bolshevik revolution in Russia and the Cold War America)[99] and fiction together (Zembla, Gradus, even Shade, etc.). This is a subjectivised world/universe. We know that, as Sass has it, "subjectivity can be derealized as well as alienated, thus leading to the prospect of a

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[97] Artistic examples of containment culture daring the Cold War era are many. Raymond Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), and its movie adaptation in 1966, depicts this paranoid fear and therefore censorship of the dissent, of any communist sympathiser.

[98] As Sass elaborates, "A second paradox is that these two selves are characterized by both an absolute separation and an absolute interdependence, an interdependence amounting to a kind of symbiosis. In this variant of the master/slave dialectic, each self – observer and observed – comes to be defined almost completely by its relationship with the other, a relationship whose essence is distance and difference: thus, the prisoner's body would have to be experienced *by* the prisoner as a body-as-perceived, a body *for* the distant observer; while the observer's being would be reduced to a single function, the-being-who-observes-*me*-from-afar" (*Madness and Modernism: Insanity in the Light of Modern Art, Literature, and Thought* 252-53).

[99] As a case in point, references to the Cold War era and Russia are quite clear in the following: "A professor of physics now joined in. He was a so-called Pink, who believed in what so-called Pinks believe in (Progressive Education, the Integrity of anyone spying for Russia, Fall-outs occasioned solely by US-made bombs, the existence in the near past of a McCarthy Era, Soviet achievements including *Dr. Zhivago*, and so forth)" (Nabokov 154).

subjectivized universe that is nevertheless devoid of any sense of subjectivity by which it might be anchored or constituted" (*Madness and Modernism: Insanity in the Light of Modern Art, Literature, and Thought* 304). Building upon the concept of "double-bookkeeping," *Pale Fire* is a fiction that represents itself as self-referential paradoxes.

As surveillance is a key mechanism in the Cold War era, a discussion of Michel Foucault's concept of the Panopticon with its implications, as put forward in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (original publication in 1975 and English publication in 1977) helps to illuminate the effects of surveillance. The Panopticon was a prison building designed by Jeremy Bentham, in the eighteenth century, the idea of which Foucault takes and uses as a metaphor for disciplinary institutions in modern society. Bentham's Panopticon is a circular prison building with a watchtower at the centre from which a watchman is able to monitor the inmates' actions, but it is covered with glass (glazed) in such a way that the inmates cannot see the inside. The effect is that as the inmates cannot see inside the tower, they can never be certain whether they are watched or not and therefore feel they might be under scrutiny at any time. As Foucault describes it:

> Each individual, in his [*sic*] place, is securely confined to a cell from which he is seen from the front by the supervisor; but the side walls prevent him from coming into contact with his companions. He is seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject in communication. The arrangement of his room, opposite the central tower, imposes on him an axial visibility; but the divisions of the ring, those separated cells, imply a lateral invisibility. (200)

The consequence of this mechanism is that the person under scrutiny internalises these power relations and becomes both the observer and the observed. As Foucault specifies, "[h]e who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the

constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection" (202-3). Those under surveillance soon come to survey themselves.

Foucault's analysis of the concept of the Panopticon is picked up and extended to the schizophrenic condition by Sass in *Madness and Modernism*. The result of living under constant surveillance, produced by the Panopticon, is that one becomes unable to discern the difference between one's own consciousness and the other's. The self observes the self. Sass expands upon some of the paradoxes that this Panopticon system generates, which Foucault never refers to. As he stipulates:

> Such a system will force one to experience oneself *both* as the body that feels itself observed . . . and also as the watcher who feels like a pure and omniscient consciousness. But oddly enough, while the prisoner is in one sense both observer and observed, in another sense he cannot truly identify with either of these polarized roles (that is, either with a bodily self-presence or with an observing consciousness). (*Madness and Modernism: Insanity in the Light of Modern Art, Literature, and Thought* 252)

What happens is a split in the person's personality, a feature of schizophrenia, due to a state of hyper-consciousness (hyper-awareness) which in turn is the result of this inner panopticism.

The policy of the containment culture functions as a panopticon which makes citizens internalise relations of power – citizens spying on other citizens or feeling of beings spied upon by others and constantly being monitored. Self-consciousness is a way or a strategy towards freedom through de-centralisation of power. About panopticism, Sass holds that "[p]aradoxically enough, this situation may even give rise to a sense of freedom in the

prisoner – the freedom of a self bent on scrutinizing and subduing a 'lower' or more objectified part of its own being" (252). Indeed, schizophrenia is a product of hyper-reflexivity and an attempt to de-centralise power. Instead of being some kind of regression into delirium, it is a product of hyper-reflection; or put differently, it is reflection upon reflection. *Pale Fire* raises the question of self-reflection in that self-reflection is a kind of endless wall of mirrors. Thus, rather than establishing a kind of primary reality in a more solid sense it is dissolved and the person cannot get to a base reality. Because of this hyper-awareness, thoughts/feelings/sensations which actually emanate from the person's consciousness are projected and thrown into the world; therefore, they seem distanced and alienated, as though not belonging to the person anymore.

Nabokov's novel is just such a reflection on authorship and of the relation between the author and the critic and the created world. Both the writer and critic are actually presented as mad. They are both suffering from delusions, but Kinbote's is the classic delusional disorder in terms of psychopathology. He thinks he is being hunted down and has acquired grandiose ideas about his past. He has an exaggerated sense of significance, common among paranoid schizophrenic patients. Considering himself to be the former king of Zembla, Charles the Beloved, on the one hand, and the muse who enabled Shade to compose around a thousand lines in just three weeks, all fit the grandiose type of delusional disorder, which is frequently observed among paranoid schizophrenic patients. Yet, one might wonder what kind of beloved he was if the people revolted against him and he had to escape and live a secret life. His claim to have been an intimate friend of a famous poet, Shade, is also indicative of having grandiose delusions. The description of the grandiose type of delusion reveals how it tellingly fits Kinbote's condition:

> This subtype applies when the central theme of the delusion is the conviction of having some great (but unrecognized) talent or insight or having made some

> important discovery. Less commonly, the individual may have the delusion of having a special relationship with a prominent person (e.g., an adviser to the President) or being a prominent person (in which case the actual person may be regarded as an impostor). Grandiose delusions may have a religious content (e.g., the person believes that he or she has a special message from a deity). (Association 297)

Kinbote's hijacking of Shade's poem through his comments – which are mainly irrelevant to the poem itself – is a strategy to fit the poem to his own constituted delusional world as a result of delusion of grandiosity. Surely here, Nabokov is poking fun at the maniacal appropriations of the authorial text in the hands of the deluded critic. Kinbote uses the poem to give validity to his solipsistic fantasy. Almost all his comments on the poem swerve away from the text to his own fantasy as when he relates the image of a waxwing to the time when he was staring at birds in New Wye (Nabokov 63). The majority of his commentary is actually centred upon himself (megalomania). Therefore, Nabokov is introducing the paradoxes of self-reference. Throughout are many self-referring paradoxes that keep breaking down into each other. It is a fiction that represents itself continuously as a series of interlinked self-referential paradoxes. In addition, Kinbote repeatedly expresses his belief in divinity. The idea of being a medium, receiving and delivering a special message from a deity (or alternatively muse) shows itself in the novel with regards to Kinbote's claim to be Shade's muse with the implication that the poem "Pale Fire" is the projection of Kinbote's self. Of his childhood experience, Kinbote says:

> Once, three decades ago, in my tender and terrible boyhood, I had the occasion of seeing a man in the act of making contact with God. I had wandered into the so-called Rose Court at the back of the Ducal Chapel in my native Onhava, during an interval in hymnal practice. As I mooned there, lifting and cooling

> my bare calves by turns against a smooth column, I could hear the distant sweet voices interblending in subdued boyish merriment which some chance grudge, some jealous annoyance with one particular lad, prevented me from joining. (74-5)

Hazel's uncanny experience of visiting ghosts shows Kinbote's preoccupation with the idea. Shade's daughter, Hazel, calls up the ghosts of the dead before she dies, an event which, again, raises the question of whether the writer is a kind of medium.

But there is a further type of delusional disorder which perfectly applies to Kinbote and that is the persecutory type. The paranoid fear of living under constant suspicion reveals itself as paranoia of existence in a different way and is substantialised in an assassin called Gradus (Jack Grey). The persecutory type of delusional disorder "applies when the central theme of the delusion involves the person's belief that he or she is being conspired against, cheated, spied on, followed, poisoned or drugged, maliciously maligned, harassed, or obstructed in the pursuit of long-term goals" (Association 298). In Kinbote's delusional constituted universe, elements like Gradus could be read as a symbolic reification of his own delusions in his inner panopticism, and possibly even of Nabokov's too. Although they seem to be external threats, Gradus and all other elements, like Shade's wife Sybil, which seem to pose a threat to Kinbote might be the embodiment and reification of his own altered consciousness which is now detached from him and therefore not realised as belonging to him. Kinbote feels his identity and agency as the most significant person in the creation of "Pale Fire" stolen from him by Sybil and he tells a story in order to justify why he is not referred to in the poem:

> Not only did I understand *then* that Shade regularly read to Sybil cumulative parts of his poem but it also dawns upon me now that, just as regularly, she made him tone down or remove from his Fair Copy everything connected with

> the magnificent Zemblan theme with which I kept furnishing him and which, without knowing much about the growing work, I fondly believed would become the main rich thread in its weave! (Nabokov 77)

If your sense of agency diminishes then you start to feel that your life is being controlled by other people. The fear of the loss of identity and agency – and of being completely controlled by someone else – causes Kinbote to create Zembla as a compensatory power within a fictional world because of the loss of power, paranoid loss of agency, in the real world outside the work of art. This constant state of hyperconsciousness (hyper-awareness), which is common in the schizophrenic and solipsist, results in depersonalisation. The schizophrenic solipsist is no longer able to recognise the product of his/her own consciousness but attributes it to an outsider. This situation might be extended to the relation between Shade and Kinbote, on the one hand, and to Nabokov on the other, in that both characters constitute Nabokov's selves: one as a writer being observed and the other as an observer, the critic. Nabokov himself was both a writer and an academic, an immigrant with a sense of being an outsider who lived in a different place from that of his origins and wrote in a second language. Kinbote's condition reflects upon the life of those who live as outsiders, dissidents, under the containment culture in the US. It is a condition that begins with a sense of "self-consciousness and hyperscrutiny through self-alienation and solipsism, and on to the dissolution of both self and the world" (Sass *Madness and Modernism: Insanity in the Light of Modern Art, Literature, and Thought* 323).

Thus, this problematic of the writer-critic relationship links the novel to questions of authorship and who the author is in the context of a specific time and place: the Cold War America in the 1950s, its world of letters threatened by political control and its dominant modes of literary criticism avowedly formalist and apolitical and objectivist (New Criticism). As an academic, a literary critic, Kinbote not only hijacks Shade's poem but also enters, and

participates in, the act of creation itself. This echoes the antagonism between the writer and the critic, which came to a critical juncture in the academy at this moment. As David Lodge suggests, "[a]cademic criticism is the demonstration of a professional mastery" ("Literary Criticism and Literary Creation" 98) and an opportunity for critics at times to "draw attention to their own eloquence" (100). In a sense Kinbote is, or considers himself to be, a Romantic author. His comments, together with the poem "Pale Fire" which consists of the novel that we can attribute to Kinbote himself, is an attempt to constantly refer back to the person who wrote it, for almost every element in his writing is a reference to Kinbote's imagination. Once again, everything refers back to Kinbote himself, and that as an academic critic he seeks to kill, to overmaster Shade's poem. (One might suggest that the writer-critic relationship is also split in Nabokov himself.) However, the paradox of self-reference undermines the proposition of the content of the statement. Whereas Kinbote regards himself as the muse to Shade's poem and therefore introduces Shade as a medium, "Pale Fire" is a poem about Shade's development as a poet but is written in a more eighteenth-century heroic couplet style. The poem is similar in content to Wordsworth's *The Prelude* (1850) in which he describes the process of his poetic development and experiences. The idea of the autobiographic poem is more a Romantic one and yet Shade does not write in the Romantic mode but in a New Classical style. The latter distances the authorial voice while the former is a personal voice. Nabokov plays off both modes and concepts – the mirror concept of authorship and the expressive concept – against each other.

Kinbote's comments upon the poem that are references to people and events outside of the text are a parody of the explication-of-the-text criticism (close reading, New Criticism turned populist and ruthless) or what T. S. Eliot in an essay in 1956 calls by way of ridicule, "the lemon-squeezer school of criticism" (537). The Formalist emphasis that the critic should only focus upon the text leads to the critic projecting his/her own imagination onto the text.

According to the idea of criticism as itself creative, put forward by Lodge, the critic adds "the product of the critic's own ingenuity, wit, and resourcefulness in the exercise of semantic freeplay" ("Literary Criticism and Literary Creation" 104). Nabokov's critique of the New Criticism's creed that the text should only be studied in its immediate textual context is best manifested in Kinbote's negligence of the poem's autobiographical references and intention. As Michael Wood notes, "Kinbote has literally, arrantly, stolen the poem . . . and metaphorically stolen it too, since he wants to endow it with a meaning which is all his own" (180). Indeed, Nabokov raises and induces the topic of such kinds of close reading as a kind of paranoid activity because the reader too is looking for a complete interpretation while projecting meaning onto the text as a kind of defensive strategy. On the other hand, the author becomes paranoid that the critic is stealing not just his work but himself. That is, if the author has a Romantic understanding of the text as being him/her or part of him/her, then the critic is killing him/her. The paranoid projects himself onto the world and sees the world in a way that accords with his vision (control), but then starts to doubt if that world exists and needs someone outside of it to affirm it, as does Kinbote.

Nabokov often presents the artist as a fragile figure in a professionalised corporate world, struggling for his existence. He is a kind of endless ironist who seems as if he is pitching against the corporate world and then defending something like the Romantic imagination; but then he is also sending up the writer who goes around thinking of himself in terms of the Romantic "egotistical sublime" (Keats). Consequently, neither agency nor authority can be attributed to Kinbote or Shade: has Kinbote created Shade? Or has Shade been written and created both? Or has Kinbote created both? Or whether Nabokov has created both as projected parts of his own split selves as a displaced author/critic? This is the actual practice of what Barthes later on theorises: "writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin" ("The Death of the Author" 146).

Chapter 4: The Novel in the Age of Risk Society

Globalisation and Risk Society

This thesis has examined a range of novels (*The Driver's Seat*, *The Bell Jar*, *The Golden Notebook*, *The French Lieutenant's Women*, *Pale Fire* and *The Unnamable* as well as a selection of short stories from Borges' *Labyrinths*), looking at ways in which the metafictional novel from the late 1950s foregrounded questions of authorship well before the rise of the more formal theoretical debate that arose out of the linguistic turn in criticism of the High Theory period in the 1970s and 80s. This chapter will examine novels post-dating that moment of High Theory, in order to gauge the direction of authorship debates within fiction in the late twentieth century and after. From the 1990s, increasingly, global crises, terrorist threat, environmental tipping points and economic insecurity produced a demand for a new seriousness on the part of the writer, a new sincerity in the novel, the end of postmodern playfulness and the demise of self-reflexivity. David Foster Wallace notes that the present risks are different from those of the postmodern. As he puts it, "[t]he old postmodern insurgents risked the gasp and squeal: shock, disgust, outrage, censorship, accusations of socialism, anarchism, nihilism. Today's risks are different. 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'" ("E Unibus Pluram Television and U.S. Fiction" 193). More so than in the 70s and 80s, a new global risk society is normativised. For the so-called post-theory world also produced a new "trauma" and wound culture, the post 9/11 war on Terror, a crisis of national borders and security and increasing numbers of refugees fleeing war zones, abandoning homes and citizen rights. Questions around authorship and the death of the author per se begin to seem narcissistic and self-involved and move from the foreground of literary theory as discourses of ecological disaster, precarity, fragility and the

new risk society become more urgent and compelling. But the question of authorship remains: who might an author aspire to be within the context of this new culture, this newest post-postmodernism?

The new mediated, technologised and economically globalised world has been described as one of anxiety, risk, fragility and precariousness by a new generation of theorists (among them Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer* (1995), Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt's *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (2004) and Ulrich Beck's *Risk Society* (1992) and *What Is Globalization?* (originally published in 1997)). Roger Luckhurst in *The Trauma Question* (2008) traces the trajectory of the concept of trauma from the 1860s to the emergence of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in 1980, suggesting that "trauma" is now a key concept in constructions of the Western conception of selfhood. Examining "the transmissibility of traumatic affect" (8, 13), Luckhurst suggests how trauma was originally "an effect of the rise, in the nineteenth century, of the technological and statistical society that can generate, multiply and quantify the 'shocks' of modern life" (19). In other words, modernisation, with its industrialised technology, has generated global side effects now beyond the control of human beings. Ulrich Beck, developing the idea of a "risk society," in *Risk Society* (1986, trans. 1992), *World Risk Society* (1999) and *World at Risk* (2009), examines how the risk society has created the condition of uncertainty that its technologies were intended to alleviate. Modernisation, with its unforeseeable hazards and risks now affects and jeopardises all of humanity around the globe. As he defines it:

> By risks, I mean above all radioactivity, which completely evades human perceptive abilities, but also toxins and pollutants in the air, the water and foodstuffs, together with the accompanying short- and long-term effects on plants, animals and people. They induce systematic and often irreversible harm, generally remain *invisible*, are based on *causal interpretations*, and thus

> initially only exist in terms of the (scientific or anti-scientific) *knowledge* about them. (22-3)

Such hazards, even if unintended, are the manufactured and self-induced consequences of modern industrial society: global warming (due to human produced CO_2), financial crises (such as the global financial crisis of 2007-8), environmental pollution (the Love Canal disaster rising to its catastrophic climax in 1978 and The Deepwater Horizon oil spill in 2010) and nuclear accidents such as Chernobyl (1986). Each of these has had disastrous consequences that go beyond a particular place and time and into the unforeseeable future: gene mutations, for example, that will pass on to future generations, and are of such magnitude and catastrophic scale that they may endanger the human race.[100]

Beck argues that a shift has occurred in the nature of hazard since 1980. During the earlier industrial period, conflicts occurred over the distribution of wealth, but in the risk society (after 1980) most human conflicts are bound up with distribution of risks themselves: who is subject to what risk is what is at stake now. He calls this society a "risk-distributing" one (20). This has led, he maintains, to the rise of a new set of global inequalities (46). Here lies his distinction between dangers and risks, for the former is caused by nature, the latter, increasingly, by human beings (giving rise to the concept of The Anthropocene); risks are now what is manufactured (19). A new modernity – in which everything (social relations and institutions) is individually chosen – has replaced the previous "classic" model. Hence, Beck's distinction "between classical and reflexive modernisation" (11). As he puts it, "[*j*]*ust as modernization dissolved the structure of feudal society in the nineteenth century and produced the industrial society, modernization today is dissolving industrial society and another modernity is coming into being*" (10). Climate change that threatens the globe's eco-systems is now reaching a tipping point, but still driven by human interventions. Like the

[100] Beck argues that "if you distinguish between calculable and non-calculable threats, under the surface of risk calculation new kinds of *industrialized, decision-produced incalculabilities and threats* are spreading within the globalization of high-risk industries, whether for warfare or welfare purposes" (22).

production of genetically modified foods, the catastrophic consequences of such changes are not completely predictable. Human societies are no longer able to contain or mitigate many of these risks and only now are we coming to terms with the legacy of unbridled modernisation founded on the concept of economic (capitalist) growth.[101]

Like the transition from industrial modern society – or to use Beck's terminology, classical modernisation – from an age of scientific prediction to that of manufactured risks and uncertainties generated by more globalised modernisation, there has occurred too a shift from an era of theory as praxis to an era of therapy for vulnerability and pathology. The sociologist Frank Furedi – in *Therapy Culture* (2004) – has taken up Beck's argument, portraying a world whose inhabitants now conceive themselves primarily as 'at risk' and vulnerable and seek solace through the new "army of counsellors" and therapists that now outnumber most other professions in the US, as well as the plethora of reality TV shows with their confessional parade of private psychological problems as a means of entertainment.[102] Furedi views the excessive emphasis on therapy, however, as a new means of social control within the risk society. Therapy persuades individuals that their problems are innate and not socially produced. Popularised concepts such as being at "risk," "scarred for life" and "emotional damaged" reflect the new vulnerability as a giving over of individual and collective agency to a beleaguered state. As people come to see themselves increasingly as at risk and vulnerable, they are more convinced that their problems require medical intervention rather than political solutions. Under such conditions, "[e]veryone complains endlessly of

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[101] As Beck observes, "[m]odernization is becoming reflexive; it is becoming its own theme" (19). Other people who are investigating similar themes are Didier Fassin, Richard Rechtman in *The Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry into the Condition of Victimhood* (2009), Frank Furedi in *Culture of Fear: Risk Taking and the Morality of Low Expectation* (1997), *Therapy Culture* (2003), *The Politics of Fear* (2005) and *Invitation to Terror* (2007) – to name just a few – Zygmunt Bauman in *A Chronicle of Crisis: 2011-2016* (2017), Anthony Giddens and Scott Lash, the last two along with Ulrich Beck endorse the idea of reflexive modernisation. As a case in point, Giddens in *Turbulent and Mighty Continent* (2013) acknowledges that we are now living in a "high opportunity, high risk society" as a result of globalisation and technological advancements (14) and speaks of the problems the integration of European countries into the EU has caused. As Giddens puts it, "it is right to agonize about specters that lurk in wait should the EU start to disintegrate" (2).

[102] The TV show Dr. Phil (starting in 2002) is exemplary in that Dr. Phil brings a private case to the public (a show with million audiences) and almost always puts the blame on the guest for any problem that exists.

being 'stressed' and every difficult or challenging experience is read as 'traumatic'" (Waugh "The Novel as Therapy: Ministrations of Voice in an Age of Risk" 46). As Furedi argues, "the fundamental premise of therapeutic culture . . . is that the individual self is defined by its vulnerability" and therefore "contemporary culture valorizes the help-seeking self" (107). Furedi's main argument is that the risk society has led to the rise of therapy culture.[103]

Anthony Giddens too has criticised this fallout from the risk society: "security may quite often be furthered more by an active embrace of risk than by attempts to reduce or avoid it" (95). Because the world is more and more globalised and therefore complex and as the therapy culture continues its emphasis on the separation of the private and the public, it becomes almost impossible for individuals rationally to predict future risks. Consequently, people are convinced that their problems are internal and so demand ever more professionalised intervention. Furedi suggests that almost any less than optimal state – boredom, anger, sadness – is now medicalised and targeted for medical intervention: we are, all of us, becoming "cases." The outcome is "that the escalating dysfunction that is the fallout of global risk society is experienced and represented as privatised and interior" (Waugh "The Novel as Therapy: Ministrations of Voice in an Age of Risk" 45). Rather than collective political action, the only remedy is medication or talk therapy.

A new concept of authorship emerges in this more globalised and fragile new risk therapy culture for it produces pressures on novelists not only to embrace the New Sincerity but to return to the old eighteenth-century ideals of the novelist as a purveyor of moral sentiment within the new version of liberal economics. The novelist is seen to have a new responsibility, contemporaneous with the rise of Risk Society appears the pressure to redefine authorship for a new globalised Risk world. From the 1980s on writers – such as Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), Philip Roth's *American Pastoral* (1997), Paul Auster's

[103] Blake Morrison summarises Furedi's main argument that "[a]s the old hierarchies have collapsed, so people have become more demanding – and in their drive towards self-improvement look to therapy for relief" ("Pull yourself together!").

Sunset Park (2010), J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999) and *Elizabeth Costello* (2003) and Hilary Mantel's *Beyond Black* (2005), who consciously examine authorship within their fictions – have attempted to pick up on the authorial self-reflections of the earlier novelists examined here such as Beckett, Nabokov and Spark. But they do so to carry their ethical concerns into a new reconsideration of the function of authorship and the role of the novel in the new and differently fragmented, precarious, globalised risk society. New questions are raised concerning the moral and social function of the novel and the role of the writer as a medium for the many voices of this new heterogeneous and distributed world of risk: the writer, in this new age, is a person with ethical responsibility, a builder of alternative worlds and imaginary homelands.

Beyond Postmodernism: The New Sincerity and Metamodernism

A significant number of fictions in the contemporary era, or risk society, are highly suggestive of a return of the author, albeit a re-emergence characterised by fresh preoccupations: the author-function as a medium, or conduit, of different cultural centres, which strive to bring about change for the better in the new globalised, risk economy. This new author feels an incumbent ethical responsibility to bring about positive change, opposing what is perceived as a prevailing apathy and cynicism in postmodern ironic life and fiction.[104] In other words, some artists and thinkers have come to ask "What next?" once the illusions and assumptions, upon which Western culture rests, have been laid bare, debunked, and punctured. They do not regard the postmodern phase (including the practices of deconstruction) as adequate to address, cope with, and solve, the new phenomenon of

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[104] Arthur Rose expands on major examples of postmodern cynicism in *Literary Cynics: Borges, Beckett, Coetzee* (2017). Postmodern cynicism, as he delineates, means a total incredulity of post-war writers – such as the late style of Beckett, Borges and Coetzee – towards any ultimate truth and value or "the denial of any ultimate basis in values" as he says, quoting Coetzee (7).

globalisation and its risky, threatening consequences.[105] They argue that the dominant sense of ironic detachment (hence, apathy) and cynicism, which results from postmodernism, has leaked into public life and mass culture – an occurrence which has not only failed to change the world for the better, but has instead given impetus to its very decadence.[106] Hence, the emergence of a new authorial style and sensibility as a means of coping with this dominant cynical, apathetic, and ethically detached, postmodern mode of life.[107]

A Postmodernist ethos can be defined in terms of apathy, or, to use Wampole's phrase, "diligent apathy," ironic detachment, carelessness, and being "too brainlessly compliant" to avoid complicity ("How to Live without Irony"). These qualities are most prominently embodied in the lifestyle of the hipster, who is prototypical of postmodern ironic life (self-defensive behaviour, inwardness, narcissism, and cynicism). Critiquing what she later calls "the surplus of apolitical irony in a certain segment of American culture," Wampole stresses that this amount of apolitical irony is dangerous ("How to Live without Irony (for Real, This Time)") – irony has leaked from rhetoric into life and has come to predominate.[108] Yet, Wampole also remarks, our globalised world is now more at risk with hazards and elements which are not at all ironic: "fundamentalists," "dictators," and all who make changes to the world which are not ironic ("How to Live without Irony").

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[105] Christy Wampole (2016) acknowledges postmodernism and deconstruction as an inevitable necessity of its own time, a means to fight against fascism and dogmatism yet warns against its continuation due to the potential danger: cynicism. As she puts it, "[i]t is essential, however, to make sure that the good kind of seriousness – steady, good-hearted, good-willed – does not slide back into moral smugness or certainty, and that the fascistic thinking and dogmatism against which we retaliated with irony does not become our own signature. If we do, and trust our 'saving instincts', we could potentially avoid lapsing into the dangerous cynicism that characterized our most recent Age of Irony" ("How to Live without Irony (for Real, This Time)").

[106] Hannah Arendt's *oeuvre* focuses mainly on the necessity of an informed, ethically and politically responsible individual. Her "Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship" (1964) is a case in point that without complicitous individuals, the Nazi would not have succeeded that much. She criticises "the total collapse of normal moral standards" ("Personal Responsibility under Dictatorship" 34) and lack of ethical responsible individuals as the main cause of the rise and survival of the German Nazi regime.

[107] In 2016, Rob Horning views a link between apathetical detachment and the rise of fascism. As he argues, "[t]he flourishing of fascism has depended on that sense of inevitability, that sense of futility, that sense of fuck it, and fascists will be quick to leverage technology to deepen the pervasive sense that one can experience power only by surrendering to it" (Horning).

[108] In *The Other Serious: Essays for the New American Generation* (2015), Wampole argues that this aspect of American culture (that is, ironic living) has seeped into the public mind, thanks to the flourishing of different sorts of media like the internet.

Irony, as the argument goes, has failed to address and ameliorate the (political) flaws of society, which have had large-scale global effects. Thus, irony, as it stands, is not only useless but also detrimental, since its self-defensive mechanisms help people to avoid their socio-political responsibility.[109] This, in turn, as Wampole suggests, has been exacerbated by the emergence of the internet, which has also contributed to an atmosphere of irresponsible political and ethical avoidance and detachment, as our face-to-face interactions have diminished. Given that those in power are not ironists, they have been able to successfully exploit the authority which they have accrued (thanks to the indifference of the mob, which lacks the seriousness necessary to regain agency, control and power). "A certain kind of seriousness," Wampole continues, "is the *precondition* for the ascent to power. It is hard to imagine someone who has taken on the veil of irony holding a powerful role in any government" (Wampole "How to Live without Irony (for Real, This Time)"). In other words, it is all about who holds power: ironists do not, and will continue to fail in any effort to do so.

Thus, society's failure – for instance to prevent wars, such as that in Iraq, or the ascent to power of Donald Trump – must arise from this sense of detachment and languid apathy, since almost all democratic means (such as running campaigns, putting pressure on representatives in parliaments, etc.), through which to get people actively engaged in the political process, still remain available. In other words, to people like Wampole or David Foster Wallace, the postmodern ethos seems to have failed. Hence, a call for a wake up from the ironic dream and stupor as well as the need for an alternative good to be expressed, since there must be "a reason to unnumb oneself from the stupor of dumb media and listicle listlessness" (Wampole "How to Live without Irony (for Real, This Time)"). That reason must be that there are values which need to be defended. Accordingly, the alternative to this

[109] In *The Other Serious*, Wampole similarly argues that because people no longer rely on, or believe in, institutions – such as church and the government – that once functioned as stable grounds, the young generation has turned to ironic living to avoid any confrontation with problems in society.

apathetic, ironic life and culture, is serious engagement and commitment within political life, or what Wampole calls a "joyfully serious life" ("The Other Serious" 225).

Early critiques of the dominance of an ironic mode of culture, and the attempt to find an alternative pattern of existence, were made as early as the 1980s, by what have come to be known as The New Sincerity artists, and most notably by David Foster Wallace. In his influential interview with Larry MacCaffery, in 1993, he expresses what would become the tenets of The New Sincerity movement, arguing that postmodern aesthetics (irony, self-consciousness, cynicism, and anarchy) have excessively leaked into, and been absorbed by, the commercial culture of America. This rampant mode has turned out to have drastic, venomous consequences and repercussions. He suggests that this can be seen anywhere, even "in fucking Rush Limbaugh" – the direct, indignant tone with which Foster Wallace expresses this sentiment is indicative of his own commitment to the sincerity he preaches (McCaffery and Wallace 48). He goes on to explain that while irony (in a general sense, including parody, sarcasm, etc.) does offer a necessary means of unmasking reality and disclosing illusions, what postmodernism crucially lacks is the subsequent step, the offering of a solution. Without that step, it has merely fallen into the tautology of repeated ridicule. As he states:

> [M]ost of the illusion-debunking in the U.S. has now been done and redone. Once everybody knows that equality of opportunity is bunk and Mike Brady's bunk and Just Say No is bunk, now what do we do? All we seem to want to do is keep ridiculing the stuff. Postmodern irony and cynicism's become an end in itself, a measure of hip sophistication and literary savvy. Few artists dare to try to talk about ways of working toward redeeming what's wrong, because they'll look sentimental and naive to all the weary ironists. Irony's gone from

> liberating to enslaving. There's some great essay somewhere that has a line about irony being the song of the prisoner who's come to love his cage. (48-9)

The rampant hypocrisy of the 1950s and 60s resulted in a need for irony to disclose the illusion and duplicity which lay beneath the surface. For Foster Wallace, this is "what made the early postmodernists great artists" (48). This postmodern legacy, however, has also bequeathed to us "a terrible penchant for ironic diagnosis of unpleasantness," rather than any sincere attempt to "redeem" (49). The problem with postmodern aesthetics, as he suggests, is then, "So what?" His critique of postmodernism is that it has shifted from being a transitional means of disclosure, into an end in itself – one which does not have any ameliorating function, and is therefore merely poisonous to society.

Implying a kind of Oedipus complex, Foster Wallace suggests that the writers of our time must undertake an act of patricide and replace their postmodern parents, likening the necessity of such an undertaking to a party when our parents are away. According to Foster Wallace's analogy, we keep revelling, getting drunk and getting high on drugs; the whole house becomes a total mess and when it gets to be early morning, we wish the party would end, and that our parents would return to "restore some fucking order" (52). But we know that they will not. Therefore, we have to face that fact and acknowledge that "'we're' going to have to be the parents" (52). Put simply, his maxim is that we should not be orphans anymore but must rather fashion a new order. Yet, such an undertaking seems a vicious cycle, since when you become parents, and take on a position of authority, you create a need for that very authority and order to be challenged – any demand for unquestioned, unaccountable, and absolute authority, would only lead to fascistic thinking and structures.

In "E Unibus Pluram: Television and U.S. Fiction" (1993), Wallace complains that fiction writers are only watchers who lurk behind irony.[110] They are only oglers who love to watch others but hate to be watched in return. He argues that TV has the same effect and spirit, in that its audience is comprised of watchers engaged in a non-reciprocal practice towards those who are being watched, and hence they derive a feeling of security in not being seen. He also suggests fiction writers "tend to be terribly self-conscious" and thus calls for, and proposes, a new style of fiction that would replace the overriding, self-reflexive, ironic detachment of postmodernist art ("E Unibus Pluram Television and U.S. Fiction" 151). For Foster Wallace, postmodernist fiction is only an ironic commentary upon the hollowness of contemporary culture, and is thus inherently insufficient in itself, since it is the very emptiness which it identifies which has to be filled and recovered. Therefore, he seeks remedy in a style of writing which could obviate or redeem the prevailing vapidity and cynicism of contemporary (American) culture. He calls for new literary rebels, and anticipates a new generation of writers who will depart from ironic detachment and champion sincerely held values:

> The next real literary "rebels" in this country might well emerge as some weird bunch of "anti-rebels," born oglers who dare to back away from ironic watching, who have the childish gall actually to endorse single-entendre values. Who treat old untrendy human troubles and emotions in U.S. life with reverence and conviction. Who eschew self-consciousness and fatigue. These anti-rebels would be outdated, of course, before they even started. Too sincere. Clearly repressed. ("E Unibus Pluram Television and U.S. Fiction" 192-93)

[110] Wallace begins his long essay by implicitly accusing fiction writers (of his time) of being nonchalant oglers: "Fiction writers as a species tend to be oglers. They tend to lurk and to stare. The minute fiction writers stop moving, they start lurking, and stare. They are born watchers. They are viewers. They are the ones on the subway about whose nonchalant stare there is something creepy, somehow. Almost predatory. This is because human situations are writers' food. Fiction writers watch other humans sort of the way gapers slow down for car wrecks: they covet a vision of themselves as witnesses" ("E Unibus Pluram Television and U.S. Fiction" 151).

This new generation of writers is called upon to be committed to fighting against apathetic torpor and the cynicism that oozes into every aspect of culture. And the first step in this challenge is to depart from postmodernist ironic ridicule, which he regards as "agents of a great despair and stasis in U.S. culture, and that for aspiring fictionists they pose terrifically vexing problems" ("E Unibus Pluram Television and U.S. Fiction" 171). He acknowledges that such writers should be brave enough to risk the accusations and ridicule of the ogling ironists.[111]

Writing in support of Wallace, in "David Foster Wallace was right: Irony is ruining our culture" (2014), Matt Ashby and Brendan Carroll likewise suggest that contemporary, popular culture, has been afflicted by postmodern apathetic cynicism and irony. While they suggest that in the era of the Vietnam War such a stance was justified, irony was subsequently co-opted by TV in the 1990s, and its widespread, afflicting nihilism, has been felt in every corner of popular culture, and especially in commercials.[112] As they state, once "irony served to reveal hypocrisies, but now it simply acknowledges one's cultural compliance and familiarity with pop trends. The art of irony has lost its vision and its edge. The rebellious posture of the past has been annexed by the very commercialism it sought to defy" (Ashby and Carroll). Consequently, and in a similar vein to Foster Wallace, they call for the emergence of responsible, committed artists, who are both ironic yet sincere, capable of fashioning an artwork which can reconstruct and rebuild:

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[111] In Wallace's own words, "[t]he new rebels might be the ones willing to risk the yawn, the rolled eyes, the cool smile, the nudged ribs, the parody of gifted ironists, the 'How banal'. Accusations of sentimentality, melodrama. Credulity. Willingness to be suckered by a world of lurkers and starers who fear gaze and ridicule above imprisonment without law" ("E Unibus Pluram Television and U.S. Fiction" 193).

[112] The writers give an example of a commercial in which Andre Agassi endorses Canon's "Rebel" brand. In their own words: "In the commercial, the hard-hitting, wiseass Agassi smashed tennis balls loaded with paint to advertise Canon's 'Rebel' brand camera. The ad wraps with Agassi standing in front of a Pollockesque canvas saying 'Image is everything'. For all the world, it seemed rebellion had been usurped by commercialism" (Ashby and Carroll). Another example of irony's seep into the mass culture is an ad that urges hipsters to go to a restaurant and invites them to ridicule its food and atmosphere. It also adds a new food item to their menu which reads: "Like Mexico and France are the same country now?!? Served with a crappy salad, something kinda like guacamole, and 'Le Crème Sour' $9.95" ("New Ad Urges Hipsters to Go to Applebee's Ironically"). The commercials, it could be strongly argued, are indications of what Wampole calls a self-deprecating, self-defensive mechanism of irony: "No attack can be set against it [irony], as it has already conquered itself. The ironic frame functions as a shield against criticism" ("How to Live without Irony").

> Artists must take responsibility for finding the form to make our dreams real. They must assess a work as honestly as possible, seeking integrity. At one time, irony served to challenge the establishment; now it is the establishment. The art of irony has turned into ironic art. Irony for irony's sake. A smart aleck making bomb noises in front of a city in ruins. But irony without a purpose enables cynicism. It stops at disavowal and destruction, fearing strong conviction is a mark of simplicity and delusion. But we can remake the world. (Ashby and Carroll)

They proceed to offer examples of such sincere art, which, while being ironic, are still redemptive, including novels such as Marilynne Robinson's *Gilead* (2004), Mary Gaitskill's *Veronica* (2005), and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006).

Similar concerns are also present throughout an essay entitled "Notes on Metamodernism" (2010), which offers a detailed survey of the key critical concepts surrounding contemporary art. In response to Linda Hutcheon's call for a label, Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker propose the term metamodernism as a means of characterising the contemporary zeitgeist, drawing upon the Latin origin of "meta" as in-between or middle-ground.[113] Such art, they argue, oscillates between two opposing poles of modernist and postmodernist aesthetics, between fanaticism and irony, between apathy and enthusiasm, between self-conscious cynical detachment and naiveté; hence, the prefix

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[113] As Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker put it, "[a]ccording to the Greek-English Lexicon the prefix 'meta' refers to such notions as 'with', 'between', and 'beyond'. We will use these connotations of 'meta' in a similar, yet not indiscriminate fashion. For we contend that metamodernism should be situated epistemologically *with* (post) modernism, ontologically *between* (post) modernism, and historically beyond (post) modernism" (2). Also, the essay seems to be inspired by Linda Hutcheon's yearning for a new label for what comes after postmodernism. In the epilogue to the second edition of *The Politics of Postmodernism* (2002), Hutcheon articulates that "[t]he postmodern moment has passed, even if its discursive strategies and its ideological critique continue to live on – as do those of modernism – in our contemporary twenty-first-century world. Literary historical categories like modernism and postmodernism are, after all, only heuristic labels that we create in our attempts to chart cultural changes and continuities. Post-postmodernism needs a new label of its own, and I conclude, therefore, with this challenge to readers to find it – and name it for the twenty-first century" (*The Politics of Postmodernism* 181).

meta.[114] Noting how the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have been characterised by a prevailing human failure which has disrupted our ecosystem, they identify a new tendency amongst contemporary artists toward "*aesth-ethical* notions of reconstruction," whose emergence could not be expressed in terms of postmodernist aesthetics (2). As the dash in "aesth-ethical" implies, there is an ethical dimension to such tendencies, a commitment which was lacking in the postmodern due to its incredulity towards all metanarratives, including ethics. This new structure of feeling or sensibility "is characterized by the oscillation between a typically modern commitment and a markedly postmodern detachment" (2).[115] Although the exact moment of the emergence of this metamodernist sensibility, and the end of postmodernism, is not easy to pin down, the writers identify those who have noticed and described this change, asserting that their goal is not to announce "that all postmodern tendencies are over," but that "many of them are taking another shape, and, more importantly, a new *sens*, a new meaning and direction" (4).[116]

[114] The oscillation, as Vermeulen and Akker elucidate, "is a pendulum swinging between 2, 3, 5, 10, innumerable poles. Each time the metamodern enthusiasm swings toward fanaticism, gravity pulls it back toward irony; the moment its irony sways toward apathy, gravity pulls it back toward enthusiasm" (6).

[115] The writers take the concept of oscillation between modernism and postmodernism from Jos de Mul's *Romantic Desire in (Post)modern Art and Philosophy* (1999) in which Mul notices the presence of the ambivalence of Romantic desire in our present culture which oscillates between postmodern irony and modern enthusiasm. This oscillation, as Mul notifies, is taken from Schlegel's definition of Romantic art (64) although he still calls it postmodern.

[116] Vermeulen and van den Akker notice that "[s]ome argue the postmodern has been put to an abrupt end by material events like climate change, financial crises, terror attacks, and digital revolutions. Others find that it has come to a more gradual halt by merit of less tangible developments, such as the appropriation of critique by the market and the integration of *différance* into mass culture. And yet others point to diverging models of identity politics, ranging from global postcolonialism to queer theory" (2-3). On the other hand, for Wampole "[t]hat Age of Irony ended abruptly on Nov. 9, 2016, when people in many of the irony-heavy communities . . . woke up to the sobering news of Donald J. Trump's victory, and perhaps a new reason to ditch the culture of sarcasm and self-infantilization" ("How to Live without Irony (for Real, This Time)"). Nevertheless, some would disagree with her as to the exact time it happens. Jonathan D. Fitzgerald in "Sincerity, Not Irony, Is Our Age's Ethos" (2012) reads Wampole's first essay critically. As he puts it, Wampole "notes that the New Sincerity has been around since the 1980s" but that it has failed. On the contrary, he asserts that the age of irony is not dead but the ethos of our age is described "as a joining of irony and sincerity" (Fitzgerald). Yet, *Altermodern: Tate Triennial 2009* is an occasion for Adrian Searle to announce that: "Postmodernism is dead, at least according to the Tate – and something altogether weirder has taken its place" (Searle). For the like of Edward Docx, it is September 2011 that they "can officially and definitively declare that postmodernism is dead . . . Because that is the date when the Victoria and Albert Museum opens what it calls 'the first comprehensive retrospective' in the world: 'Postmodernism – Style and Subversion 1970-1990'" (Docx). Likewise, Alan Kirby in "The Death of Postmodernism and Beyond" (2006) argues that postmodernism as a cultural period has been replaced by what he calls "pseudomodernism" (Kirby). In a similar vein, Raoul Eshelman in *Performatism, or the End of Postmodernism* (2009) explicates the tenets of what supersedes postmodernism which he calls performatism.

The main concern and commitment of this new sensibility is to make a change for the better. Vermeulen and Akker identify a process of decentralisation of economic power, including the rise of new Asian economies on the one hand, and financial, geopolitical, and climactic global crises on the other, as well as the need for alternative forms of energy to offer a solution to the problem of waste. All of which necessitates that a new political discourse be constructed, which would make sense of the current changes which are occurring. Under such conditions, artists and politicians, amongst others, must begin to frame a narrative which, to borrow from Vermeulen and Akker, would hope for "(a 'better' future) that was long forgotten" (5). The attitude of this new generation is thus that of "a kind of informed naivety, a pragmatic idealism," as exemplified in its attitude towards history. For the postmodern, history had come to a conclusion. Yet, as the essay clarifies, this conclusion is that of a certain concept of history: "Hegel's 'positive' idealism," an idea that there is a progress in the course of history towards an ultimate goal (Telos) (5). The supposed End of History can therefore only be the result of either a realisation that such a telos does not exist, or else that it has already been attained.

However, the current metamodern narrative, although confirming that such a purpose (Telos) does not exist, "takes toward it [history's aim] *as if* it does exist. Inspired by a modern naïveté yet informed by postmodern skepticism, the metamodern discourse consciously commits itself to an impossible possibility" (5). Such an informed naiveté, it could be argued, is the major stimulus behind the expression of an enthusiastic desire for a better future which

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Ihab Hassan's attempt to answer the question of what was postmodernism in "Beyond Postmodernism: Toward as Aesthetic of Trust" (2003) implies that the phenomenon is over for him. Or as Kim Kevin in "How PoMo Can You Go?" (2012) observes, "[i]n the past couple of years, there's been a new post-Postmodern movement lurking in Europe: Metamodernism" (Levin). Jerry Saltz in "Sincerity and Irony Hug it Out" (2010) expresses his happiness that the 2010 edition of *Greater New York* art exhibition something familiar is missing: "a by-now-familiar genus of cynical art that is mainly about gamesmanship, work that is coolly ironic, simply cool, ironic about being ironic, or mainly commenting on art that comments on other art. I'm glad to see it fading away – sincerely and otherwise" (Saltz). She mentions Liz Magic Laser's *Mine* art as a good example of emerging art which "simultaneously dismantles and creates." In the same spirit, Steven Connor in 2015 assures us that "the first thing to be said about postmodernism, at this hour, after three decades of furious business and ringing tills, is that it must be nearly at an end" ("Postmodernism Grown Old" 33). Much earlier in 2002, Hutcheon declared that postmodernism is now "a thing of the past" ("Postmodern Afterthoughts" 5).

has occurred within many contemporary artworks. This informed naiveté helps the artists to overrule the dominant postmodern apathy and its poisonous consequences. Yet, they are also informed (thanks to postmodern self-consciousness and scepticism) that an ultimate, better future, remains an impossibility. In other words, they must pretend that they are making progress towards an ultimate telos, a better goal, though it remains one which they will never reach. Vermeulen and Akker thus liken the metamodern to the metaphor of the donkey-and-carrot double-bind.[117] It is precisely this amalgam of naiveté and sceptical self-consciousness which sustains the oscillation in question, ensuring that a negotiation continually occurs between the two poles, without a collapse into either state. It is this ongoing search which is necessary in a time of reconstruction, proceeding after an age of deconstruction.

The Return of the Author as an Ethically and Politically Committed Social Reformist: The Secretary of the Invisible

It could be argued that a considerable bulk of fiction in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, which carries the label metamodernist amongst many others, is suggestive of the return of the ideal of a grounded, serious, clear-eyed, ethically- and politically-committed author. The concept of the author has shifted from the age of the death of the author, to that of the post-theory era with its reinvigorated moral concepts: the author function is shifting once again and it is now situated in a world landscape as much as a national one. Salman Rushdie, one of the first to embrace the global identity, was also amongst the first writers to notice the change discussed above, and to take the first steps towards experimenting with new means of expression in fiction.[118] A desire and commitment to change for the better is

[117] Vermeulen and Akker clarify the metaphor: "Like a donkey it [the metamodern] chases a carrot that it never manages to eat because the carrot is always just beyond its reach. But precisely because it never manages to eat the carrot, it never ends its chase, setting foot in moral realms the modern donkey (having eaten its carrot elsewhere) will never encounter, entering political domains the postmodern donkey (having abandoned the chase) will never come across" (5).
[118] Rushdie in "Imaginary Homelands" points out that "[o]ur identity is at once plural and partial" (15).

consciously manifested in both his essay entitled "Imaginary Homelands" (1991), and the novel *Midnight's Children* (1981), which stresses the need felt amongst writers to express the world differently. As Rushdie states, "I once took part in a conference on modern writing at New College, Oxford. Various novelists, myself included, were talking earnestly of such matters as the need for new ways of describing the world" ("Imaginary Homelands" 13). Since to describe the world is itself a political act, Rushdie argues, a revolution in the means of description is therefore "the necessary first step towards changing it" (14).

Nonetheless, why is the act of writing a novel political, one might ask? Rushdie would reply that "it is particularly at times when the state takes reality into its own hands, and sets about distorting it, altering the past to fit its present needs, that the making of the alternative realities of art, including the novel of memory, becomes politicized" (14). In other words, it is political because writers and politicians are in constant competition with each other; they "are natural rivals," since both would impose their own image of the world upon us in pursuit of their own ends (14): "they fight for the same territory. And the novel is one way of denying the official, politicians' version of truth" (14). Within this paradigm, "literature can, and perhaps must, give the lie to official facts," since these "facts" are, of course, distorted versions of what really happened (14). For Rushdie, the means of giving lie to the politicians' version of the truth, and the best way in which to describe the world differently, is by pushing the boundaries of the novel, as a genre, to its very limits. As he makes clear:

> [T]he real risks for any artist are taken in the work, in pushing the work to the limits of what is possible, in the attempt to increase the sum of what it is possible to think. Books become good when they go to this edge and risk falling over it – when they endanger the artist by reason of what he has, or has not, *artistically* dared. (15)

And that is exactly what, I would argue, the contemporary "world" writers to be examined in this chapter – Hilary Mantel, J. M. Coetzee and Rushdie – are doing. In *Midnight's Children*, Saleem comes to realise the exceptional power which his ability to hear voices accords him, allowing him to function as a conduit for differing cultural centres. Yet, as his concern with the wasting of such energy shows, the power which he possesses serves no purpose if he is not able to use his talents for social betterment. His concern with wasting his energy seems also curiously to attune with our contemporary concern with energy saving and a need to turn to an alternative energy to save the world. The present Bombay is described as a large multicultural and transnational business centre; it is a city that has changed from the time of Saleem's childhood. As he notices:

> Our Bombay, Padma! It was very different then, there were no night-clubs or pickle factories or Oberoi-Sheraton Hotels or movie studios; but the city grew at breakneck speed, acquiring a cathedral and an equestrian statue of the Mahratta warrior-king Sivaji which (we used to think) came to life at night and galloped awesomely through the city streets-right along Marine Drive! (*Midnight's Children* 86)

Now it is a metropolis with "Colaba Causeway to its tip-past cheap clothes shops and Irani restaurants and the second-rate flats of teachers journalists and clerks" and skyscrapers (87-8). This change is also clear in the change of the name from Bombay to Mumbai. Rushdie too, not unlike Saleem, is from "a metropolis in which the multiplicity of commingled faiths and cultures creates a remarkably secular ambience. Saleem Sinai makes use of whatever elements from whatever sources he chooses" (16).[119]

[119] An aspect of a Metamodernist movement is a quest for truth. As Luke Turner puts it in his "Metamodernist Manifesto" (2011), "[j]ust as science strives for poetic elegance, artists might assume a quest for truth. All information is grounds for knowledge, whether empirical or aphoristic, no matter its truth-value. We should embrace the scientific-poetic synthesis and informed naivety of a magical realism. Error breeds sense" (Turner "Metamodernist Manifesto"). Similarly, with regard to the US's invasion of Iraq, Harold Pinter's Nobel Prize speech, also published as "Art, Truth and Politics" (2005), calls upon us an act towards finding the truth from

Although the novel has been criticised for its despairing tone, we might perhaps agree with Rushdie that he has still departed from postmodernist cynicism, via the tension between Saleem's personal view, and what the novel offers as differing possibilities. In this respect, I would argue, *Midnight's Children* functions as a metamodernist text. "The form," he suggests, "– multitudinous, hinting at the infinite possibilities of the country – is the optimistic counterweight to Saleem's personal tragedy" ("Imaginary Homelands" 16). The purpose of this tension and discrepancy (irony) is to provide an alternative vision of change for the reader.[120] Our contemporary world – which is flooded with different reality TV shows, talk shows and other pure entertainment programmes – is defined more by a sense of apathy, stupor and lack of action. Jeffrey T. Nealon in "Post-Postmodernism: Or, The Cultural Logic of Just-In-Time Capitalism" (2012) points to the same prevailing apathy as characteristic of the post-postmodern era: "we post-postmodern capitalists are trained by our media masters to watch rather than act, consume rather than do" (88).[121] Cold war-era imperialism has thus given way to a more poisonous media-driven culture, dominated by almost pure

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the distorted version of reality. As he asserts, "[p]olitical language, as used by politicians, does not venture into any of this territory [of the artist] since the majority of politicians, on the evidence available to us, are interested not in truth but in power and in the maintenance of that power. To maintain that power it is essential that people remain in ignorance, that they live in ignorance of the truth, even the truth of their own lives. What surrounds us therefore is a vast tapestry of lies, upon which we feed" (12). He emphasises the fact that the language is manipulated by the US officials so that people do not think and "[just] lie back on the cushion" (17); hence, the systematic apathy-driven policy of the US. Pinter's own language is quite pointed, direct, sincere and trenchant; its irony is biting and serious, employed towards a sincere end: "Well, Tony Blair wasn't holding him in his arms, nor the body of any other mutilated child, nor the body of any bloody corpse. Blood is dirty. It dirties your shirt and tie when you're making a *sincere* speech on television" (19 emphasis added). Pinter ends his speech by calling upon the people to act, a conviction incumbent upon all of us: "I believe that despite the enormous odds which exist, unflinching, unswerving, fierce intellectual determination, as citizens, to *define* the real truth of our lives and our societies is a crucial *obligation* which devolves upon us all. It is in fact mandatory" (23 emphasis added). Similarly, the writer's duty is to break the mirror (let us call it to *de-construct*) and then *re-construct* the truth: "When we look into a mirror we think the image that confronts us is accurate. But move a millimetre and the image changes. We are actually looking at a never-ending range of reflections. But sometimes a writer has to smash the mirror – for it is on the other side of that mirror that the *truth* stares at us" (23 emphasis added).

[120] Rushdie's literary practice, in *Midnight's Children*, very well expresses the ethos of Metamodernism. As mentioned earlier, Matt Ashby and Brendan Carroll assert that "irony without a purpose enables cynicism (Ashby and Carroll). Also, Bradley Warshauer (2014) stipulates that the New Sincerity is "both irony-driven destruction and earnest attempts at rebuilding" (Warshauer). Rushdie's use of irony does not stop at the level of destruction or deconstruction, rather the infinite possibilities that the novel provides are a gateway away from the present cynicism, expressed by Saleem, to rebuild the world order.

[121] Nealon highlights the movie *Gladiator* (2000) as a turning point which portrays the conflict between an old era coming to an end (the decadent Romans) with a new one (a post-postmodern era) (86-8). One could also think of Roger Waters' "Amused to Death" (1992) that portrays the contemporary life with "TV screens" that trigger "[no] thoughts to think" (Waters).

entertainment. The technique which Rushdie uses to wake us from this stupor and delusion is an amalgamation of fantasy and realism. This blending, as he puts it, "offers a way of echoing in the form of our work the issues faced by all of us: how to build a new, 'modern' world out of an old, legend-haunted civilisation, an old culture which we have brought into the heart of a newer one" ("Imaginary Homelands" 19). This is made manifest in *Midnight's Children* through Saleem's visual and voice hearing experiences, which might be said to move beyond the simple, memetic mechanisms of realism, whilst still ensuring that the realism of the novel's historical intertexts – the partition of India – remains at its centre.

Rushdie offers both the postmodern secular apocalyptic end of history (of British India in 1947) and an optimistic view of the future in the sense that Francis Fukuyama intends: "the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government" ("The End of History?" 4), an ideal that will be not replaced by any alternative in the far future.[122] The image of sterility is dominant: from Saleem's physiological sterility, bombardment and destruction, Sanjay's forced sterilisation programme to control the growth of population to attempts to make Saleem magical powers shut down (by shutting up the voices).[123] Yet, the novel takes a metamodernist view of history that it, as progressing towards a final goal, does not exist but it pretends as if it does. That history has no purpose and is purely a matter of chance is best exemplified in Shiva's words that "you think there's a purpose!" (Rushdie *Midnight's Children* 220), given that Shiva and Saleem were given to different parents after birth. This Shiva is the voice Saleem conjures up. The cynical apocalyptic view is channelled via Shiva here whilst the naiveté of a possibility of

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[122] Elsewhere, Fukuyama prophesies that the world will be more assimilated into the EU pattern of transnationality: "The EU's attempt to transcend sovereignty and traditional power politics by establishing a transnational rule of law is much more in line with a 'post-historical' world than the Americans' continuing belief in God, national sovereignty, and their military" ("The History at the End of History").

[123] Of the significance of his own name, Saleem contemplates and acknowledges an apocalypse: "it is the name of the desert-of barrenness, infertility, dust; the name of the end" (Rushdie *Midnight's Children* 303). Of Karachi too he says, it "obscured the desert; but either the cords, or the infertility of the soil, made it grow into something grotesque" (307). Also, as Neil Ten Kortenaar observes, the ending of the novel "is a deliberate echo of the apocalyptic conclusion of *A Hundred Years of Solitude* (García Márquez 1991)" (190-91).

continuation and progress is proposed in the narrative by his attempt to silence Shiva's voice or what he himself self-consciously calls "my alter ego" (229). Hence, Saleem is endowed with self-awareness (informed). All the violence and splitting of India mark the end of an old system and the dawn of a new order. As Teresa Heffernan observes, "Saleem Sinai also draws on the revolutionary legacy of apocalyptic nationalism as an obvious frame for account of India's struggle of liberation" (101).[124] History ends but Saleem feels a responsibility to re-unite the scattered individuals and rebuild a new order. He should contain all the voices and the world to breach the (geographical, political, religious, etc.) gaps and fissures, to make a new whole. "To understand just one life, you have to swallow the world" (Rushdie *Midnight's Children* 108) simply because our destinies are more linked together in this new global world despite the geographical, political and religious fragments and schisms.

Nonetheless, this optimism – as epitomised in his birthday and marriage[125] – channelled through multitudes (infinite possibilities, to use Rushdie's terms), is an informed naiveté because the world (India) described in the novel is an apocalyptic one: characterised by dictatorship, suppression, violence and splitting of the world into half. Endowed with an exceptional gift, Saleem feels a historical responsibility to use this gift to bring all the world entirely together into a unified whole: to bring order to this split geography and yet global world.[126] As the narrator puts it, "[c]onsumed multitudes are jostling and shoving inside" him (3). Rushdie realises that too much scepticism and detachment would cause apathy and lack of fellow-feeling, yet too much attachment with no irony and scepticism would lead to

[124] Heffernan argues that apocalyptic nationalist stories "about the nation express the dreams of the ostracized and the oppressed about the renewal or rebirth of a community" (89).

[125] As Saleem has it, "the future cannot be preserved in a jar; one jar must remain empty […] What cannot be pickled, because it has not taken place, is that I shall reach my birthday, thirty-one today, and no doubt a marriage will take place, and Padma will have henna-tracery on her palms and soles, and also a new name, perhaps Naseem in honour of Reverend Mother's watching ghost, and outside the window there will be fireworks and crowds, because it will be Independence Day and the many-headed multitudes will be in the streets, and Kashmir will be waiting" (458).

[126] As Heffernan argues that there is a similar tendency in secular apocalyptic writings and the book of Revelation in which "John imagines himself as the consciousness of the collective; the boundary between the world and the word, between narrative and history, must dissolve, and all margins, including the one he inhabits, must be eradicated to complete this dream of a perfectly integrated community at the end of history" (89).

sentimentalism; therefore, both are offered in the novel. On the one hand, we see Saleem's attempts to get connected to and receive others (to put himself in their shoes) and on the other, the postmodernist scepticism, deconstruction of metanarratives and self-reflexivity as well as self-consciousness of the narration brings about ironic distanciation. Once again, a tenet of what would later be called Metamodernism seems evidenced: "*metamodernism* shall be defined as the mercurial condition between and beyond irony and sincerity, naivety and knowingness, relativism and truth, optimism and doubt, in pursuit of a plurality of disparate and elusive horizons. We must go forth and oscillate!" (Turner "Metamodernist Manifesto").

Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* was one of the first and most influential novels to reflect on and fictionally pivot round the sense that a radically new concept of authorship is called for. Saleem, the story-teller, splitting and peeling as voices speak through him, is an image of the new novelist containing multitudes, who must somehow allow the singularity of each voice to speak through him. His head has become a transistor radio:

> By sunrise, I had discovered that the voices could be controlled-I was a *radio receiver*, and could turn the volume down or up; I could select individual voices; I could even, by an effort of will; switch off my newly-discovered inner ear. It was astonishing how soon fear left me; by morning, I was thinking, "Man, this is better than All-India Radio, man; better than Radio Ceylon!" (162 emphasis added)

Radio – the new medium for the newly globalised post-colonial world that is coming into being in 1947 makes its intrusive appearance throughout the novel; the radio becomes the symbol of Nero's modernised new globalised nation just as it becomes the symbol of the New Tower of Babel that is post-partition. The radio as global transmitter also represents the disseminated author figure of Saleem and of Rushdie himself as new world novelist in English. This author has no longer any clear sense of possible audiences or of who might tune

into his words. Rushdie, like Saleem, is a translated man. As he puts it, "[t]he word 'translation' comes, etymologically, from the Latin for 'bearing across'. Having been borne across the world, we are translated men" ("Imaginary Homelands" 17), that is, a person who is a channel to different centres of culture across the world. This is a definition of the contemporary author or what, for Rushdie, an author-function must become in our contemporary world.[127] This is the new author figure, disseminated beyond McLuhanite dreams of global culture, existing across cultures, expected to be a conduit for the many different suffering voices of this new global Risk Society.

If English is now a world language, and the world has become more universal,[128] Rushdie contends that the reader, and not the author, must now play a key role in the act of interpretation for, as Plato feared first at the birth of writing, no author can know where in the world or to whom his or her work might be circulated and how, therefore, it might be interpreted in many different local contexts. However, the author generating the words to build many imaginary homelands is still both magician (springing out of Ali Baba baskets) and a medium (a transmitter) who transforms the voices of cultures into an imaginary world that is meaningful in a particular way for each singular reader. Saleem becomes the template for this new conception of authorship (though a comically failing one). The novel might be read as a meditation on the nature of authorship and the changed significance of the novel as it nears the end of the twentieth century, continuing as in earlier metafictions to interrogate the mode of the novel itself and what it must become in order to renew itself at this strange

[127] Rushdie's choice of English language to write fiction has a global purpose. It is to keep that channel open to different cultures and voices. He comments on the use of English by Indian writers like himself and its significance that it can reflect the multiplicity of their own cultures: "Those of us who do use English do so in spite of our ambiguity towards it or perhaps because of that, perhaps because we can find in that linguistic struggle a reflection of other struggles taking place in the real world, struggles between the cultures within ourselves and the influences at work upon our societies" ("Imaginary Homelands" 17). Yet, as he continues, such writers cannot do away with English as their children are brought up with it.

[128] Rushdie points to his inevitability of being located as an international writer: "we are inescapably international writers at a time when the novel has never been a more international form (a writer like Borges speaks of the influence of Robert Louis Stevenson on his work; Heinrich Böll acknowledges the influence of Irish literature; cross-pollination is everywhere)" ("Imaginary Homelands" 20).

new conjuncture in history when the writer no longer writes as the voice of a national tradition but must become a conduit for the many stories of the world. Writing at a post-colonial time when he is "now partly of the West," his "identity is at once plural and partial" feeling "we straddle two cultures" (15), the author is still a medium but now a mediator of world cultures, a conduit through which different cultures are received, translated and put into new conversational dialogues.

Saleem fears how he has wasted his gifts performing tricks for his schoolmates, reading their minds and playing jokes on them. Yet, born at the moment of the Independence of India and the birth of Pakistan, and recognising that all the children who were born at the same moment have similar powers, he begins to wonder whether they might be deployed to achieve good in this chaotic world. Wasting his energy and gifts (an exceptional negative capability of the author) means an inability to use them in order to bring about positive change on a global scale. Soon a telepathic conduit, therefore, he gathers together the other midnights' children from their different geographies to an assembly that might further acknowledge and understand the significance of their gift. But as his own story progresses, he realises that in order to voice his own history, he must incorporate all of theirs in a kind of frenzy of infinite regress. No longer in the image of God, and unable to contain the many and diverse voices of the world, so his body begins to peel and split, his person to disintegrate.

The inside of Saleem's head as world radio transmitter is Rushdie's vision of this new transnational novel and of the strains and stresses of authorship under the new world dispensation. Rushdie seems to be re-writing T. S. Eliot's idea of tradition and the individual talent, the individual as the receptacle for all the voices of tradition, but now a globalised sea of stories: how can a novelist contain and express all these whilst keeping the self uninvolved

and untouched to be able to be a pure medium?[129] Saleem reflects, "I am the tomb in Bombay [. . .] watch me explode!" (*Midnight's Children* 172) "but also timeless explosion in which I bow my head yes I acquiesce yes in the necessity of the blow, and then I am empty and free, because all the Saleems go pouring out of me . . ." (341). Later on, he recounts, "Shiva and the Angel are closing closing, I hear lies being spoken in the night, anything you want to be you kin be, the greatest lie of all, cracking now, fission of Saleem, I am the bomb in Bombay, watch me explode, bones splitting breaking beneath the awful pressure of the crowd," (459). "I have been a swallower of lives" (3), Saleem says at the very beginning of the novel. That enthusiastic committed purpose of bringing about a positive change on a large scale inevitably results in the disintegration of his own self as he lets others speak through him.

Picking up the theme of the power of imagination and the creation of alternative fictions that might postpone an otherwise likely death, there are many allusions in the course of the novel to Scheherezade and the many forces attempting to silence Saleem. As a case in point, when Saleem tells his family about the voices he hears, he is severely beaten: "If my crumbling, over-used body permits. But I have no hope of saving my life, nor can I count on having even a thousand nights and a night. I must work fast, faster than Scheherazade, if I am to end up meaning-yes, meaning-something. I admit it: above all things, I fear absurdity" (1). Later on, the narrator observes, "[r]eality can have metaphorical content; that does not make it less real. A thousand and one children were born; there were a thousand and one possibilities which had never been present in one place at one time before; and there were a thousand and one dead ends" (201). Elsewhere, he says, "[s]ometimes I feel a thousand years old: or (because I cannot, even now, abandon form), to be exact, a thousand and one" (436). For the novelistic imagination, art is somatic, as Rushdie seems to suggest, its origins in the

[129] The similarity of Rushdie's idea with that of Eliot is a practice of metamodernist mode of art, that is, an oscillation between modernist enthusiasm and postmodernist irony. Stanely Mushava (2017) defines the metamodernist model as "the dominant sensibility, where the new default is dizzy oscillation between modernist enthusiasm and postmodernist irony" (Mushava).

grotesque of Rabelais, Cervantes and Sterne, grounded in the body and the embodied mind. So too has the nation traditionally been conceived as a body, from Dr Aziz's examination of the body of his future wife, a kind of future Mother India, to Saleem's runny nose and his peeling skin and exploding body.

Somatisation is defined as "a process whereby the body translates mental stress into physical expressions that have symbolic value (Steckel, 1943). The process of somatization also represents primitive defense mechanisms, like denial and repression, against undesirable wishes or urges" (Iezzi *et al.* 216). Hence, Saleem's body becomes a physical conduit for all the afflictions and traumas of the entire risk world. Saleem's nose functions like an antenna, receiving different signals from around the world: "mysteriously, my nose recognized, once again, the scent of personal danger. What I am obliged to deduce from this warning aroma: soothsayers prophesied me; might not soothsayers have undone me at the end?" (Rushdie *Midnight's Children* 423). He realises that he is endowed with an exceptional gift and power, like a chosen prophet, and therefore that it is incumbent upon him to use this gift in the best way.[130]

All his cracking up, peeling off and exploding are an indication of the function of the author in this new world, a means to go beyond the containment of the limits the body as geographical confinement, to widen the horizon and take up a global stance. As Rushdie puts it, "[t]o forget that there is a world beyond the community to which we belong, to confine ourselves within narrowly defined cultural frontiers, would be, I believe, to go voluntarily into that form of internal exile which in South Africa is called the 'homeland'" ("Imaginary Homelands" 19). If Saleem's body is the narrowly defined frontier, his magic power enables him to connect to the world entire. As the novel is the most international form, so the writer should be international too, committed to bring about change for the better in an international

[130] Saleem tells us that he was prophesied by soothsayers in the fashion of prophets who are prophesied before they come to the world: "Soothsayers had prophesied me, newspapers celebrated my arrival, politicos ratified my authenticity" (3).

scale, to open the universe more, beyond the limited bubble in which we have deluded ourselves.

Rushdie is using the motif of the traumatised and somatising body of the new Risk World that has become an effect of the materially medicalised therapy culture noted by Furedi: the "broken" brain that might be mended and the body exercised to repair the mind.[131] But from Adam Smith onwards, the novel has been regarded as a regulator of mood and emotion, shaper of sentiment and sympathy: like the athlete with mental training, the imaginary world of fiction trains its readers in the mental muscle required for survival in and ethical response to a new world culture. On the power of the imagination, Rushdie has argued:

> Fantasy, or the mingling of fantasy and naturalism, is one way of dealing with these problems. It offers a way of echoing in the form of our work the issues faced by all of us: how to build a new, "modern" world out of an old, legend-haunted civilization, an old culture which we have brought into the heart of a newer one. ("Imaginary Homelands" 19)

Rushdie's preoccupation is with how to re-write (re-build) the world; how an author should write in order to respond to this new globalised world. As Turner has it, "a yearning for meaning – for sincere and constructive progression and expression – has come to shape today's dominant cultural mode" ("Metamodernism: A Brief Introduction").[132] Saleem oscillates between deconstructive activity – splitting and disintegration of her body and self

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[131] Rushdie seems to be picking up on popularisations of neuroscience in the new "decade of the brain." Recent neuroscientific studies (such as "From Mental power to Muscle Power – Gaining Strength by Using the Mind" (2004) published in *Neurophysiologia* and "The Power of the Mind: The Cortex as a Critical Determinant of Muscle Strength/weakness" (2014) published in *Journal of Neurophysiology*) provide scientific legitimation, showing how all parts of the body involved in activities in life are similarly active and involved as we enter imaginary worlds.

[132] Jorg Heiser in *Romantic Conceptualism* (2007) explores what he considers as romantic motifs and methods amongst contemporary artists: a juxtaposition of Romantic inwardness and conceptual rationalism. Vermeulen and Akker put it, "[i]f the postmodern deconstructs, Heiser's Romantic Conceptualism is concerned with reconstruction" (7).

as well as of the nation –[133] and re-construction of the world, body and self via inviting "the annihilating whirlpool of the multitudes" (Rushdie *Midnight's Children* 459), which are the voices from different geographies and cultures on a large global scale, receiving them, listening to them, speaking to them and finally re-uniting them. In a more global, risky world, the author is a medium, a transformer of illnesses/traumas of the world entire into meaningful characters and stories. Rushdie cherishes the power of imagination as a vehicle to bring about changes in the world because of its effects on body, mind and memory; imagination shapes perception, changes how we see and hear our worlds.

These concerns are shared famously and emphatically by another writer whose oeuvre has continuously engaged with and foregrounded the problem of authentic authorship in the context of the traumatic realities of the global as well as local Risk Society: of the relationship between the persona of the author – as in Greek tragedy – an individual (per) speaking (sona) through a mask – and of the problematic relation to a readership that requires many different and contradictory things under the dispensation of the new global responsibility. J. M. Coetzee's character, Elizabeth Costello, along with Coetzee himself, is centrally concerned with the function of the author; the extent to which the author might become alternative selves, genders, even species. Elizabeth has written a novel entitled *The House on Eccles Street* which re-writes the story of James Joyce's Ulysses from the perspective of Bloom's wife, Molly.

[133] Towards the end of the story, Saleem wonders: "But how can I, look at me, I'm tearing myself apart, can't even agree with myself, talking arguing like a wild fellow, cracking memory going, yes, memory plunging into chasms and being lowed by the dark, only fragments remain, none of it makes any more! But I mustn't presume to judge; must simply continue (having once begun) until the end" (417-18).

Pushing the Limits of the Novel and the Self Towards the Infinite

Coetzee chooses to incorporate elements of his own bibliography within his fictional creation of Elizabeth Costello, depicted as presenting some of the lectures that Coetzee himself had previously delivered, or published, under his own name. Similarly, building upon fictional intertwining, Coetzee also uses the persona of Robinson Crusoe in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech.[134] Thus, Elizabeth, herself a supposedly renowned novelist, and Crusoe the most famous fictional character in history, function as Coetzee's alter egos. Using the technique of *mise-en abyme* – in which Coetzee's creation of his alter ego, Elizabeth, is in turn portrayed as imagining the processes which occur in Marion Bloom's mind – Coetzee experiments with the extent to which an author can create alternative selves and alter egos, without descending into sensationalism or a total loss of self. In a similar fashion, as Coetzee seems to suggest, novelists in our contemporary moment should explore the power of fiction in facilitating understanding of the suffering of others. Both in *Disgrace* (1999), and *Elizabeth Costello*, Coetzee examines the extent to which we can empathise with, and understand, the voiceless others and their predicaments, and thereby connect to a wider, global community.

To empathise is to imagine, think, feel, and understand, the minds of others. Many of Elizabeth's musings over the course of the story concern the subject of empathy and the extent to which one can put oneself in the place of another. As she says:

> The particular horror of the camps, the horror that convinces us that what went on there was a crime against humanity, is not that despite a humanity shared with their victims, they treated them like lice. That is too abstract. The horror is the killers refused to think themselves into the place of their victims, as did everyone else. (*Elizabeth Costello* 79)

[134] Coetzee delivered his Nobel Prize lecture in December 2003. Yet, rather than giving a conventional Nobel lecture (addressing the audience directly), he read a short story titled "He and His Man," a fictive life of Robinson Crusoe, referred to as "man," after his return to Britain.

Referring to Thomas Nagel's influential essay "What is it Like to be a Bat?" (1974), Elizabeth proceeds to explore the topic of the death camps, and to discuss the main reasons for the genocide that the Nazis were able to commit: "The horror is that the killers refused to think themselves into the place of their victims, as did everyone else. They said, 'It is they in those cattle cars rattling past'. They did not say, 'How would it be if it were I in that cattle car?'" (79) and continues:

> In other words, they closed their hearts. The heart is the seat of a faculty, *sympathy*, that allows us to share at times the being of another. Sympathy has everything to do with the subject and little to do with the object, the "another," as we see at once when we think of the object not as a bat ("Can I share the being of a bat?") but as another human being. There are people who have the capacity to imagine themselves as someone else, there are people who have no such capacity (when the lack is extreme, we call them psychopaths), and there are people who have the capacity but choose not to exercise it. (79)

As implied in this quotation, a novelist is among those who appear to have the faculty of imagining themselves as others, able therefore to understand and empathise with people's sufferings. And that is why Elizabeth is not comfortable with the idea of *cogito, ergo sum* as, according to the formula, "a living being that does not do what we call thinking is somehow second-class" (78). For Elizabeth, and perhaps for Coetzee, this faculty is infinite; that is, "there is no limit to the extent to which we can think ourselves into the being of another. There are no bounds to the sympathetic imagination" (80), an example of which, as Elizabeth notes, is a rewriting of Joyce's novel from Marion's perspective. As she says, "[t]o write that book I had to think my way into the existence of Marion Bloom" (80), concluding that "[i]f I can think myself into the existence of a being who has never existed, then I think my way

into the existence of a bat or a chimpanzee or an oyster, any being with whom I share the substrate of life" (80).

As Coetzee effectively suggests, it is the novel that enables us (the author and the reader alike) to acknowledge the existence of those without a voice, and to express their concerns, thinking and feeling ourselves into other beings without suffering a complete or even major loss of our own sense of selfhood. In this way, the novel – better and more efficiently than any other mode, such as that of philosophy – hones our most invaluable faculties: sympathetic imagination and empathy as an alternative to mere (rational) thinking. Sympathetic imagination validates both our existence and that of others. Coetzee thus practices and experiments with ways of bringing together the ethical and the aesthetic, exploring the bounds of imaginative thinking by creating a fictional character, Elizabeth Costello, who delivers Coetzee's guest lectures "The Philosophers and the Animals" and "The Poets and the Animals" at Princeton University, two of the Tanner Lectures on Human Values, in 1997. The lectures are later published as a metafictional novella, *The Lives of Animals*, in 1999, and incorporated into the novel *Elizabeth Costello* in 2003. *Elizabeth Costello* therefore has a hybrid structure: comprising elements of both a work of fiction, which follows a fictional character and her life story, and that of a non-fiction book whose chapters – each called a lesson – are arranged thematically, and include, in addition to the ones mentioned above, subjects such as "Realism" and "The Problem of Evil."

Elizabeth's lecture, entitled "The Problem of Evil," which deals, in part, with a novel *The Very Rich Hours of Count von Stauffenberg* (1980), written by Paul West, is exemplary of a kind of sincerity and ethical responsibility that the novelist Coetzee both intends and encourages other writers to possess. West is a real novelist, who is brought into the work of fiction by Coetzee, and is present at Elizabeth's lecture. West's novel tells a story based upon the horrors and tortures of the Nazi regime, whose images disturb Elizabeth so that she

wonders if anyone can go through all that obscenity – that is, violence, horror and tortures of the hangman – and still remain emotionally untouched. As the narrator observes, "[c]an anyone, she asks in her lecture, wander as deep as Paul West does into the Nazi forest of horrors and emerge unscathed?" (85). Before she starts her lecture, Elizabeth ponders the ethical demands of Political Correctness, of mitigating her critique of the novel, particularly as West is present at the lecture, so that it does not offend him.[135] The narrator, using free indirect speech to express Elizabeth's thoughts, wonders "[w]hat if she tries softening her thesis? What if she suggests that, in representing the workings of evil, the writer may unwittingly make evil seem attractive, and thereby do more harm than good?" (86). Then, the narrator goes on to express Elizabeth's final decision, "[t]he writer as dupe of Satan: what nonsense! Ineluctably she is arguing herself into the position of the old-fashioned censor. And what is the point of all this pussyfooting anyway? To forestall a petty scandal? Where does it come from, her reluctance to offend?" (86). Like Wallace, she hates 'pussyfooting' around the subject of Political Correctness and instead favours, and finally acts, with sincerity, rather than hypocrisy. As Wallace argues:

> This reviewer's own humble opinion is that some of the cultural and political realities of American life are themselves racially insensitive and elitist and offensive and unfair, and that pussyfooting around these realities with euphemistic doublespeak is not only hypocritical but toxic to the project of ever actually changing them. Such pussyfooting has of course now achieved the status of a dialect […] I refer here to Politically Correct English (PCE), under whose conventions failing students become "high-potential" students

[135] As the narrator observes, Elizabeth "could even make the book itself hypothetical: a hypothetical novel about the Nazis, the writing of which would have scarred the soul of its hypothetical author. Then no one will know, except of course West himself, if he is present, if he bothers to come to the talk by the lady from Australia" (Coetzee *Elizabeth Costello* 85).

> and poor people "economically disadvantaged" and people in wheelchairs "differently abled." ("Authority and American Usage" 109-10)

Hence, pussyfooting, in dealing with a subject, contributes to an unfairness which is an act of violence against the voiceless. It is toxic because it does not address, and therefore cannot change, the unfair condition, but merely disguises the seriousness of the matter. The first step to changing a phenomenon for the better is to sincerely acknowledge that there is something wrong. In the essay, Wallace makes a distinction between politeness and fairness.[136] Elizabeth echoes Wallace's opinion of PC, in her belief that modifying her remarks to make them less pointed "would not have been fair" (Coetzee *Elizabeth Costello* 89).

In addition, Elizabeth takes West's novel as an example which shows that an act of writing in itself is not necessarily good. The reader learns that she has been violently sexually assaulted and her jaw broken by her assailant, when she was young (86). For that reason, it is not that she wants West to refrain from telling what happened to the plotters against Hitler. It is rather the way in which he chooses to tell the story to which she objects:

> The answer, as far as she can see, is that she no longer believes that storytelling is good in itself, whereas for West, or at least for West as he was when he wrote the Stauffenberg book, the question does not seem to arise. If she, as she is nowadays, had to choose between telling a story and doing good, she would rather, she thinks, do good. West, she thinks, would rather tell a story, though perhaps she ought to suspend judgement until she hears it from his own lips. (87)

Concerned with doing good, rather than simply writing, Elizabeth would only wish for a writer to express the horrors, tortures and predicaments of the voiceless, as long as doing so does not contribute further to the unfairness and atrocity to which such people are subjected.

[136] On the idea of Political Correctness and fairness, Slavoj Žižek says, "[i]t's just a form of self discipline, which doesn't really allow you to overcome racism. It's just oppressed controlled racism" (Žižek).

On the contrary, as Elizabeth suggests in her lecture – one should bear in mind that the lecture is also delivered by Coetzee, and therefore it would seem to express his view too or the view of one at least of his selves – "[t]hrough Hitler's hangman a devil entered Paul West, and in his book West in turn has given that devil his freedom, turned him loose upon the world. She felt the brush of his leathery wing, as sure as soap, when she read those dark pages" (87). To Elizabeth, as well as to Coetzee, West's description is obscene as it relies purely on sensationalism and violence.[137] She therefore raises the question of the extent to which it is possible to represent horrors (evils, as she puts it) ethically.

Coetzee in fact puts forth the idea of the author as responsible and committed to change. In other words, he raises the question of how to write sincerely and make change for the better, without falling into obscenity, sensationalism, violence and vulgarity. A negative example of a sincerity which does succumb to these pitfalls is Paul West's novel, with its exercise of realist description (details) of tortures, horrors, and hanging, without any sense of detachment. As Derek Attridge puts it,

> Responsibility is an ethical term; it implies an "ought." To be responsible for the other as it comes into being (and thus bring it into being) is to be under an obligation to it; to respond responsibly to the otherness of a literary work is to do justice to it; treating literature as literature means being hospitable and generous: my entire discussion to this point has been shot through with ethical considerations. (126)

That is why Elizabeth criticises West for enhancing the experience of violence in himself and the reader. Because as a result, the writer, character and reader are dissolved and assimilated into the horrors and evil of the other by totally losing their own self, thanks to fellow-feeling;

[137] As the narrator, expressing Elizabeth's thoughts, suggests, "[t]o save our humanity, certain things that we may want to see (may want to see because we are human!) must remain off-stage. Paul West has written an obscene book, he has shown what ought not to be shown" (Coetzee *Elizabeth Costello* 88). David Lodge (2003) states that "I read West's novel out of curiosity, and agreed with Elizabeth's literary judgment" ("Disturbing the Peace").

this is the result of an obscene and sensationalist imaginative thinking which is undertaken with no sense of detachment.

Conversely, a good example would be Coetzee's own novel, which, in the fashion of metamodernism, oscillates between opposing poles: sincerity and ironic detachment, informed naiveté and apathy. The self-conscious and self-reflexive narrative, established from the beginning of the novel, creates a postmodernist ironic detachment and deconstructive mode. As the narrator observes, "'[t]here used to be a time when we knew. We used to believe that when the text said, 'On the table stood a glass of water', there was indeed a table, and a glass of water on it, and we had only to look in the word-mirror of the text to see them. 'But all that has ended. The word-mirror is broken, irreparably, it seems" (Coetzee *Elizabeth Costello* 12). Or as the narrator addresses the reader ironically:

> The presentation scene itself we skip. It is not a good idea to interrupt the narrative too often, since storytelling works by lulling the reader or listener into a dreamlike state in which the time and space of the real world fade away, superseded by the time and space of the fiction. Breaking into the dream draws attention to the constructedness of the story, and plays havoc with the realist illusion. However, unless certain scenes are skipped over we will be here all afternoon. The skips are not part of the text, they are part of the performance. (10)

In this case, the narrator could have refrained from interrupting the narrative, rather than telling the reader he or she should not interrupt the story. Such deliberate, Romantic ironies, challenge the realist notion of representation and create critical distanciation. Yet, in spite of this acknowledgement that the word-mirror is already broken (thanks to deconstruction), the

novel still strives towards the possibility of representation.[138] Therefore, Coetzee has blended self-consciousness and self-reflexivity (distanciation through ironic commentary), undertaken from the outset of the novel, with sincere fellow feeling (through Elizabeth's striving to put herself imaginatively into other beings).

The novel therefore introduces, and takes as its focus, the ethical responsibility of the author, and the question of the extension of the novel to bring about empathetic intersubjectivity or understanding. Accordingly, Elizabeth offers Ted Hughes's "The Jaguar" (1957) as an example of a form of fellow feeling that incites action and dynamism, rather than lethargy or obscenity. Her interest in the poem is mainly because it incites in the reader a kinetic consciousness and progress, as opposed to the jaguar's peers, which remain lifeless and unappreciable to the visitors, due to their lethargic, motionless state. It inhabits "another body" rather than another mind, as Elizabeth has it (51). It "is not about the animal, but is instead the record of an engagement with him" (51); hence, it is a record of empathy. It is the power of the poet in embodying and inhabiting the animal that Elizabeth, together with Coetzee, acknowledges and appreciates. The first step in sharing and understanding the feelings of others, is to inhabit not (only) their minds, but their bodies, to paraphrase Elizabeth. It is to be a receiver, a medium for the predicaments of the voiceless, by going beyond one's own self into another, and then returning to your own self once again – like the metamodernist notion of a swinging pendulum between two opposing poles. Of embodying the mind and rational thinking we have had enough, as Elizabeth suggests: "[t]o thinking, cogitation, I oppose fullness, embodiedness, the sensation of being – not a consciousness of yourself as a kind of ghostly reasoning machine thinking thoughts, but on the contrary the sensation – a heavily affective sensation – of being a body with limbs that have extension in

[138] Lodge notices that Elizabeth is aware of the power of deconstruction, which is irreversible, yet still strives to establish a kind of representation; hence, informed naiveté: "So what are we to make of the whole extraordinary book? Its First Lesson, it will be remembered, was that all texts are now open to infinite interpretation; but in spite of deconstruction we persist in trying to discern some kind of communicative intention in works of literature, for they do not come into existence by accident" ("Disturbing the Peace").

space, of being alive to the world" (42). This necessitates a human faculty which is best exercised in fiction, rather than in other modes like philosophy: that of sympathetic imagination: "Philosophy, she [Elizabeth] argues, is relatively powerless to lead, or in any event to lead in the right direction, because it lags our sympathies" (Gutmann 4). We are not machines.[139] As Coetzee strives to suggest, one might gain some knowledge and understanding of self through others, in ways that do not require rational thinking.

With passion, sincerity, and much enthusiasm clearly manifest in her diction, Elizabeth explores the infinite possibilities of fiction, experimenting with pushing it to its very limits: the faculty of sympathetic imagination could be extended to include animals in order to bring about a change, via fiction. This is a metamodernist fascination with infinite possibilities. That is where Elizabeth likens the Nazi concentration camps and the extermination of the Jews to animal slaughter.[140] In addressing such a controversial issue, she is at her most sincere and direct, with no hint of ironic detachment. Coetzee, in 2007, at Voiceless, The Animal Protection Institute, of which Coetzee himself is a patron, criticises animal husbandry and what he calls the "transformation of animals into production units" ("Voiceless: I Feel Therefore I Am"). Coetzee, by embodying and inhabiting another being, that of Elizabeth, uses the novel as a means of ethically enacting his own intention upon the reader: by inhabiting animals, via fiction, the reader might follow the author in struggling to understand the horrors and violence to which animals are subjected, and consequently live a life of vegetarianism.[141]

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[139] Coetzee shares with Charlie Chaplin (1940) the same vehemence, energy, and enthusiasm, and the idea that "we think too much, we feel too little" (Chaplin).

[140] Elizabeth imagines (dreams) that she is visiting a friend and complimenting the lamp in their living room made of Polish-Jewish skin and a soap wrapper that reads "Treblinka – 100% human stearate" (Coetzee *Elizabeth Costello* 61); another comparison between animal products and the Nazi extermination camps.

[141] As Amy Gutmann writes in an introduction to *The Lives of Animals*, "[t]he fictional form, in Coetzee's hands, therefore appears to have an ethical purpose: extending our sympathies to animals. If fiction does not so extend our sympathies, then neither will philosophy. If it does, then perhaps philosophy will follow" (4).

In order to acknowledge the existence of the other – the voiceless – and simultaneously bring it into existence, one should accept a certain ethical responsibility. As Attridge puts it, "[o]nly in accepting responsibility for the other do I bring it – or let it come – into existence; and there is a sense in which responsibility precedes even the 'I' that is said to 'accept' it, since the act always remarks the actor" (126). However, the idea of a responsible individual is not new. For example, Immanuel Kant's "An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?" (1784) calls for responsible individuals. A responsible person is not an irresponsible child; their responsibility is no longer at the hands of their guardians or parents.[142] However, the contemporary call for responsibility takes a new form, pushing the Kantian concept of responsibility even further to its limits. It requires imagination rather than simply the rational calculation of the categorical imperative, an oscillation between two opposing poles that may also reciprocally mirror each other: between being oneself and being the other.

Elizabeth stands for the contemporary figure of the author: a medium that receives – hears – the voiceless and directly addresses their predicament, in order to bring about a change for the better. As Elizabeth has it, "I am a writer, and what I write is what I hear. I am a secretary of the invisible, one of many secretaries over the ages. That is my calling: dictation secretary. It is not for me to interrogate, to judge what is given me. I merely write down the words and then test them, test their soundness, to make sure I have heard right" (Coetzee *Elizabeth Costello* 103). When asked if she hears the voices of the exterminated Tasmanians, Elizabeth replies: "Do you mean, have their voices come to me? No, they have not, not yet. I probably do not qualify, in their eyes. They would probably want to use a secretary of their own, as they are surely entitled to do" (105). This hearing others, being a medium, and the ability to think and feel into others, is a negative capability, as Elizabeth

[142] Kant begins the essay with the following statement: "Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's own understanding without guidance of another" (Kant).

conceives of it, because if she were not appointed by the invisible, yet she still undertook to tell their story, then she would be perpetuating a sham (104).

Embodying and inhabiting the other requires the extinction of personality and self (self-effacement) whilst it is being brought into being. Yet, one must also step back from it, in order to acknowledge and affirm its existence: to recognise the singularity of the other, one has to cease to be other.[143] This implies the acknowledgment of the postmodern idea that self is constructed in a differential system. In other words, as Attridge suggests, "responsiveness to the other must involve something like responsibility because the other cannot come into existence unless it is affirmed, welcomed, trusted, nurtured (even though, as we have seen, coming into existence necessarily involves ceasing to be other)" (125-26). Therefore, it requires an oscillation between being oneself to affirm the existence of the other, and putting one's self into the other in order to feel and understand that the other deserves existence. Unlike T. S. Eliot's concept of authorship as an extinction of personality – the becoming of an entirely detached medium – the author's responsibility, as Coetzee's novel suggests, is not to be totally devoid of, and detached from, self and personality. Rather, it is to be a swinging pendulum between these two opposing poles. Self-awareness of the existence and affirmation of the other, allows us to maintain our distance, whereas sympathetic imagination and empathy allows us to go beyond the limits of the self, and to inhabit another body and self, and to then step back – cease to be the other – to confirm the existence and worthiness of the other as an equal. Thus, Coetzee aims at both the aesthetic and the ethical.[144]

In a manner similar to Saleem, who is open to different voices, Elizabeth (who is possibly the voice of Coetzee, himself) states, "*I am a writer, a trader in fictions . . . I*

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[143] Arttridge argues that "[w]ithout responsibility for the other, as we have seen, there would be no other; with no other, repeatedly appearing, always different, there would be no same, no self, no society, no morality" (127).
[144] As Gutmann states, "'SERIOUSNESS is, for a certain kind of artist, an imperative uniting the aesthetic and the ethical', John Coetzee wrote in *Giving Offense: Essays on Censorship*. In *The Lives of Animals*, the 1997–98 Tanner Lectures delivered at Princeton University, John Coetzee displays the kind of seriousness that can unite aesthetics and ethics" (3).

maintain beliefs only provisionally . . . 'A word of caution to you, however, I am open to all voices, not just the voices of the murdered and violated' . . . 'If it is their murderers and violators who choose to summon me instead, to use me and speak through me, I will not close my ears to them, I will not judge them'" (195, 204). This is what a novelist is called to do in this era of global connectivity: to be a medium through which the underdog can speak. Simon McCarthy-Jones draws attention to the therapeutic effect which the hearing of voices can have, offering as it does a potential awareness of post-traumatic symptoms in the listener. Voices are "helpful manifestations of unresolved pain" (*Can't You Hear Them? The Science and Significance of Hearing Voices* 309). He gives an account of a person who is able to listen to the voices and come to understand what they are trying to tell her:

> Viewing her voices in this way meant she could thank the voices for their concern, deal with the issues they raised and have a better relationship with them. In this sense, as Eleanor argues, voices may be part of a solution, flagging the dangers of a post-traumatic world, and not part of the problem. We saw a parallel to this idea in a contemporary psychological theory of PTSD, which suggested that negative voices could be seen as warning signals that the trauma may be about to occur again. (308)

The author's function too, as Coetzee suggests, is to be a receiver, mediator, and broadcaster of the voices he or she hears, voices that speak of risks, violence and rape, prevalent in this unsafe, traumatic, post-genocide world that Elizabeth is concerned with in her lectures.

Perhaps that is why Coetzee creates Elizabeth Costello as a means of delivering some of his own lectures, which interrogate the possibility and scope of empathetic imagining. What he is interrogating in these two novels is how far a novelist (and equally readers) may go in empathetic imagining, without falling into sentimentalism, or pure scepticism – a

necessary human requirement in a more connected world. On the other hand, too much irony and rationality might empty us of emotions and fellow feeling.

The technique that novelists such as Coetzee, as well as Rushdie and Mantel (as we shall see later) employ to create a sense of fellow-feeling, without falling into sentimentalism or complete scepticism, is that of ironic distanciation. Via self-reflexivity, *mise-en abyme*, together with postmodernist scepticism, their novels explore the limits of empathetic imagining. Self-deprecation and self-reflexive irony – not a sentimental narcissism, but self-narcissistic, to borrow Linda Hutcheon's terminology – equips the novel to self-reflexively interrogate its modes of knowledge. On this distancing function of irony in postmodernist fiction, Hutcheon has written extensively, including "The Complex Functions of Irony" (1992), *A Theory of Parody* (1985), and *Irony's Edge* (1994). Her argument throughout is that such fiction leads to an ironic aesthetics. So for the universal novelist, such as Coetzee, the best way to write is neither in a sentimentalist fashion, nor in the mode of complete sceptical distanciation, but rather to create an effect of fellow-feeling and connection in readers who are now as broad as the scope of the earth, providing an arena in which they may attempt to imagine with the mind's eye and the mind's ear how it feels to be in the other's shoes. That is the function of the author in the contemporary era of globalisation.

As Coetzee seems to suggest, the novel continues to offer – albeit through ever changing techniques- a kind of training that can help us improve our faculty of empathy – a similar responsibility to that entrusted to fiction by its earliest defenders such as Adam Smith in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). Many critics are confused as to whether Elizabeth is merely Coetzee's mouthpiece, and if everything she expresses about animals, human rights, and politics, is merely Coetzee's own views – a means of hiding behind the persona (originally meaning to speak through a mask) of Elizabeth, in order to avoid probable antagonism and the serious criticism and accusations of racism which he received for

Disgrace. In fact, by pushing the limits of the novel as genre to its extreme, Coetzee is raising the issue of radical alterity, and the question of how do I know that I am not projecting my own belief system onto someone else? This challenges the liberal, humanist concept of an autonomous unified self. In other words, fiction, as novelists like Coetzee suggest, is a site where the boundaries of the unified self are blurred and trespassed. He raises the question of how an author can best use the ability of the novel to engender empathic understanding, to enter and live in other minds (those of other genders, classes, and creatures, etc.) in order to understand the suffering of the unspeakable and mute – especially in this new interconnected world of violence and oppression. Authorship in this sense means and requires going beyond our personhood to think, feel and write, in others' minds, without falling into either sentimentalism, or an excess of scepticism which would deprive us of our empathetic feelings. Coetzee therefore questions how far the novel can reveal atrocities, without becoming sensationalist and pornographic. Can one become a frog or an ape? To what extent can the novel be a vehicle for opening up a kind of empathetic window into subjectivity, yet knowing its limitations and the difficulty of reading other minds not become so detached and distanced that it facilitates an entry into lethargic indifference? He offers seriousness aesthetically, rather than presenting it in a non-fictional way, to hone the human faculty of sympathetic imagination but always with the pole of ironic detachment not too far away. As Decety puts it, "various camps of psychologists generally agree that empathy doesn't involve the *actual* merging of the self and other" (35): one inhabits another body and self, fictionally, in order to understand the concerns and plights of the other. Yet, again recalling poststructuralism, the self is constructed in relation to others (in a differential relationship), and one should go back to one's own self to acknowledge and confirm the ontological presence of the other, to both avoid a total loss of self, and to affirm the singularity of two different selves.

The Author as a Traumatised Wounded Figure and the Healer in the Age of Globalised Trauma

Hilary Mantel's *Beyond Black* (2005) gathers all of the themes explored so far: madness, gender, the ethical function of the novel, the writer as magician, the writer as traumatised wounded figure but, more than Rushdie and Coetzee, addresses the issue of the therapeutic capacity of the novel, returning to the figure of the madwoman or hysteric. It raises the question of the woman writer specifically as a kind of committed medium/shaman in this new globalised world who attempts to bring about change for good and heal the world. Also, the novel mixes neo-Victorianism with contemporary psycho-geography to foreground the problem of self-reflexivity: what happens to agency and subjectivity when consciousness becomes both subject and object of its own scrutiny within the norms of patriarchy's objectification of women? The Victorian preoccupation with spiritualism, the invocation of the voices of the dead, becomes a figure for the contemporary woman writer's externalisation of an inner dialogic conflict that is concretised through the creation of character. Storytelling helps the writer, in this case Alison, from falling into ontological dissolution or even suicide as the control of inner voices through the artistic process allows for some wresting back of agency and empowerment, a rewriting of subjectivity within the constraints of patriarchal objectification. Like Spark, Lessing and Plath, Mantel is also a writer of voice – often indeed echoing their voices – a writer for whom self-knowledge is a process of listening into and externalising inner voices, rather than peering into consciousness conceived as the fixed set of a theatre or stage. As Waugh has recently argued:

> I will suggest that sound and voice are major agents for our feeling of immersion in fictional worlds, as important as "pictures," but almost always overlooked in our tendency to think of consciousness as an "inner theatre." Read attentively, most novels disturb the tendency to imagine an inner self

> that is unified and fixed, a shadowy homunculus, crouched in the dark, awaiting the searchlight of an inner eye that might illuminate and clarify its contours. ("The Novel as Therapy: Ministrations of Voice in an Age of Risk" 38)

Alison Hart, the heroine of *Beyond Black*, has ingeniously found ways to convert her traumatic voice hearing experiences as she talks to ghosts, spirits and demonic others by professionalising her capacities as she builds her career of latter day medium, summoning up ghosts for the bereaved and suffering as she travels around the edgelands of the London Orbital. From the first page of the novel, Mantel invokes a feeling of threat by evoking a place of margins and dark edges. She depicts a society that protects itself by removing misfits and rebellious women to the edges like lurking animals, whilst requiring that successful habitation of its centres means conformity to consumerist values and lives of household service. The motifs of globalisation, risk, fragility, violence and uncertainty are established from the very beginning, as the poisoned terrain of London's edgelands is presented as a contemporary Waste Land: "wastes looping London", "the leaves of the poisoned shrubs," "fridges dead on their backs, and starving ponies cropping the mud," "a landscape running with outcasts and escapees, with Afghans, Turks and Kurds: with scapegoats, scarred with bottle and burn marks, limping from the cities with broken ribs," and "something dead" stirring in the back seat of the car, "the Heathrow sheep, their fleece clotted with the stench of aviation fuel", with "burnt-out pedophiles," "[a] static cloud bank, like an ink smudge. Darkening air", and a land where "[c]olour has run out from" it (Mantel *Beyond Black* 1). All this is happening in present time, "the time of Le Pendu, the Hanged Man, swinging by his foot from the living tree. It is a time of suspension, of hesitation, of the indrawn breath" (1). This is a powerfully vivid, surreal yet penetrating image of the radically unsafe metropolis and outer landscapes (with its polluted, detrimental and toxic environments) inhabited by

impoverished immigrants, paedophiles and zombie-like creatures limping over a lethal dead land. "This is marginal land" (1).

Drawing upon Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire* (2000), and Gilles Deleuze's concept of a movement from a discipline society to a control society in *Negotiations* (1995), Nealon regards the contemporary era (post-postmodernism) as an intensification of postmodernism. As he observes, "post-postmodernism marks an intensification and mutation within postmodernism (which in its turn was of course a historical mutation and intensification of certain tendencies within modernism)" (78). He argues that postmodern surveillance has entered a new phase and has become less tangible but more constant and disembodied. This control society – an intensification of the postmodern surveillance which best manifests itself in the life and fiction of the cold war – can now be implemented via credit cards, subway passes, Web browsers, DNA and mobile data usage (92). As the world moves beyond late capitalism, postmodernism can no longer appropriately express its ethos.[145]

The contemporary world is now better defined in terms of transnational capital, or to use Nealon's term, an "economy of globalized control," which guarantees the "smooth flow of capital and goods" globally (93). This new control society no longer functions based on exclusion (as in a disciplinary society that would exclude minorities such as lepers, women, mad people, etc.). Rather, to guarantee the flow of capital, it celebrates multiplicity and difference (the Other), in contrast to the postmodern discourse of the high period of cold war.[146] As mentioned earlier, London, in the novel, is depicted as now run by the once

[145] Nealon explains that "Hardt and Negri suggest that we are witnessing not so much the end of imperialist or disciplinary power, but its intensification and transmutation into another kind of power. At its completion, one might say that the disciplinary power of imperialism doesn't merely halt, but it's forced to work differently, to develop to another modus operandi" (92).

[146] Nealon brings up Arby's chain commercial (1993) that celebrates "different is good" as an example of welcoming and celebrating (manipulating) difference and multiculturalism (93). Another good example would be L'Oreal's celebration of diversity by using a hijab-wearing model who has just (in January 2018) had to step down as her 2014 tweets are deemed anti-Israeli. L'Oreal declares that "L'Oreal Paris is committed to tolerance and respect toward all people. We agree with her decision to step down from the campaign." Even though she

marginalised and excluded: outcasts, Afghans, Turks and Kurds. Yet, simultaneously this new globalised, inclusive centre, inevitably creates new margins: "impoverished immigrants, pedophiles and zombie-like creatures" (Mantel *Beyond Black* 1).

The world of *Beyond Black* is also that of a new, transnational form of capital. It is the world of the globalised, control economy, in which the possession of a credit card triggers the fear of constant surveillance and tracking. Alison is fully aware of, and fed up with, this world. Her dismay is depicted in her asking a woman to cut up her credit card: "Al said, 'Look, darling. Let me give you a word of advice. Cut up that credit card. Throw away those catalogues. You can break these spending habits – well, you must, really. You have to grow up and exercise some self-*control*. Or I can see the bailiffs in, before Christmas'" (17 emphasis added).[147] Credit cards, catalogues, and later emails, are disembodied yet constant reminders of the power and control of transnational capital; the backdrop against which Alison struggles to preserve her sense of agency and control, to find a means of doing good and bringing about a positive change in the world (184).

The representative of this newly emerged, globalised power, is Colette, who decides to expand the business globally and turn Alison into a transnational brand. Yet, Alison shows no interest in being part of this transformation:

> Colette had got her online these days, e-mailing predictions around the globe and doing readings for people in different time zones. "I'd like to make you a global brand," Colette said. "Like …" Her sentence had tailed off. She could only think of fat things, like McDonald's and Coca-Cola. In Al's belief, the four of swords governed the Internet. (184)

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has officially apologised, L'Oreal's note gives one the impression that she has been made to step down by the corporation to prevent a potential decline in sales. Hence, the transnational corporation's respect for difference (inclusion of Muslim hijab-wearing women in advertising industry) is inevitably linked to its economic interest.

[147] Speaking of catalogues, Nealon's argument seems quite pertinent here. He draws our attention to the inescapability of control society, which is kept in hold by transnational corporations: "If you can't even escape your undergraduate alumni *magazine*, how can you hope to evade the grip of transnational corporations?" (92 emphasis added).

Alison feels a responsibility towards this expanded world as she reluctantly takes on a global, transnational role for herself. That is why she is so concerned with the desire to do good and bring about positive change: to be a solution, and to offer an alternative. So, in order to achieve this end of healing the world, she has turned towards mediumship, now a kind of pastiche of late Victorian spirituality. Her profession is a kind of shaman, and her interaction with benevolent and malevolent spirits, all projections of her own altered states of consciousness, represents an attempt to draw down other forces that might cure the world of its dis-ease.

The voices and spirits emanate from Alison's own consciousness. Yet, she is represented as a conduit for the widespread traumas of the world. In a sense, they come from her own self; hence, the expressive Romantic concept of the author as a lamp. On the other hand, they also emanate from this risky world, so Alison is also a mirror. The contemporary concept of authorship suggests that the author's function is complex and dialectical, exercising a negative capability in externalising the inner voices that are already internalisations of the afflictions, horrors and traumas of the external world. Exercising hyper-vigilant awareness, the dark other side of the bright new world of transnational commerce, Alison calls up its voices and transforms them into rowdy and colourful characters expressed in fictive language. Like Saleem, Alison's re-invention of the neo-Victorian shaman – the wounded healer – is an attempt to bring a spiritual cure to this contemporary spiritless wasteland and its lethargic people, who are only preoccupied with their properties as investments (as Al's neighbours after the death of Mart), and especially so, for medicine has failed to adequately cure their spiritual malaise. The author-function in the contemporary metamodernist world is thus a negative capability to project and substantialise those inner voices dialogically internalised – so they may become a vehicle for addressing the unsayable and the hidden of personal and social trauma and violence.

Princess Diana died in 1997, an event that marks a turning point for Alison; a new era starts after her death. As the narrator says, "[i]t was in the week after Diana's death that Colette felt she got to know Alison properly. It seems another era now, another world: before the millennium, before the Queen's Jubilee, before the Twin Towers burned" (74). The novel hyper-vigilantly carries a new sense of a culture of risk now much more pervasive than the 70s and 80s. This is a new, post 9/11 world, characterised by a rise in rates of mental illness (despite the widespread presence of psychiatric programmes), the intensification of the late capitalist economy into neo-liberalism and its accompanying global insecurities, and a world newly overflowing with refugees, the displaced, those without rights or basic human deserts.[148] Diana, as Queen of Hearts, is therefore taken up as symbol of a possible new Nobelsse oblige, of passion, enthusiasm, compassion, and fellow-feeling. A commitment to doing good in the world. Her death therefore requires a compensation. In this sense, Diana, for Alison, is similar to Elizabeth Drury, for John Donne's *An Anatomy of the World* (1611). Diana, too, is that rich soul which has now departed the globe. Like Diana, Alison wants to be the Queen of Hearts, too. As Alison keeps saying, she just wants to do good in life, and it is for this reason that she helps Mart. "It's not enough just to be nice" as she puts it, "[y]ou have to do a good action" (176) to change the world for the better; a metamodernist tenet. Alison's informed naiveté is expressed in her enthusiastic desire to enact change for the better, even though she so evidently fails with Mart. Jos de Mul views this conscious and self-aware enthusiasm as a Romantic desire conspicuous in contemporary art. As he puts it, "in Romantic art and philosophy enthusiasm for experiencing infinity is accompanied by the consciousness that this is an unachievable ambition" (233-34). Likewise, although Alison's compassion and fellow-feeling for Mart does not prevent a tragic death, her attempt at achieving the unachievable separates her from the other apathetic characters in the novel

[148] As Nealon puts it, "[t]he 'late' capitalism of that era (the tail end of the cold war) has since *intensified* into the 'just-in-time' (which is to say, all-the-time) capitalism of our neoliberal era" (79 emphasis added).

(especially the neighbours and Colette). That oscillation between modern or Romantic enthusiasm, and postmodern deconstructive apathia or cynicism, offers at least a new sincerity, an alternative to nihilistic stasis and lethargy. As these writers suggest, this is the function of the new metamodernist author.

The earlier postmodernist feminist concern with gender issues – such as lack of agency and objectification of women – is likewise intensified. Alison's voice hearing – at this stage of the novel, indirectly – is linked to the hazardous conditions for women in a society that continuously objectifies, degrades, controls or objectifies them. It is a society where women's sense of self-integrity is at constant risk of total annihilation. As recent clinical studies suggest, women are more susceptible to developing "certain forms of voice-hearing (voices conversing) and to have antecedent events of trauma, physical illness, and relationship problems" (McCarthy-Jones *et al.* 1). The foundations of this unsafe, insecure society – particularly for women – are gradually revealed first in intimations of the desperate necessity to Alison of her profession if she is to remain sane, and of its necessity to the many haunted women of the edgelands who seek her services and then, gradually, the unfolding of her violent, neglected and utterly dysfunctional childhood – molested and abused by threatening male figures.

Accompanying this evocation of wastelands is a grammatically effective shift of object pronouns in the narrative that presents Alison passivised by the condition of things just as when the voices arrive: "you can't send them back. The dead won't be coaxed and they won't be coerced" (Mantel *Beyond Black* 1), as if, ultimately, there is no way to control the arrival and presence of the voices at all. An expressionist style of connection is built between the perilous landscape and the absence of a sense of any independence or agency of its inhabitants, especially if they are female and impoverished. The reader is unable to discern the source of the narrative voice in the opening of the novel. Is it Alison, the narrator, or

Mantel herself who is the speaker, first referring to Alison in the third person: "[beside] her", but then a few lines further on exclaiming, "[i]t's no good asking *me* whether I'd choose to be like this, because I've never had a choice" (1 emphasis added). The subject of the object pronouns "her" and "me" as well as the subject pronoun "I" are not locatable: Alison is a medium, but is she also the medium for her narrator's voice? The novel immediately appears to use the literal existence of Alison as a medium as a figure for exploration of the curious ontological status of voice in fiction as well as a vehicle to articulate the voicelessness of the poor and oppressed and especially women in a neo-liberal still patriarchal culture.

Once the key themes of Alison's life – risk, child abuse, violence, death, and poison – are established, the narrative begins its own hermeneutic journey towards the revelation of the personal and cultural sources of Alison's traumatic voices. Though seemingly related to the supernatural or "Spirit" – as the jargon in the narrative puts it – the voices are auditory verbal hallucinations that signal Alison's traumatic experiences in the past that she continues to live with in the present. The first voice speaking with Alison in the novel is that of Morris, her spirit guide who has a berating tone, scolding her professional abilities. Criticising Alison's choice of partner, Morris refers to Colette, Alison's P.A. and manager, as a "[f]ucking stuck-up cow" and "[w]hite-faced fucking freak. She's like a bloody ghoul. Where did you get her, gel, a churchyard?" (7). This is a point confirmed by another colleague of Alison: "It seems to me that your guide is on a very low vibratory plane, very low indeed. Had you been drinking when he first made contact?" (7). Again in the ambiguity-laden form of free indirect speech, which mingles the voice of Alison with that of the narrator, the reader learns, "[h]er colleague was right, Morris was a low person. How did she get him? She probably deserved him, that was all there was to it" (7). We might attribute the narratorial voice here to Alison, but her low opinion of herself is a product of the internalisation of

voices who have already robbed her of self-esteem so that she assumes that she does not deserve anything or anyone better.

Auditory verbal hallucinations frequently carry a berating and scolding tone among those who hear voices, whether the traumatised or those suffering from psychotic illnesses such as schizophrenia. These voices are often distressing, malevolent and accusatory.[149] The psychologist McCarthy-Jones gives an account of a woman who develops a voice which blames her for the rape she was subject to in her teenage years as an example of how "themes of shame and guilt pervade many people's voices" (*Can't You Hear Them? The Science and Significance of Hearing Voices* 147). Morris has an accusatory tone towards Alison, undermining any initiative with scorn and mockery, as when she goes to view a new house, in an effort to better herself and he first mocks the house and then starts threatening her (Mantel *Beyond Black* 128).[150] He blames her for endless misdemeanours running back to childhood, such as not studying hard enough when she was at school, when in fact she was barely able to concentrate at all because of the horrific abuse and violence that was happening at home (200). Morris carries here the voice of the unsympathetic schoolteacher who punishes Alison instead of making the effort to understand and to empathise with her situation.

Morris threatens but is also a vehicle eventually for the reworking of all the threatening voices from childhood – mother, rapists, teachers, family members, social workers – so that as she is able to listen to them through the distancing mechanism of dissociation, to make them real as fictional characters become real, so she slowly begins to remember and to understand that: it was not her fault. So the ambiguous agencies of free

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[149] Many scholars have expanded on the nature of auditory verbal hallucinations and their types including the accusatory, such as McCarthy-Jones in *Hearing Voices* (2012) and Bruce J. Cohen in *Theory and Practice of Psychiatry* (2003). As McCarthy-Jones puts it, "[i]t is plausible that emotions such as guilt, shame, self blame and anger, as well as a lack of social support, lead to traumas reverberating in the mind to a greater degree, and play a role in the development of malevolent voices" (*Hearing Voices: The Histories, Causes, and Meanings of Auditory Verbal Hallucinations* 301).

[150] Angela Woods in "On shame and Voice-hearing" (2017) explores how auditory verbal hallucinations are often likened to "a wide range of negative emotions" (1) and gives accounts of two voice-hearers experiencing shame and guilt. One of them says, "I heard the voices of demons screaming at me, telling me that I was damned, that God hated me, and that I was going to hell" (1).

indirect discourse are resolved as she becomes able to occupy the narrator's voice. But guilt and shame are difficult emotions to work through, causing the person "to become hypervigilant for signs that their social status (and potentially their physical safety) is threatened" (McCarthy-Jones *Can't You Hear Them? The Science and Significance of Hearing Voices* 149) and allowing an increase of "the likelihood of someone trying to suppress thoughts and emotions related to the trauma, causing them to, ironically, rebound with greater vigour unexpectedly into consciousness" (150). Psychologists such as Richard Bentall have revealed through extensive research and case studies how "being raped increases the odds of voice-hearing sixfold" (McCarthy-Jones *et al.* 4). Similarly, the voices Alison hears are initially unacknowledged as the vigorous recurrence of the suppressed internalised emotions (such as guilt and shame) related to her disturbed, traumatised past.[151] Mantel not only draws our attention to the mechanics of the novelist as a voice hearer but also to the serious issues of violence that women face in society. As McCarthy-Jones *et al.* continue: "In 2011, the US National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (40) found that 18.3% of women reported being raped in their lifetime (compared to 1.4% of men)" (4).

Even before her own abuse, we learn that Alison was witness to many of the men with whom her mother, a prostitute, sleeps; how this careless though equally abjected mother forgets to send her to school; how, because she does not own a swimming costume her teacher threatens humiliation, that she should swim "in her knickers"; another of her peer group threatens that he will "push a bottle up your bleeding whatnot, and—I don't think it's very nice, miss – ram it in till your guts come out your mouf" (Mantel *Beyond Black* 55). Alison's childhood is the continuous experience of violence towards women: hiding in the kitchen as she believes the vicious Keith is coming after her, she tells Colette that "I was never so frightened as then; that was my worst moment" (57). On another occasion later on,

[151] As Waugh has it, auditory verbal hallucinations "may express unacknowledged aspects of the self, expand, yet threaten to dissolve, its boundaries" ("Memory and Voices" 321).

Keith with two men intrudes into Alison's room and a man pushes her into a back room. The day after, she hears a voice (57). This voice is an externalisation of the shock. Later on Alison recalls when she was sent to school with an empty stomach, that she was laughed at and her nipple is grabbed and twisted by Mr MacArthur on her way back home (217). We also understand that Morris's habit is to grab at her breast throughout her childhood (224). McCarthy-Jones *et al.* note:

> Many studies of women and madness already demonstrate how patriarchy has reinterpreted women's anger, suffering, and oppression into signs of mental pathology . . . and feminists have shown how diagnoses may be suffused with the dominant ideologies of their time and place and used to regulate behaviour. (1)

Alison's externalisation of her traumatic past in the form of inner voices is a reworking, a thinking back of the woman writer through her mothers, that reaches back to the rape of Philomel that leaves women without a voice or a tongue, to the abjection of the madwoman in the attic, Mr. Rochester's wife, in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), the projection of Jane's repressed own anger, in Gilbert and Gubar's famous interpretation (360).[152]

The ghosts whose voices Alison hears are shadowy figures in the same way as the men who threatened Alison violently are now shadowy presences in her memory. When she is about 9 years old playing alone outside, Alison sees unidentified intrusive and menacing male figures: "But then a minute later she thought they were men she didn't know. It was hard to tell. They kept their faces turned away. A sick feeling crept over her. Silent, faces downcast, the men moved over the tussocky grass. Silent, faces downcast, they passed the boxes. She couldn't judge the distance from herself to them; it was as if the light had grown

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[152] As Gilbert and Gubar put it, "Bertha, in other words, is Jane's truest and darkest double: she is the angry aspect of the orphan child, the ferocious secret self Jane has been trying to repress ever since her days at Gateshead" (360). It is worth noting what Hilary Mantel thinks of Jane Eyre: "I remember the first time I read *Jane Eyre*: probably every woman writer does, because you recognise, when you have hardly begun it, that you are reading a story of yourself" (*Giving up the Ghost: A Memoir* 246).

more thick and dense" (58). She sees shadowy threatening figures whose identity she cannot confirm as they hide their faces in the dubious semi-twilight atmosphere. At almost the same age she develops sleepwalking habits and the reader later learns that she was molested by Keith. On a different occasion, as Alison recalls, Morris comes "limping towards her" (67). At school, he puts his hand on her knee and starts squeezing then pushes her skirt up (70) and when she screams and accuses him, she is suspended. The scene reminds the reader of the limping imagery at the very beginning of the story, stitching together the literal and the metaphoric, the public and the private.

Rushdie, Coetzee and Mantel refigure the concept of the wounded storyteller that the medical sociologist Arthur Frank raises up in *The Wounded Storyteller* (1995) and with this, the question of the ethical responsibility of the author. Frank's key argument is that illness has a story that we need to listen to in order to learn by telling and sharing. He adduces examples including his own experience of cancer to show how the dominant scientific medical discourse (a biopolitical discourse intensified under the efficiency and profit regimes of neo-liberalism) silences the stories that each illness might tell and dehumanises the patient, treating them not as persons but as specimens, a case. Via its "general unifying view", this discourse takes away personal experience and individuality. So "more and more people, with varying degrees of articulation and action, express suspicion of medicine's reduction of their suffering to its general unifying view" (11).[153] Frank goes on to argue that the stories that illness tells are not simply about illness; they are told "*through* a wounded body" as they spring directly from people's afflicted bodies (2): not just the disabled but the debilitated and the derided. He contends bodies have their own story; disrupted by illness, the body needs a

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[153] Frank gives the example of a person who required surgery due to mouth cancer and his surgeon used an innovative technique. Then, the surgeon published an article about the surgery but the name of the patient was not even mentioned: "Thus in 'his' article he [the patient] was systematically ignored as anyone – actually anything – other than a body. But for medical purposes it was not his article at all; it was his surgeon's article. This is exactly the colonization that Spivak speaks of: the master text of the medical journal article needs the suffering person, but the individuality of that suffering cannot be acknowledged" (12).

new story (2). As the medical language/discourse silences the story behind illness, it colonises the body: Frank draws a direct analogy with colonisation (much like Rushdie and Coetzee).

Thus, the ill person needs to construct a new map by telling a story. In other words, the postmodern expression to reclaim the occupied, colonised land/body is to find "one's voice" (72). Moreover, in the contemporary era, there is little opportunity for the patient to speak, given cuts, clinical costs and the increasingly limited time physicians have at their disposal in a broken welfare system. Consequently, patients "speak elsewhere. The post-colonial impulse is acted out less in the clinic than in stories that members of the remission society tell each other about their illnesses" (13).[154] Therefore, this voice is that of a post-colonial writer – given that anyone who tells the story is a writer. As Frank stipulates:

> As a post-colonial voice, the storyteller seeks to reclaim her own experience of suffering. As she seeks to tum that suffering into testimony, the storyteller engages in moral action. The themes of body, voice, and illness culminate in the ethics made uniquely possible in postmodern times. Postmodernity is not often described in ethical terms, and when it is, the assessment is usually that "postmodern ethics" is an oxymoron. (18)

Storytelling is therefore an ethical act and responsibility. The ethical responsibility of metamodern illness stories and "the post-colonial ill person" lies in rejection of the medical "unifying general view" and in an understanding what the "illness means in life" (13).

In the same vein, Alison's doctor fails in diagnosing the real causes of her problems and instead focuses on checking her cholesterol, blood pressure, thyroid and endocrine system: all biologised, technical and de-humanising jargons. As the doctor says, "[y]ou're probably diabetic. I suppose we ought to get your cholesterol checked, though I don't know

[154] By "remission society," Frank means "all those people who, like me, were effectively well but could never be considered cured" (8).

why we bother" (Mantel *Beyond Black* 175). Medical materialism reduces deep suffering to biologistic diagnosis, failing to address or understand the hidden traumatic causes that rest in this broken society. "'Come on, come on', the doctor said. 'There are people waiting out there'" "Never mind your shoes, we haven't time for that, you can get back into your shoes when you get outside. Roll up your sleeve" (175). The doctor's voice is even threatening: "You're not registered with two doctors, are you? . . . Because if you are, I warn you, the system will catch up with you. You can't pull that stunt" (175). But where medicine as a therapy fails to address and deal with the underlying traumas of a threatening world, stories must become a remedy. Alison, feeling she has lost her body's agency as it has been colonised, to borrow Frank's terminology, sets out to tell all the underlying stories of her maimed and violated body. In other words, the novelist in our contemporary time is a wounded figure who speaks to the singularities of the dead and the debilitated.

Likewise, Mantel's main motivation and inspiration in writing up her memoir, *Giving up the Ghost*, lies in her need to tell the story of her body's illness. She too has suffered from a debilitating illness, been diagnosed with psychotic illness, put onto antipsychotic drugs. She gets "sick with a chronic illness, swollen by steroid medication" (*Giving up the Ghost: A Memoir* 11), is hospitalised for an "echocardiogram" (28) and is finally diagnosed as having endometriosis – a woman's disorder – and has to go through a perilous surgery. The result of this health condition and surgery is the inability to have children and a *continuous* steroid *treatment* which gains her enormous weight and a drastic change of appearance. In her own words:

> I have hesitated . . . before beginning this narrative. For a long time, I felt as if someone else were writing my life. I seemed able to create or interpret characters in fiction, but not able to create or interpret myself. About the time I reached mid-life, I began to understand why this was. The book of me was

> indeed being written by other people: by my parents, by the child I once was, and by my own unborn children, stretching out their ghost fingers to grab the pen. I began this writing in an attempt to seize the copyright in myself. (70-1)

Medicine's failure is also evident in Mantel's memoir. Putting her on antidepressants is an act of silencing the problem rather than addressing the underlying causes. If the problem is not found in her body, her mind must be the source and needs to be fixed (178). The description of her encounter with a psychiatrist is quite similar to that of Alison's. Her doctor's diagnosis is "stress, caused by overambition," similar to the belief "that women were made ill by their wombs cutting loose and wandering about their bodies" (174). The psychiatrist asks her if it would be better for her to work in her mother's shop rather than studying law (174), the underlying assumption being that studying, implied and represented in the term "overambition," is the cause of her illness.[155] Like Virginia Woolf, her doctors ask her not to write; her doctors deny to her as a woman the possibility of becoming an author (180). She realises that her body is not her own but "a thing done to, a thing operated on" (211).

So Mantel explains her main aims behind writing stories and her memoir. She looks for an alternative therapy. She says, "I am writing in order to take charge of the story of my childhood and my childlessness; and in order to locate myself, if not within a body, then in the narrow space between one letter and the next, between the lines where the ghosts of meaning are" and continues, "I have been so *mauled by medical procedures*, so sabotaged and made over, so thin and so far, that sometimes I feel that each morning it is necessary to *write myself into being*" (222 emphasis added). She seeks to construct her self and her being as an active agent, rather than a passive vegetable. Or one would be "dried out like an old

[155] Mantel notices and comments upon medicine's failure in addressing the serious issues lying in her illness: "It was in the nature of educated young women, it was believed, to be hysterical, neurotic, difficult, and out of control, and the object was to get them back under control, not by helping them examine their lives, or fix their practical problems – in my case, silverfish, sulking family, poverty, cold – but by giving them drugs which would make them indifferent to their mental pain – and in my case, indifferent to physical pain too" (*Beyond Black* 177).

quill pen" (223). The metaphor of ink as blood, circulating through and coming from the body is also evident in *Ink in the Blood* (2010), a diary that she wrote after a hospitalisation and operation, similar to Virginia Woolf's "On Being Ill" (1926). She turns this "devil's dictionary of anguish" (*Ink in the Blood: A Hospital Diary*) into a literary work.

Alison's profession as a psychic, medium, and the tendency among the characters, major and minor, towards the practice of mediumship is a practice of Victorian spiritualism which allows her, as well as Mantel, to address, understand and come to terms with her traumas (her traumatic past). Alison, together with almost all the characters in the novel, is a liminal character, on the edgelands of the world of the new metropolis, just as the medium lives on the edgeland of the world between the dead and the living. As the narrator puts it, "[t]he next book she bought – from a different bookshop – was *An Encyclopedia of the Psychic Arts*. Occult, she discovered, meant *hidden*. She was beginning to feel that everything of interest was *hidden*. And none of it in the obvious places; don't, for example, look in trousers" (Mantel *Beyond Black* 31 emphasis added). Her motivation to delve into the magical and clairvoyant is to understand what medicine (doctors, psychologists and psychiatrists) fails to see: the *hidden* causes of one's traumas and "the complete mystery of human relationships" that people reductively simplify as sex (39). The psychic profession ("crystal healing" (38), fortune telling, tarots) gives her, even unknowingly, the opportunity to negotiate with her own past, an act that other instruments, that claim they could bring about therapy, fail to do. This act of practising mediumship allows Alison to write an illness narrative which touches upon the risky, fragile, threatening world around her. These "illness narratives," as Frank call them, are a "form of self-story" and come in different forms such as spiritual autobiographies, stories of becoming a man or a woman and what that gender identity involves, and finally survivor stories of inflicted traumas such as war, captivity, incest, and abuse" (69). What Mantel does both in her memoir and novel is what Frank calls

"reflexive monitoring," that is, "the perpetual readjustment of past and present to create and sustain a good story"; it is "the creation of a coherent self-story, the re-creation of memory, and the assumption of responsibility" (65-6). It is an act of responsibility because the illness narrative refuses the narrative of surrender (Frank 16). Alison's story and Mantel's memoir are acts of reflexive monitoring, attempts to restore memory and readjust past and present to construct a coherent story: the creation of a coherent self. Alison's listening to the voices and her special attention to Mart are acts of revisiting her own past/self, negotiating with the past. While others gang against him, she allows him in, just as she allows in the ghosts.

In some ways, Mantel is picking up on, and evoking, what is called neo-Victorianism. She is writing about the mediumship and spiritualism that arose so intensely at the end of the nineteenth century, during a period of the crisis of Christian faith as people turned to mediums to get in touch with their loved ones and their dead. Yet, the dead here are not the ghosts living at a supernatural layer but voices from the depth of consciousness which have been suppressed in the contemporary world, similar to the nineteenth century's moral code and its own emphasis on notions of self-restraint and self-denial. Mantel shows how this use of mediums and therapeutic culture is flourishing because people want consolation, the belief that they can connect across the dead world of transnational capitalism into a more vibrant realm of the dead who may become undead. And of course she is using it as a motif for the novelist and asking what does a novelist do (the novelist's function) in this culture. In some way, this is the condition of the novel in our contemporary time; this is a novel about England but it is also a novel that indicts the global neo-liberal culture that is larger than the nation; the way its luxury sits on a wasteland, its lack of empathy, the ecological blight on the land, its people turning to consumer goods and sex because they can no longer find meaning or finding meaning in New Age cultishness: the echoes of Eliot's modernist poem are everywhere in this metamodernist novel. That is why Mantel is fascinated with the profession

of mediumship and shapes her character into a medium, a kind of double or alter ego: to address and understand her self in a threatening world, where a man molests her on an escalator (*Giving up the Ghost: A Memoir* 185), and to gain agency in a world where women are shrunk to "vegetables" (198). The novel is therapeutic and consolatory but it also opens up a social critique of the roots of dis-ease. It situates its models of authorship in social contexts. It is existential (as it writes and constructs a self), political (as it lays bare the oppressing laws and norms such as that of patriarchy) and social (as it aims to connect and empathise with other fellow humans). For the woman writer in the wake of the death of the author, it announces "Me-too."

T. S. Eliot's famous dictum in shaping his definition of poetry in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" is that the man who writes is completely different from the man who suffers. For Eliot, the role of the writer and the material of the work is to be impersonal. The poet struggles with language and shapes it into the work of art. He points to the poet's immersion in the literature and voices of the past. Mantel transfers Eliot's idea of the poet as medium to the popular culture of spirit mediums: where the writer serves as a conduit for the traumatic and the violated and the dead so does the medium of popular culture. Alison's ritualistic performance is Eliot's shaping into form. First she simply aims to please her audience, like putting on the exotic dresses as she prefers "something to capture the gaze, something to shiver, something to shine" (Mantel *Beyond Black* 6), but gradually she recognises that the performance is actually an evasion, a way of not facing the desperation before her. So, like Saleem, she turns her trauma into something positive, worrying about the ethics of what she is doing, whether it is charlatanism. Then she starts to revisit the past. An analogy is made between Alison's traumatised voices that are actually people in her world and the idea of the author creating characters through harnessing voices in the head and turning them into characters in this kind of impersonal space. The process is risky, uncertain,

the self never simply rational and unified. The London Orbital, full of broken down vehicles, odd characters, all in "an oily dimness" (124), is a kind of surreal counterpart to Dicken's London. This is the new risk society, a society of precarity, where fragility has become our sense of things. It calls for a rethink of both novel and author.

Alison, from childhood, has lived in a society which regards women as objects, effectively reducing them to agentless machines, ventriloquizing society's norms. Alison regards herself as an "answering machine" (17) and initially therefore feels she can exert little agency or control over the voices. Likewise, Colette's ex, Gavin, treats her too like a machine. As she has it, "[i]n bed he kept pressing her clit with his finger, as if he were inputting a sale on the cash machine" (31). In such an unsafe, "risk society," to use Ulrich Beck's terms, with its intrusive and monstrous male figures (from burglars to paedophiles and molesting men) who treat women as agentless objects, it is hardly surprising that women feel in control neither of their bodies nor their destinies and lives. "[P]roblematic, distressing voice-hearing," as McCarthy-Jones tells us, "may derive from not feeling safe in the world" (*Can't You Hear Them? The Science and Significance of Hearing Voices* 143).[156] As the narrator tells us, most of Alison's clients are young women: similarly, most of the voice-hearers in the novel or "psychics" to use the terminology of the profession, except two, are women (43).

"Since the Greeks," Waugh observes, "the disembodied voice is understood to carry authority, to command obedience" ("The Novelist as Voice Hearer" e55). The acousmatic or disembodied and unlocatable voice, as for Pythagoras's followers, carries immense authority, is enigmatic and eerie, conducive of a profound ontological insecurity that produces a desire to believe in the absolute authority of the voice itself as in the characters of Beckett's Trilogy. To repeat Steven Connor's observation: "[s]ound, and especially the sound of the human

[156] On the subject of our contemporary world as a risk society, one could read *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* (1992) and *World at Risk* (2009) by Ulrich Beck.

voice, is experienced as enigmatic or anxiously incomplete until its source can be identified, which is usually to say, visualized" (*Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* 20). Alison appears to be a victim of a patriarchal society (under the coercion of the voices/ghosts). However, she goes through a spectrum that expands from agentlessness (victimisation) towards a process of gaining agency by coming to terms with the voices she hears. Her lack of agency is more manifest when the voices talk about her, not directly to her. This implies that Alison experiences herself as an object, rather than an active subject.[157]

So, gradually, Alison learns to become an active participant in a dialogue, to come to terms with the voices from her past, allowing reintegration of the fragments of a dissociative self in order to feel less unsafe. In the beginning, she has little agency in coping with the voices outside the performances where she controls the ensembles and creates her exotic effects: "But can we switch the tape off, please? Morris is threatening me. He doesn't like me talking about the early days. He doesn't want it recorded" (Mantel *Beyond Black* 66). By the end of the novel, however, she is able to conjure up benign and caring voices like that of Mrs. McGibbet: "'Ah, who called me back?' says Mrs. McGibbet. And she says, 'I did, Alison. I need your help'" (222).

So the novel, expanding the metaphor of the author as medium offers an insight into how novelists are able to shape their inner voices into characters to gain agency. As Waugh notes:

> It can, therefore, be instructive to reflect on how novelists build their voices into characters to both control them and build a sense of connective intimacy with readers. Perhaps helping distressed voice hearers to build voices into

[157] Research reveals, as MacCarthy-Jones *et al.* observe: "Women, more often than men, had voices that conversed with each other about them. … this could reflect the long-term objectification and devaluation of women in our culture, with women being objects that are talked about, rather than subjects with whom to talk. This is consistent with our qualitative finding that women voice-hearers experienced abusive, infantilising discourses, which treated them as objects. . . . One way to cope with such objectifying, conversing voices may be to make oneself a subject, not an object" ("Hearing the Unheard" 13).

> characters might help to mitigate the uncanny power of the disembodied voice to subvert the self's sense of its own agency. ("The Novelist as Voice Hearer" e55)

It is a similar mechanism to that described in our tendency towards singing along with a song we hear.[158] McCarthy-Jones gives us indicative examples of the therapeutic aspect of the ability to listen and respond to inner voices in "Sensing the Dead is Perfectly Normal – and Often Helpful" (2017).[159] The title of the article perfectly expresses the main idea.

Although Morris is not really a spirit guide but one of Alison's inner voices, ironically he, together with other voices, guides and helps her to gradually acknowledge that he represents a fragment of her own traumatised past and she starts to listen and speak to it. As she notes towards the end of the novel, the voices "took out my will and put in their own" (Mantel *Beyond Black* 192). Since the voices are negative, they are likely signals of serious issues. As Simon MacCarthy-Jones has it, "negative voices could be seen as warning signals" (*Can't You Hear Them? The Science and Significance of Hearing Voices* 308). Engaging these voices is risky: they might bring about the complete disintegration of the self.

As Woolf does in *Mrs Dalloway*, Mantel uses the device of the double to explore this thin line between creative authorship and agency and the abjection that ensues when brutal internalised voices refuse to be integrated into an ongoing self-authorisation of subjectivity. If Alison is Mantel's double, Mart is Alison's, each representing two possible approaches to hearing voices, like Clarissa who is drawn to positive experiences in memory and able to control the process, as opposed to Septimus who is drowned by the terrible haunting of the

[158] As Connor argues, our tendency to sing with a song is to turn the "bad voice" (our voice which has been disembodied or not belonging to us) into a "good voice" (the voice of others that becomes that of oneself as when we sing with the song) (*Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* 32).

[159] "Take the experience of Aggie, which she recounted to researchers as part of a study of bereavement hallucinations. Her boyfriend knew he was dying but hid it, ending their relationship to try to spare her pain. After he died, Aggie heard his voice apologising for pushing her away at the end. She had partly blamed herself for his death and felt guilty. Hearing his voice helped Aggie to forgive herself" (McCarthy-Jones "Sensing the Dead Is Perfectly Normal – and Often Helpful").

past. Like Alison, Malt was subject to violence in childhood, as for instance when his father beat his head with a pipe (Mantel *Beyond Black* 158). Alison realises that both "have a lot in common" (162) and she quickly identifies with him as her male alter ego. He too hears voices and believes he has had encounters with aliens, witnessing how they took his friend Pito up into their spaceship and erased his tattoos as they returned him to earth (163). The character of Mart, like that of Septimus as against Clarissa, is the alter ego of Alison, the one who is unable to come to terms with his voices and who is diagnosed as paranoid-schizophrenic and commits suicide. But Alison, finding in her profession – like any author- the means to harness and creatively transform her voices – is saved and she is saved in part – like Clarissa herself, by Septimus – by opening her heart to Mart and recognising her own capacities. Ignoring, or being unable to deal with inner voices may lead to suicide.[160] Suppressing them by taking medication does not help either, as pills have failed to help Mart (157).[161] And here lies the novelist's ability in transmuting memories and past traumas into the deflected ontology of the fictional world, with seemingly palpable characters who are externalisations of inner voices. Waugh equates writing a novel to this ability that she calls a "negative capability" ("Memory and Voices" 321). This controlled liberation of hallucinations, fiends and monsters of memory, has a therapeutic function: to re-integrate a dissociative self, that would otherwise be subject to total ontological annihilation. This is the valuable insight into authorship that this novel provides as do other women writers before her – Charlotte Brontë, Virginia Woolf – Mantel reveals her understanding of self/subjectivity to be an amalgamation of manifold selves, a pattern or a "synthesis of multiple selves" as Sebastian Groes and Nick

[160] McCarthy-Jones gives an account of Karen's hearing voice experiences as an example of the risk of ignoring the inner voices. When Karen denies the voices, they become worse but when the therapist helps enter a dialogue/interview with them, they start to disappear (*Can't You Hear Them? The Science and Significance of Hearing Voices* 281).

[161] McCarthy-Jones and Eleanor Longden in "The Voices Others Cannot Hear" have endeavoured to show that the use of medication as a way to suppress the inner voices, is not helpful at all and might have dangerous outcomes in the end.

Lavery paraphrase it (304). Put simply, fiction is the externalisation and slow transformation of inner voices into fully fledged characters.

It is only when Alison starts to listen and talk to Morris that she recalls and notices her wounded past and then is able finally to rid herself of all fiends. In an exchange of words, she resists the accusations Morris has brought and retorts assertively: "Morris, if you want to keep your job, I want some answers. If you don't give me answers I'm going to give up this game. I'll go back and work in a cake shop. I'll work in the chemist like I used to. I'll scrub floors if I have to. I'm going to give it up, and then where will you be?" (Mantel *Beyond Black* 212). She does not simply passively let things just happen to her anymore, but rises up and defends herself against the violence, bullying, mocking, that is embodied in Morris and his crew. In other words, the first step to liberate the hallucinations is to listen to, acknowledge and to begin the conversation with them, to initiate a dialogic story-telling process. As she opens her heart, so she opens her house to the stranger Mart, extending an hospitality that allows her to arrive at a more generous relationship to herself. The voices exert an ethical function too. Through listening to and entering a dialogue with them, Alison is the only character in the novel – and a figure for the novelist herself – who is able to show passion and empathy. The neighbours, uncaring, are more concerned about the negative effects death can have on their business that is the value of their homes:

> "This is your fault," Michelle shouted up at the house. She turned to her neighbours. "If they hadn't encouraged him, he'd have gone and hanged himself somewhere else." "Now," said a woman from a Frobisher, "we'll be in the local paper as that place where the tramp topped himself, and that won't be very nice for our resale values. (211)

Lack of understanding and empathy for others and inability to imagine and listen to the voices of other is also evident in Alison's former teacher Mrs Clerides who scorns Alison for

writing "gibberish" in her diary when she is a child. Her diary reads: "'Slurp, slurp, yum yum', said Harry. 'Give us some', said Blighto. 'No', said Harry. 'Today it is all for me'" (61). Yet, Alison retorts by explaining the context: "'It's a dog writing, [i]t's Serene. She's the witness. She tells how Harry polished his bowl. When he'd done you could see your face in it'" (61). Mrs Clerides's lack of understanding and empathy, her incapacities in fictionalisation/storytelling, stand at odds with Alison's powerful imagination in creating fictional characters, others, like the dog in this case, and communicating with their voices. Alison is doing what a novelist does. It is only through acknowledging the voices and responding to them, that she is able to reorient and preserve all her voices, the art of the musical score perhaps, that renders the concerto of the self ever changing. As Hodges and Klein note on empathy, "[i]f people connect other people's experiences to their own, in some sense, it is as if they have created an annex or appendix to the self" (441). Empathy blurs "the line between self and other" (Decety 35); hence, merging one's self with that of another.

Of Eichmann in his trial, Hannah Arendt in *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963) writes:

> The longer one listened to him, the more obvious it became that his inability to speak was closely connected with an inability to think, namely, *to think from the standpoint of somebody else*. No communication was possible with him, not because he lied but because he was surrounded by the most reliable of all safeguards against the words and the presence of others, and hence against reality as such. (27 emphasis added)

Eichmann's inability to listen to other voices, to empathise, to think where he is not and to imagine other standpoints and therefore turning imaginary voices into characters – in other words, to fictionalise – is the source of what Arendt describes as his "banality of evil." Likewise, the serial killer Charles Manson described himself as being disconnected from any

feelings of empathy and sensitivity, unable to listen to and understand others' sufferings. As the presiding commissioner John Peck at Manson's parole hearing session put it, Manson showed "exceptionally callous disregard for human suffering" and he emphasised "Manson's lack of understanding of the magnitude of this crime" (Peck and Robles). This is at the psychopath end of the spectrum, but as with Alison's neighbours, they too are indications of what it might mean to be incapable of listening to one's inner voices. They suggest an ethical function for the novel as well as an existential and therapeutic one. They suggest that the act of authorship as a listening to and shaping of the voices that are heard within is not necessarily a sign of madness and a disadvantage but a privilege, a gift that, if managed, might acknowledge, celebrate and understand the multiplicity of voices/selves and sufferings and the very complex process of authorship that is still the reflexive focus of the novel in that post 9/11 age of risk and terror that is the twenty first century.[162][163]

[162] In other words, auditory verbal hallucinations may occur in any person. As Oliver Sacks notes, "[p]erhaps the commonest auditory hallucination is hearing one's own name spoken – either by a familiar voice or an anonymous one" (40).

[163] McCarthy-Jones notes that "[c]onceding that brain changes are associated with voice-hearing does not inevitably mean voice-hearing is a dysfunction, that it must be treated by drugs and that it doesn't have a basis in emotionally overwhelming life events" (*Can't You Hear Them? The Science and Significance of Hearing Voices* 311).

Conclusion

> Madness need not be all breakdown. It may also be break-through. It is potentially liberation and renewal as well as enslavement and existential death (Laing *The Politics of Experience, and, the Bird of Paradise* 110)

Questions of authorship in fiction and theory merit special research treatment because, as Andrew Bennett argues, "[l]iterary theory . . . is largely a question of author theory" (Bennett *The Author* 4). Not only does this study disclose and examine different functions and concepts of authorship in fiction and theory from the 1950s and 1960s to the present, but it also reveals, at least implicitly, a trajectory of some of the modes and functions of the novel as a genre in the last few decades. My contention is that the explicit terms of much of the theoretical and philosophical debate surrounding the concept of authorship in the moment of High Theory in the 1980s, had already been engaged, albeit often more implicitly, in literary fictions, by writers themselves, including Jorge Luis Borges, Samuel Beckett, John Fowles, Vladimir Nabokov, Muriel Spark, Doris Lessing, and Sylvia Plath. This thesis examined the fortunes of the authorship debate and the conceptualisations and functions of authorship both before, during, and after the Death of the Author came to prominence as one of the key foci for the moment of High Theory in the 1980s. The thesis examined how, rather than postmodern fiction being driven by the theoretical turn, such debate has been intrinsic to fiction and in particular to the fiction of the post-war years. Writers such as Borges, Beckett and Fowles began to problematise the concept of authorship; later novelists such as Rushdie, Coetzee, Mantel, in turn fought back against the killing-off of the author by critics and theoreticians, finding their own agency and a reconceptualisation of authorship in the age of the supposed demise of the author.

The thesis investigated the historical moment of the emergence of the concept of the death of the author in literary and cultural theory, which coincides with critics no longer seeing themselves as handmaids or explicators of the text, but instead viewing their relation to the text as one of creative rewriting. It examined the trajectories that authorship has taken before, during, and after the rise of Theory, in order to investigate some of the prevailing concepts and functions of fictional authorship from the 1950s to the present. To this aim, the thesis explored the so-called "theory revolution" that began to take shape in the late 1960s, with the writing of Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, and Michel Foucault, each of whom questioned the foundations of the humanist Romantic/expressive concept of authorship. One focus of my investigation is the undertheorisation of gender in the work of these key theorists so that the focus of the first part of the thesis explores how, as opposed to death, women writers turn rather to madness as the gateway to a new authorship and agency in the feminist discourses of *écriture feminine* and the vexed question of "writing the body" that took centre stage in the new second wave feminism of the 1980s. Feminist discourses on authorship did not appear until the 1970s (Germaine Greer, Kate Millett, Shulamith Firestone), though Virginia Woolf had directly addressed the question of female authorship in *A Room of One's Own* (1928), decades earlier. Again, what is evident is that writers such as Sylvia Plath, Doris Lessing, Margaret Drabble, and Muriel Spark, began to address questions of gender and authorship from the late fifties and early sixties, before the theoretical writings of second-wave feminism emerged. An enduring preoccupation in much of this writing is the desire to disclose the patriarchal binary that attributes a concept of pure rationality to the male but promulgates definitions of women as being more driven by irrational emotional responses, and with tendencies towards madness. In this fiction, madness is re-engineered through writing into a reverse discourse describing the conditions of women's suffering under patriarchal law and is thus seen to be a consequence of identity production under patriarchy.

The third part of the thesis examined how more contemporary fiction – written in the period after the decline of High Theory – explores postpostmodern (metamodern) constructions of authorship as a new transnational and global world emerges, driven by international capital with new forms of social control. As the writings of J. M. Coetzee, Salman Rushdie and Hilary Mantel suggest, the author (together with the novel) might now be seen to have a therapeutic function in an age of globalised risk and trauma: the author becomes a kind of therapist for the present and a curator of the past. The distinctive tone of this new fiction departs from the skeptical textualism of the postmodern to produce a new blend of the ironic and the sincere. This new author is both healer and wounded figure, committed to pushing the boundaries of the novel (towards the infinite) and to exploring the power of fiction in connecting to the globalised world, facilitating our understanding of the suffering of others on a more global scale. Like a shaman, this author-function also brings about positive change. The preoccupation with authorship, madness, and identity politics, returns in contemporary fiction (hence, the return of the author), but is refigured and re-engineered to address global risk and trauma. The author comes to function as a conduit for the traumatic and the wounded.

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