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EVERYTHING IS FICTION

An Experimental Study in the Application of Ethnographic Criticism to Modern Atheist Identity

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Declaration

‘This is to certify that the work contained within has been composed by me and is entirely my own work. No part of this thesis has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.’

Signed: _____

Ethan G. Quillen

Dedicated to the eternal memory of **Thomas Aikenhead**, Divinity Student at the University of Edinburgh who, for blasphemy and the denial and impugnation of the existence and power of God, was hanged on the road to Leith, 8 January 1697.

...

*“Nevertheless it is of verity, that you Thomas Aikenhead, shakeing off all fear of God and regaird to his majesties lawes, have now for more than a twelvemoneth by past, and upon severall of the dayes within the said space, and ane or other of the same, made it as it were your endeavour and work in severall compainies to vent your wicked blasphemies against God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, and against the holy Scriptures, and all revealled religione, in soe far as upon ane or other of the dayes forsaid, you said and affirmed, that divinity or the doctrine of theologie was a rapsidie of faigned and ill-invented nonsense, patched up partly of the morall doctrine of philosophers, and pairtly of poeticall **fictions** and extravagant chimeras, or words to this effect or purpose, with severall other such reproachfull expressions.”*

Excerpt from the Transcript Condemning Aikenhead to Death,
T. B. Howell (editor) Volume 13, Section 401

ABSTRACT

This Thesis is an experiment. Within its pages a number of stories will be told, the foci of which will apply a particular methodology—what I call ‘Ethnographic Criticism’—to the examination of a specific concept: modern Atheist identity. First, it will introduce Ethnographic Criticism as a new and significant style of literary analysis aimed at reading fictional texts in order to generate anthropological insights about how particular identities are formed. Second, it will use this new means of criticism to discuss and evaluate how Atheist identity might be perceived as being constructed within a dialectic between seemingly exclusive forms of Theism and Atheism.

Ethnographic Criticism exists at the nexus between fiction and ethnography, and its genesis derives from three foundational pillars: ethnographic construction, Ethical Criticism, and discourse analysis. In the three Chapters of Part One, each of these pillars will be established, both exegetically and critically. This examination will play a key role in explicating how the ‘made-up’ qualities of fiction might be converted into the ‘made-from’ qualities of ethnography. Additionally, these Chapters will reveal the roots of Ethnographic Criticism through an analysis of discourses dealing with the ‘literary turn’ in the theory of anthropology, how Ethical Criticism associates fictional character development with identity construction, and the anthropological benefits of discourse analysis.

As a case study, I will apply Ethnographic Criticism to an analysis of Atheist identity construction. Due to the combination of a relative absence of existing ethnographic sources on the subject, an ambiguous academic discourse on the definition of the term, and a paucity of cultural units or ‘tribes’ of Atheists in which to observe, my use of Ethnographic Criticism will attempt to fill a methodological lacuna concerning the study of Atheist identity. Thus, in Part Two, I will focus on two fictional texts by the contemporary English novelist Ian McEwan: *Black Dogs* (1992) and *Enduring Love* (1997). In this analysis, not only will McEwan’s fictional characters be treated as if they are ‘real,’ historical individuals, they will be evaluated through an anthropological lens in order to isolate within their interactional validations a means to understand how Atheists define themselves via dialectical communication. In this way, and in both explicating and reflecting upon this approach, my experimental analysis will identify a number of dynamic, yet no less precarious, outcomes that might surface from reading fictional texts as if they were authoritatively equal to ethnographic ones.

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INTRODUCTION—ETHNOGRAPHIC CRITICISM

“A model of the phenomenologist’s work is, perhaps, reading and assimilating a novel. Within the pages of the novel and in their own way, the brothers Karamazov exist, though in another way it does not matter whether they did or did not exist; typically it is not a question which needs asking. Prescinding, however, from the ‘real’ world, in a novel one is immersed in a particular ambience, and moves with the characters, play-acting their feelings, understanding their beliefs, beginning to live in their social world. It is not necessary to agree with Ivan Karamazov in ‘real life’: one still can see the world from his point-of-view, and likewise with Alyosha. They are two brothers with very different outlooks. One may not in real life actually sympathize with a given character, but within the world of the novel one can have a vivid empathy.”

—Ninian Smart, *The Phenomenon of Religion*, 1973¹

1. Hypothesis

This Thesis will address the question: *what is Ethnographic Criticism?* Moreover, this Thesis is an experiment, so that in answering this question, and by plotting out the method, theory, and data necessary to introduce—as well as use—Ethnographic Criticism, it will equally become a critical analysis of the elements that make up its description. For this reason, and though it represents a unique approach to the subject of observing, classifying, testing, and defining certain conceptual terms, it does not originate ex nihilo. In fact, and for clarity’s sake, we might concede that this approach stems from a specific hypothesis:

In consideration of more experimental conceptions about the ‘literary aspects’ of ethnography, and in light of a lack of traditional sources pertaining to a particular subject (in this case, Atheist identity), can we read fictional accounts for insight into cultural identity constructions; and if so, what does that say about how texts—cultural representations in textual form—might be considered ‘authentic’ or ‘authoritative?’

Put differently, in outlining the methodological and theoretical process one might adopt in using an ‘invented’ or ‘fictional’ account in order to establish an ‘ethnographic understanding’ about how a particular cultural identity is formed, this thesis will present a two part discussion: a critical examination about how doing that might benefit the larger study of religious identity construction, as well as a critical consideration about how this might precariously blur the line between that which is ‘fictional’ or ‘non-fictional.’ Additionally, because Ethnographic Criticism is dependent upon three subject-specific foundations (ethnography, literary criticism, discourse analysis), the introduction of it herein will act as both a contribution to those fields, as well as offer unique perspectives on each. In this way, this Thesis will collectively present an experimental and inter-disciplinary examination of the

¹ Ninian Smart, *The Phenomenon of Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1973), 72.

limits and complications pertaining to the ways in which we approach—as well as alter—data, identity, and definitions in the process of stipulating what might be deemed textually authentic, authoritative, and true. Lastly, as an introduction to Ethnographic Criticism, it is also an invitation, an appeal to others in the hope that they might adopt and test it in reference to their own conceptual interests.

2. Self-Reflective Inspiration

The locus of inspiration for writing this thesis can be divided into two parts. On one end, I have found myself a member of a small group of individuals attempting to inaugurate—or perhaps better stated, control—the ever-broadening field of ‘Atheist studies.’ Given the newness of this field of analysis, the implicit controversial tone of its subject material, and the way ‘Atheism’² has been defined by individuals hoping to produce ‘*the*’ definition, our group seems to be more adrift than anchored. Like a Flying Dutchman of academic scholars, we seem cast about in a sea of differing opinions and approaches, drifting haphazardly without a specific disciplinary port-of-call. We have neither a prevailing base, nor an orthodox or standardized method of approach; which makes our discourse one of a multi-disciplinary polyvocality. Granted, while there do exist a few ‘research organizations’ within which we might find an academic group identity, such as the Nonreligion and Secularity Research Network,³ I have found myself generally dissatisfied with their approaches, particularly with their apprehension in focusing solely on ‘Atheism,’ and by their use and promotion of relatable, yet likewise general, terminology, such as ‘ir-religion,’ ‘un-belief,’ or ‘non-religion.’ To me, the latter is like drinking salt water: while it might briefly abate the thirst, it will merely cause worse issues later. For these reasons, my choice for focusing on ‘Atheism’ is two-fold: my interests in understanding how Atheists define themselves beyond these kinds of external distinctions, and an attempt at moving away from this stipulative—and thus terminologically imprecise—style of approach. However, in my initial research, these interests revealed their own issues.

When I first began exploring this subject, I undertook the sort of initial inquiry likely familiar with anyone interested in a particular concept: I looked up the definition. This, of course, involved more

² The capitalization of the ‘A’ here, as well as throughout the Thesis as a whole, is a choice made by the author to denote ‘Atheism’ as an identity, in the same way we might capitalize the ‘C’ in ‘Christian,’ or ‘B’ in ‘British.’

³ The NSRN, founded in 2011 as a research organization focused on establishing this exact sort of group identity, is perhaps the most ideal example. See their ‘about page’ here: <http://nsrn.net/about/> (accessed 3 January 2015).

than a mere rudimentary study of the ‘dictionary’ definitions of the term. Rather, I began with some of the more known publications, isolated the definition in each, and sourced from where the authors might have developed their stipulations. I continued this process for some time, recording notable influences and references, until after amassing roughly seventy or so definitions, I started to notice a unique progression. To make sense of this, I categorized this discourse according to theoretical similarity, and the result is the discursive field that I will discuss in detail in the third Chapter.

Beyond realizing that these definitions revealed a term ‘less simple to understand’ or ‘easy to define,’ as many of these publications seemed to argue, I also came to realize that this ambiguous discourse made my ability to theoretically stipulate a definition of my own overtly problematic. To remedy this, I turned my attention toward a more material approach. That is, because I wanted to consider how an individual might go about defining him or herself as an Atheist, within a specific context, rather than simply describe what *I* thought Atheism might mean in a general sense, a material approach seemed more accessible than a theoretical one. However, this raised a number of its own issues. In order to try and make sense of how I might create an ‘anthropology of Atheism,’ I first needed to determine how that might be accomplished. Out of this investigation I came to two very important conclusions. First, because the field of ‘Atheist studies’ is somewhat new, and because the concept itself is still fairly contentious—even in ‘secular’ Britain—the ‘organizations’ or ‘cultural units’ we might substitute as ‘tribes’ are equally difficult to define. That is, while the majority of the ‘in-process’ sources we might look at as examples—which all seem to have begun their research at the same time that I started working on this Thesis—focus their attention on ‘Humanist Societies’ or ‘Secular Groups,’ I found myself again dissatisfied with their approaches. While the data they have provided is extremely useful and important, I felt it to be a bit too equivocal. This is due, in large part, to my second conclusion: it occurred to me that the dubious nature of their results was inextricably linked to the issues I discovered in my research on the definition of the term. In each of the anthropological examples that I found, their results seemed quite heavily impeded by an indecisive collectivity of terms. While ‘Atheists’ and ‘Atheism’ pop up from time to time, they are intermixed with broader notions of ‘humanist,’ ‘agnostic,’ ‘secular,’ ‘non-religious,’ ‘ir-religious,’ ‘non-believer,’ ‘indifferent,’ ‘apatheist,’ and so on. While I will discuss these issues in more detail at the start of the second Chapter, I will conclude here with the admission that my disappointment with both the theoretical and anthropological approaches to

the study of Atheist identity construction led me down a more creative or experimental path toward using fiction ‘as ethnography.’ Which, in all honesty, is perhaps the direction I wanted to take all along, and which likewise brings me to my second inspiration. I have always been fascinated with the novel, especially with how the novelist creates a reflective world, as if allegorically holding a mirror up to his or her own surroundings. Additionally, I have always enjoyed the way reading a novel is like playing a detective, seeking out how the novelist is secretly telling a story within the story itself. I can link this back to my earliest textual analyses in High School, and how we were required to translate the sub-textual meaning of narrative images like Fitzgerald’s use of the ‘green light,’ what Orwell meant by calling his conniving pig ‘Napoleon,’ or why Hemingway had the ‘Old Man’ lose the fish to the sharks.

Through this style of sub-textual translation, the novel seems written in a language that offers more than just an opportunity to empathetically see or feel as if we exist in another’s world. I believe it also speaks to a particular culture, time, and place. Just as much as *The Great Gatsby* is about vengeance and greed and the debaucheries of the American 1920s, it is also about the people, their identities, in what ways they construct those identities, and the identities of others, through their specially crafted interactions. They are like well-formed and organized representations, so that novels like this might also be seen as telling two stories: a plot and sub-plot. With the former, these are texts that entertain us. They provide aesthetic amusement, and an escape into another world. These are stories embedded with characters and dialogue, and because they are designed and dictated by plot, they also lead us toward a particular conclusion. With the latter, the sub-plot hidden beneath the aesthetic fiction tells an altogether different kind of story. Here is where we find layers of cultural insight, where the ‘made-up’ aspect of the fiction reveals the culturally inspired ‘made-from’ quality of the character-dialogue-plot description above. It is through analyzing the sub-plot where we learn about the influences that shaped the story, about the author’s intentions, about how the plot itself might tell us something about the culture it presents, and about the context within which it was constructed. Moreover, perhaps this two-level understanding explains why we so often find ourselves using fictions to teach about historical concepts, or to elucidate academic discussions about religious and/or ethical debates.

Yet, even with these romantic notions about the ‘scope’ of the novel, or about how fiction ‘works,’ I have often found myself cautiously considering a number of critical questions, the theme of which is always directed at the differentiation between the ‘fictional’ and the ‘non-fictional.’ For example:

Given that fiction is a particular type of writing, and that ‘writing-in-general’ is defined by a process of constructing or manufacturing something either ‘real’ or ‘fake’ from an author’s perspective, what might limit a fiction from being read as a non-fiction, aside from the distinction on the cover? As well, what happens when we begin to believe that a novel might be able to speak on behalf of some cultural snapshot in time, such as my example of *The Great Gatsby* above? Does this initiate a sense of confusion about the writing process between fiction and non-fiction, and thus blur these into some strange form of both? What about the textual importance of theme, like when a ‘fictional’ text takes up a thematic style that ‘mimics’ the non-fictional, such as the genre of ‘historical fiction’ wherein the characters, settings, and plots are based on real people, in a real place and time? How might these questions collectively alter how we consciously acknowledge the ‘made-up’ quality from the ‘made-from’ method of scientific textual construction?

As an exemplary source with which to contextualize these questions, what immediately comes to mind are the award-winning first two parts of Hilary Mantel’s trilogy about the rise and fall of Thomas Cromwell: *Wolf Hall* (2009) and *Bring up the Bodies* (2012).⁴ These are fictions. The people in them are not real. They are fictional characters placed into a world created by the author for a pragmatic purpose. They speak what the author wants them to say, and they act according to a chronology that is ‘plotted’ by the author’s intentions. They exist within a fictional milieu, so that when we read their dialogues and conflicts we begin to vividly empathize with them. We move along with their stories, we embody and embrace their feelings and emotions, and we begin to imaginatively live in their social world because we consciously accept that it is ‘made-up.’ It is a fantasy, and thus a product of a shared imagination between author and reader. Yet, with Mantel’s texts these characters are both real and fake. They existed once as historical fact, just as much as they exist now as fictionalized creations. More importantly, they are historical figures who played an integral political role in shaping the Britain we know today. Their ‘realness’ can be measured by the actions they took when alive, by the decisions they made, and how the repercussions of those decisions live on in British History. Yet, we still might ask: are these novels ‘real?’ Or rather: are they fiction, fact, or something else? Do they somehow stand with a foot on each shore, a bridge of sorts between what is factual and what is fabricated?

Reading these sorts of fictions requires a different type of detective work than that used while reading a novel like *Animal Farm*. We know that farm animals do not hold meetings, form governments, supplant humans, and then descend into destructive political systems evocative of Communism and

⁴ Both won the Man Booker Prize for their respected years of publication.

Fascism. These are metaphors, and this is fantasy. Yet, so are the stories told about Henry VIII, and Anne Boleyn, and Thomas Cromwell. Their ‘truths’ are just as metaphorical as the fantasy in Orwell’s fairytale because as fictionalized versions of themselves they become representatives, in many ways indicative of how utterly invented individuals like Nick Carroway, Daisy Buchanan, or Jay Gatsby might become representations of the Jazz Age. In the same way that a novel tells two stories, they take on a double-life: on one end they are evocative of their *actual* lives, and on the other they embody a metaphorical meaning based upon the author’s intentions in creating them. Whether or not they really existed at some point in time, when novelized, they become something made-up, regardless of whether or not their traits and customs and habits are made from actual history.

So where do we draw the line? Where do we acknowledge a ‘novelization’ from an historical text, such as those by Alison Weir, whose histories of Henry VIII have made her the ‘highest-selling’ female historian in Britain?⁵ Between Mantel and Weir, whose texts do we declare as more ‘authoritative’ or ‘authentic?’ Answering from within the Academy, we might immediately declare on the side of Weir’s non-fiction, such as *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* (1991). After all, and by its very dialectical distinction as a ‘non-fiction,’ it denotes a sense of truth. A non-fiction is neither made-up nor imagined. It is writing that conveys fact. Of course, this becomes all the more difficult when we learn that Weir has no formal training in writing history,⁶ and has equally produced a number of historical fictions to coincide with her historical texts. Does this knowledge diminish her authority? Has she somehow herself crossed a line into the realm of ‘partial truths’ or ‘true fictions?’

It seems that with the more we examine these sorts of texts, which in turn causes us to question the lines we have drawn in order to distinguish between ‘fact’ and ‘fiction,’ the more these sorts of signifiers begin to blur. As we move along the axis of what constitutes the ‘real’ from the ‘fake,’ and the ‘true’ from the ‘false,’ we begin to veer precariously toward a sort of consensus, a middle ground where these distinctions no longer appear stable, and accuracy begins to transmute into a concept that

⁵ Emma Buckley, “The 14/4 Interview with Alison Weir,” *Glow Magazine*, 2012, accessed via: <http://www.glowmagazine.me/the-144-interview-with-alison-weir/> (28 August 2014).

⁶ She cites a feeling of disillusionment with ‘trendy teaching methods’ as the reason for her not pursuing a career in academia. See her ‘biography’ at: <http://alisonweir.org.uk/biography/> (accessed 29 August 2014).

no longer means what it used to. In other words, we begin to believe that *everything is fiction*. This is, perhaps, the quintessential impetus of my choosing to discuss these issues herein.

This Thesis, then, is my attempt at combining the two inspirations described above into a useful, as well as contributive, approach to studying cultural identity construction via an experimental interpretation of fiction as fact. However, before moving forward, and because I will be focusing this first example on ‘Atheism,’ I feel it is important to briefly describe one further inspiration, from my early research on the subject, which helped direct my choice to use fiction.

∇

When I was compiling my list of definitions I came across a short text that seemed to rest perfectly at the nexus between my two inspirations. As part of a series on ‘new directions in religion and literature,’ Bradley and Tate’s (2010) *The New Atheist Novel* seemed an intriguingly apt assessment of a new approach to ‘religion’ and fiction. After all, New Atheism was only a few years old at the time of their publication,⁷ and their correlations between the four New Atheists—Harris, Dawkins, Dennett, and Hitchens—and four well-known and commercially successful novelists—McEwan, Amis, Rushdie, and Pullman—looked, on the surface at least, to address some of the points concerning ‘representation’ and the merits of fiction that I spoke about above.

However, upon reading their text I again found myself dissatisfied, specifically by their approach and interpretations. Notably, I thought their thesis was highly contestable: that their notion of the thematic similarities between the New Atheist novels and the New Atheist texts revealed an effort on the part of the latter to create a ‘mythopoeia’ via what they called an ‘aestheticization,’ was nothing more than finding larger correlations between things that happened to look alike. Moreover, I felt that their analysis was merely skimming the surface of an idea that, only when filtered through a more precise and organized theoretical and methodological lens, might be of significant value. For instance, when they introduce their theory about the growing popularity of New Atheism they quite innocuously touch

⁷ If we are to state that New Atheism was ‘born’ with the publication of Harris’ first text, *The End of Faith*, in 2004.

on something that would prove otherwise intriguing if it were not for their somewhat misguided discussion after it:

To our eyes, though, it is possible to detect an obscure but even more compelling reason for the massive popular appeal of the New Atheism: it constitutes a new and powerful creation mythology that—like all mythologies—performs an implicit anthropological service.⁸

As we later learn, what they mean by this is that the ‘New Atheist novel’—including those fictions written years, even decades, before the first New Atheist texts—conveys a “secular object of devotion,” and thus becomes a ‘sacralized’ text that additionally offers a “this-worldly experience of grandeur, consolation, freedom and even redemption.”⁹ They declare this as based on a correlative ‘literary reception,’ wherein the novelists under question appear to be receptive of, even supportive of, the polemics of New Atheism, transmuting their fictions into Atheist-based narrative myths. Again, this is not an utterly useless assessment, and their cursory nod here to the interchangeable influence that media such as these have on discourse is interesting, but it barely touches on the more central importance of how that discourse is shaped, by whom, and in what ways it is both reflective of a particular environment, as well as how it is utilized by individuals within that context. In other words, though it appears that they consider this aspect, particularly in their notion of the novel performing an implicit ‘anthropological service,’ they do not offer an explanation as to what that might mean. I’ll return to this discussion a bit more in the second and third Chapters.

For me, reading this text was catalytic, the ‘killing of Ruwahiwa’ that would ‘set the whole thing going.’¹⁰ That is, their oversight would be my motivation, their omission the basis of my research questions. Thus, I set out to examine the cultural significance that might come from a detailed examination of particular fictional texts, aimed explicitly at how fictional accounts, such as those surveyed by Bradley and Tate, and read as products of, as well as contributing voices to, specific discourses, might offer narrative ‘representations’ of concepts formed by the written word.

Accompanied with the combined interests disclosed above, this cursory gathering of ideas began to shape more specific—rather than general—questions, out of which I formed the hypothesis stated above:

⁸ Arthur Bradley and Andrew Tate, *The New Atheist Novel: Fiction, Philosophy and Polemic After 9/11* (London: Continuum, 2010), 7.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Napoleon Chagnon, *Yanomamo: The Fierce People*, Fifth Edition (New York: Wadsworth, 1997), 1.

When acknowledged as ‘fiction,’ how might these texts be read as offering the cultural insight we might gain from reading non-fictional texts? That is, how might they be seen as providing an ‘anthropological service,’ and what might that entail? If they were simply the product of a writer’s imagination, would reading these texts ‘as if’ they were somehow equal to, or mimetic of, non-fiction, transform them in some way? By being treated as culturally insightful sources, would they suddenly become something more than ‘fiction?’ As well, in that they were the products of a particular action, written by a person driven by intention, what role would the author play in this process? Would the author equally become something more, and if so, what would that say about the process of writing culturally insightful non-fiction, and about the author’s position of authority when a novel might be seen as equally authoritative? Lastly, in consideration of this seemingly ‘more experimental’ sort of interpretation, could a fictional account ‘stand-in’ for a non-fictional, ethnographic one, if that latter type of text did not presently exist, or proved difficult to compile?

As well, and for methodological purposes, I reduced the theoretical content of these questions—the ‘research design’—into three categories: method, theory, and data. By doing this, I began to establish the approach that would come to embody and shape my concept of Ethnographic Criticism. Therefore, and in accordance with these foundational requirements, I produced three direct questions that I thought necessary for a proper description.

1. How would I go about reading fictional accounts as if they were something more akin to non-fictional texts on a similar subject?
2. Given the association this sort of reading might have with existing literary criticism, how might that criticism play a part in directing the texts chosen, as well as influence the way I read them?
3. In reading these texts for an insight on a particular concept—Atheism—how might I stipulate this concept for this particular approach in a relatable manner?

Dividing these inquiries like this took the shape of a formula, a three part foundational template by which I might proceed. The first would be inherently focused on how cultural representations in written form become standardized and critiqued: ethnography. The second would need to introduce the data—fictions—that I would be using, as well as how the predominant criticism focused on these fictions might be thematically mimetic of ethnographic construction: literary analysis. The third would need to address the theoretical means by which the concept within these texts was expressed, and thus defined: discourse. From this spawned the foundational pillars of Ethnographic Criticism. The first—and major—part of this thesis is devoted to these pillars, on one end offering critical examinations of the ‘traditional’ means of conducting research according to the subject areas under discussion, while on the other presenting the method, means, and existing discourse on how to perform an Ethnographic Criticism through critical analysis. Said otherwise, in my attempts to cultivate the cultural insight we

might gain from reading fiction as ethnography, these three Chapters will describe the process with which that might be possible.

3. Outline of the Text/Literature Review

The first Chapter of Part One will present the first *methodological* foundation of Ethnographic Criticism. Built upon a critical analysis of the theoretical discourse on defining ethnography as the ‘doing of anthropology,’ this Chapter will follow a progressive thread. Beginning with the concept of the ‘Literary Turn,’¹¹ this thread will present the traditional requirements of writing ethnography, and how two specific issues pertaining to the style and form of ethnography—‘discourse’ and ‘signature’—were effectively amended by the Literary Turn’s influence on textual style and authorial presence.¹² Then, this Chapter will present two means by which the construction of ethnography came to blur the distinction between the ‘science’ of anthropology and the ‘art’ of textual construction: in one way, altered by the process of *writing* ethnography so that it looked like a fictional text—the ‘ethnographic novel’¹³ and ‘auto-ethnography’¹⁴—and on the other, with the proposal of *reading* fictional texts as either ethnographic sources or descriptions.¹⁵ This latter discussion will account for a large part of this first pillar, as it will establish the experimental and familial base upon which I will shape the methodology of Ethnographic Criticism.

The second Chapter will act as a continuation of the first, both as an introduction to the *data* examined in Part Two, as well as by drawing a correlative line between the process of ethnographic construction and a particular type of literary criticism. Beginning with a three-part justification for using fiction to examine the construction of an Atheist identity—a lack of existing ethnographic sources (aside from a number of ‘in process’ examples), the ambiguity of defining ‘Atheism,’ and a lack of an ‘Atheist community’ with which to observe—this Chapter will equally contextualize my experimental use of Ethnographic Criticism to a specific time and place. In addressing how my experimental use of chosen

¹¹ Geertz (1973 and 1988), Markus (1980), Markus & Cushman (1982), Clifford and Markus (1986), Clifford (1988).

¹² Spradley (1980), Sperber (1982), Marcus and Cushman (1982), Clifford (1983 and 1986), Van Maanen (1988), Geertz (1988), Bruner (1993), Firth (1999).

¹³ Langness and Frank (1978), Crapanzano (1980), Dwyer (1982 and 2008), Tyler (1986), Stewart (1989), Fernea (1989), Wolf (1992), Narayan (1999), Cesareo (2002), Tallman (2002).

¹⁴ Heider (1975), Hayano (1979), Jackson (1986), Strathern (1987), Denzin (1989), Knab (1995), Richard and Sally Price (1995), Reed-Danahay (1997), Ashforth (2000), Ellis (2004), Anderson (2006).

¹⁵ Fernea (1989), Stewart (1989), Banks (1990), Handler and Segal (1990), Eriksen (1994).

fiction—data—is representative of a marriage between the experimental ethnographic approaches after the Literary Turn and the specific Literary Theory used to analyze the author and fictions I have chosen, this Chapter will additionally establish my experimentation within an existing method and discourse pertaining to the notion of religion and literature. More specifically, this Chapter will align my Ethnographic Criticism within the context of ‘Theism and Literature,’¹⁶ ‘Atheism and Literature,’¹⁷ and the ‘Ethical Criticism’ that predominates the discourse on the work of my chosen author: Ian McEwan.¹⁸ In reflection of this critical assessment, I will utilize Krupat’s (1992) notion of ‘Ethnocriticism’ to draw a line between the means with which Ethical Criticism associates character development with the ethnographic perception of identity construction made internally, externally, and between dialectical notions of similarity and difference.¹⁹ With this final theoretical concept established, I will introduce the two texts chosen—*Black Dogs* (1992) and *Enduring Love* (1997)—briefly describe the characters and plot, and introduce how the Atheism represented within will be discussed in my later examination.

The third Chapter will isolate and clarify the concept at central focus in this Thesis by addressing the process of term stipulation that I believe fits best with the *theoretical* aspect of Ethnographic Criticism. Taking Atheism as the concept at center in this analysis will serve three interests: first, given the issues of ambiguity within the discourse on defining the term itself, this approach will act to remove my discussion from that discourse, in order to align it with a more anthropological focus on identity construction; second, as this represents a shift from one approach to another, it will also present the theoretical methodology that I believe best characterizes the way concepts are to be addressed when conducting an Ethnographic Criticism; third, because this new style of textual analysis requires an external comprehension about the concept internalized within the texts being analyzed, this approach will not only provide such an understanding, it will equally offer a means to do that without a predetermined bias. For these reasons, I will be borrowing—rather than explicitly using—the

¹⁶ Detweiler (1989), Detweiler and Jasper (2000), Jasper (2004), Wright (2007), Hass (2007), Hass, Jasper, and Jay (2007); Tate (2008), Knight (2009).

¹⁷ Sutherland (1977), Smith (1991), Priestman (1999), Gordon (2002), Arbeit (2006), Bullivant (2008), Holderness (2010), Kane (2011), Bradley and Tate (2010), Schweizer (2011).

¹⁸ Malcolm (2002), Schemberg (2004), Childs (2005, 2006, 2007, 2009), Head (2007) Muller-Wood (2009) Wells (2010), Moller’s (2011).

¹⁹ Berger and Luckmann (1966), Goffman (1959), Jenkins (2004).

theoretical language of Discourse Analysis.²⁰ That is, rather than focusing merely on first-level discursive examples, wherein concepts are defined by actual individuals in actual places and at actual times, I will instead be adopting the theoretical language of Discourse Analysis to make sense of the ways in which Atheism has been defined, shifting the second-level discourse—definitions theorized by secondary interpreters—into a particular discursive field. Not only will this provide a solid foundation upon which to address my three interests described above, it will likewise attempt to make sense of the discordancy about how the term is currently ‘defined.’ To do this, I will be splitting this discourse between two types of terminological representation: historical and theoretical. While the first will present an analysis of a discourse that has defined the term via historical examples, delineated between ‘ancient’—referred herein as ‘ἄθεος’²¹—and ‘modern’—referred herein with the capitalized ‘A’²²—the second will reveal the ways in which the definition of the term has been built from a theoretical intent on producing a ‘general’ stipulation. For reasons that will become clear, the latter will receive much of my attention in this Chapter, as it is this discourse that I argue is the source of much of the ambiguity about what the term ‘means,’ stemming directly from its differentiation between an Atheism that is ‘positive’ (explicit) and ‘negative’ (implicit),²³ as well as the general stipulations that result from this, such as ‘un-belief,’²⁴ ‘ir-religion,’²⁵ or ‘non-religion.’²⁶ Lastly, this Chapter will conclude with a final statement concerning the necessity of comprehending the ‘meaning’ of a particular concept in order to study it, as well as why I will be choosing not to offer my own stipulation of the Atheism I expect to find in McEwan’s novels.

With this foundation established, Part Two will present my analytic use of Ethnographic Criticism. It will begin with a short introductory Chapter that will, on one end, act as a useful summation of the three pillars from Part One, while on the other, critically address the precarious dangers of too

²⁰ van Dijk (1997), Schiffrin, Tannen, and Hamilton (2001), Fairclough (2003) Von Stuckrad (2003, 2010, 2013), Gee (2005), Paltridge (2006), Jaworski and Coupland (2006), Taira (2013).

²¹ Muller (1888), Aveling [1907 (1913)], Drachmann (1922), Buckley [1987 (1990)], Robb (1993), Kahn (1997), Reid and Mondin (2003), Hartley (2006), Bremmer (2009), Fergusson (2009), Palmer (2010).

²² Masterson (1965), Fabro (1968), Herrick (1985), Buckley (1990), Smith (1991), Pasquini (2000), Gordon (2002), Baggini (2003), Converse (2003), McGrath (2005), Fergusson (2009), Hyman (2007 and 2010), Ledrew (2012).

²³ Robertson (1970), Flew (1976), Stein (1980), Smith (1989 and 1991), Martin (1990, 2007a, 2007b), Hiorth (2003), Baggini (2003), Cliteur (2009), Eller (2010), Hyman (2010), Palmer (2010), Walters (2010), Bullivant (2013).

²⁴ Marty (1966), Budd (1977).

²⁵ Campbell (1971).

²⁶ Lee (2011, 2012a, 2012b).

distinctly blurring the lines between ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’ within my experimental analysis. In this same way, it will additionally provide a short description of the style and structure of that analysis. In my Ethnographic Criticism itself, the predominant focus will be directed at how Atheism is constructed as an identity, and what McEwan’s texts themselves say about this process. Concentrating on the ‘Atheists’ of his creation, I will adopt a specific formula that will track the development of their identities, beginning with their internal constructions based on ‘interests,’ that is then externally validated through interaction: first through the process of identifying others, then in identifying themselves in reflection of those others, and finally in how those others identify them in the same way. The goal of this analysis will be to provide a more nuanced and specific case-based interpretation of the process in which the Atheists within these texts construct their identities, so as to offer a perspective on the ‘meaning’ of ‘Atheism-in-specific’ that speaks to a larger ethnographic—and historical—understanding beyond mere theoretical stipulation. Likewise, as I will be using two texts, this analysis will also take the shape of a cross-comparative examination wherein the Atheism from the second will appear like a developed form of the Atheism in the first. In this way, not only will I present an anthropological interpretation of fiction, I will also draw out a number of critical questions about the authoritativeness we implicitly afford ‘ethnographic writing.’

Following this experimental examination, Part Three will be comprised of a short Fifth Chapter and the Conclusion. With the former, I will reiterate, as well as further clarify, some of the more theoretical and experimental aspects of my examination of McEwan’s two novels. With the latter, I will provide a brief examination of this Thesis’ plot and sub-plot, my stipulation of the concept ‘fiction’ as based on a number of pre-existing examples,²⁷ and one final statement about the artifice of textual construction alongside the experimental notion that this Thesis, in a number of ways, is nothing more than a ‘fiction.’

4. Conclusion: Revealing the ‘Magic’ in the Magic Trick

In his discussion about the ‘being there’ and ‘being here’ process of ‘doing anthropology,’ Geertz (1988) refers to the literary artifice that goes into constructing an ethnography as a sort of literary ‘magic trick:’ “Ethnography becomes, it is said, a mere game of words, as poems and novels are

²⁷ Vaihinger (1935), Kliever (1979 and 1981), Said (1975), Anderson (1983), Fine (1993), Miller (1997), Cusack (2010).

supposed to be [...] exposing how the thing is done is to suggest that, like the lady sawed in half, it isn't done at all."²⁸ As he further contends, revealing the magic of ethnographic construction by focusing on the literary efforts that go into 'writing culture,' becomes an issue of authority when we begin to scrutinize how this trick works. As he also suggests, this turn toward the 'literary' roots of writing ethnography causes us to reconsider what was once thought to be objective and scientific about the process: "concentrating our gaze on the ways in which knowledge claims are advanced undermines our capacity to take any of those claims seriously."²⁹ As I will discuss in more detail shortly, this equally begins to re-conceptualize our collective notions about what might determine 'proper ethnography.' In this way, revealing the magic of the magic trick, or in other words, revealing the 'literary,' and thus 'artistic' process underscoring the construction of ethnography, moves the entire conversation into a discursive debate about what might differentiate fact from fiction. While I will address this more thoroughly in the pages to follow, I will conclude this Introduction—and thus effectively begin the Thesis—with my own sort of 'reveal.'

This thesis, as the subtitle suggests, is an experimental study. As I stated above, it is the result of my disappointment with a number of 'established ways of doing things,' both theoretically and anthropologically, and thus my choice for using fiction stems from an equally experimental attempt at studying Atheism in a manner not previously considered. This will, at times, require a bit of cross-disciplinary blurring. What this also means, is that while in its own way this Thesis will attempt to both reveal the magic Geertz refers to, as well as perform a few tricks of its own, it will be telling two distinct stories: a plot and sub-plot. For the sake of introductory clarity, I will here define the former as my introduction, description, and use of Ethnographic Criticism, and the latter as an essential acknowledgement of the precarious defects that might arise out of that. While I would prefer to allow the narrative to simply unfold from this point on, and thus let the Thesis present itself like a novel, I feel that, for pragmatic reasons, revealing a little of the sub-plot here will assist the reader along the way, as well as pre-emptively alleviate any confusion that might occur.

²⁸ Clifford Geertz, *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), 2.

²⁹ Ibid.

Perhaps the most essential ‘reveal’ that I might place here concerns the structure and linguistic style of the Thesis as a whole. As it was designed in order to be mimetic of the theoretical issues discussed throughout, and by its very nature as an ‘artifice,’ it is a fiction both ‘made-from’ and ‘made-up.’ This is exemplified throughout by certain shifts in narrative style. In Part One, the narrative will adopt an objective third-person voice, a choice that I have made because I believe this manner of speaking best reflects the type of language appropriate for an objective account. For this same reason, because they represent the three-point foundation of Ethnographic Criticism, and will thus need to cover a great deal of pre-existing or established information, these three Chapters will be theoretically detailed and heavily annotated. In this same way, because Ethnographic Criticism is a new style of textual analysis, my introduction of it is equally dependent upon a requisite need to foundationally establish the correlated roots of those things that influenced its method. Thus, each of these Chapters should be read as telling a necessary story—plot-building—that will lead to the style adopted in Part Two. That is, as they have been designed to not only set up the structure, style, and content of Part Two, they also exist to equip the reader—who might not have such preceding knowledge—with the necessary terminology, language, and intricate details that have led to the creation of this experimental analysis.

In comparison, and as the analytical center of my Thesis—both as an examination of the data used, as well as an illustration of my experimental approach at analyzing that data—the ‘text’ in Part Two will adopt a very unique narrative style. Without revealing the totality of the magic in my magic trick, this text can be described as a ‘fictionalized’ adaptation of the ethnographic experimentation discussed in the latter half of the first Chapter, as well as the Ethical Criticism described within the second. Like an ‘ethnographic novel,’ which the first Chapter will describe as a ‘fictionalized interpretation of culture told through a literary lens,’ this text will be a modified version of this genre: a fictionalized examination of McEwan’s two novels in order to depict them as texts representing the type of data we might find within an ethnography. Why I have chosen to design my analysis in such a ‘fictional’ manner, as well as a more comprehensive description of what I mean here, will be made in the fourth Chapter.

Lastly, as I have repeated throughout this Introduction, this Thesis is an experiment, and should be read as such. While this forewarning might seem excessive, I believe it to be essential in establishing how I

would like it appraised. Which inspires a second repetition: what follows are two stories. Much like the double-sense meaning of ‘criticism’ in Ethnographic Criticism—‘critical’ as meaning both analytically evaluative, as well as condemnatory of an established position—these two stories will reveal a ‘plot’—the method-data-theory that defines how we might read fiction as ethnography—as well as a ‘sub-plot’—the experimental outcome that develops from our doing this, that we can use as an example of the consequences that might arise in the process. That being said, I will conclude here by stating that while an analysis of ‘Atheism’ in fiction might seem as simple as isolating when and where a character might refer to him or herself as such, interpreting how that might be of value to that analysis, let alone be useful in a wider ‘anthropological’ interpretation, is an entirely different thing. This Thesis is an attempt at doing both.

Part One: Foundational Pillars

CHAPTER ONE—METHODOLOGY: WRITING

“If, then, we admit that ethnographies tend to look at least as much like romances as they do like lab reports (though, as with our mule, not really like either), two questions, or perhaps the same one doubly asked, immediately pose themselves: (1) How is the ‘author-function’ (or shall we, so long as we are going to be literary about the matter, just say ‘the author’?) made manifest in the text? (2) Just what is it—beyond the obvious tautology, ‘a work’—that the author authors?”

—Clifford Geertz, *Works and Lives*, 1988¹

1.1—Introduction: The ‘Four Archetypes’ of ‘Doing’ Anthropology

At the start of the Introduction we posed a hypothetical question pertaining to the possibility of reading invented fictions—texts manufactured solely for pleasure or entertainment—as having the same sort of ethnographic authenticity as ‘true’ ethnographic texts. Arising out of this question is a critical interpretation of the process itself, particularly focused on how any sort of written text might be able to offer a cultural insight on a social or political concept, especially when that text is constructed by an individual outside the context within which that concept exists. This is what the core of this Chapter shall be in response to.

Like the two others in this First Part, this Chapter will be foundational: its sole purpose will be to provide a base upon which to build, as well as justify, the methodological root of our Ethnographic Criticism in Part Two, as well as better explicate *how* we might read a novel ‘anthropologically.’ While focused on the concept of ‘ethnography,’ this Chapter will introduce the discourse pertaining to the meaning of that term, in particular reflection of the Literary Turn’s focus on the artistic aspects of reading and writing ethnographic texts. This will take the shape of a number of specific parts. First, in order to conceptualize our later discussion within the context of an explicit theoretical framework, we will begin with an introduction to the Literary Turn itself. Second, we will address two distinct challenges fostered by this ‘focus on the literary,’ aimed exclusively at the meaning and process of ethnographic construction. Third, our discussion will progress toward the larger issue of how the line between ‘science’ and ‘art’ in the process of ‘doing’ anthropology came to be challenged by two points of composition: the *writing* of ethnography like fictional texts, and the *reading* of fictional texts like ethnography. In total, this foundational discussion will follow along a progressive track, at the center

¹ Geertz, *Works and Lives*, 8-9.

of which will be the driving narrative about how we write, read, and define the scientific art of ethnographic construction.

While the goal of this Chapter is to methodologically set up the Ethnographic Criticism of Part Two, it should not be designated to this one specific task. Rather, it should likewise be seen as a direct discussion of a particular progression, contextualized by a critical analysis pertaining to textual authority. This path, like most theoretical discussions, has been properly mapped out, not just by the voices of those we shall hear in the pages to follow, but also by the larger discourse concerning the process of ‘doing’ anthropology. As Tedlock (1991) quite poignantly notes: “The mythic history of anthropology is populated by four archetypes: the amateur observer, the armchair anthropologist, the professional ethnographer, and the ‘gone native’ fieldworker.”² After our brief description of the Literary Turn, our own discussion will borrow from this erudite calibration, following certain examples along this ‘theory of anthropology,’ that will demonstrate the manner with which the Literary Turn begat a new genre of ethnographic bipolarity between fictions made-up and fictions made-from. This will, as the conclusion will discuss, not only more concisely support the *how* of our using fiction in Part Two, it will also lead us toward the next Chapter’s discussion of *why* that might be possible.

1.2—The Literary Turn and its Influences

Perhaps more than anything, the Literary Turn³ signifies a transition: a shift of attention from the essentialist notion about what anthropology *is*, toward making sense of, acknowledging, and interpreting the elements that define what anthropologists *do*. As such, and as Geertz (1973) warns us, if we are to understand what—as a science—anthropology *is*, we should look at neither the ‘theories or findings,’ nor at what ‘apologists say’ about the subject, but instead at what the ‘practitioners do.’⁴

² Barbara Tedlock, “From Participant Observation to the Observation of Participation: The Emergence of Narrative Ethnography” (*Journal of Anthropological Research*, Vol. 47, No. 1, 1991), 69.

³ The term ‘Literary Turn’ here has a number of origins, most predominately linked to the publication of *Writing Culture* in 1986. However, and like many of the terms used throughout this Thesis, it does not come from any singular source. Thus, the use of it herein is meant to broadly denote the results of the literary focus that derives from the discourse inspired by the individuals discussed throughout this Chapter.

⁴ Clifford Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic books, 1973), 5.

As ‘doing anthropology’ after the Literary Turn is re-conceived as ‘writing ethnography,’ it is this focus on the text that marks its unique character. In this way, the process turns from a focus on the ‘thick description’⁵ that differentiates involuntary action from meaningful action and parodied action—“a stratified hierarchy of meaningful structures in terms of which twitches, winks, fake-winks, parodies, rehearsals of parodies are produced, perceived, and interpreted”⁶—toward a contentiously hybridized textual translation via an explicitly formed genre. That is, according to the leading scholars who define the Literary Turn—notably Geertz (1973, 1988) Markus (1980), Markus & Cushman (1982), Clifford & Markus (1986), and Clifford (1988)—‘writing ethnography’ comes to be defined by the literary qualities and methods involved in the writing itself: an analysis of the ‘established codes,’ of “winks upon winks upon winks,” that is not unlike the enterprise undertaken by the literary critic.⁷

Geertz first initiates this discourse with a conception that finds ‘ethnography-as-literature’ as something based on discursive constructions, so that, as ethnographies become literary types, they also become “constructions of other people’s constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to.”⁸ Then, as these constructions become ‘interpretations,’ the products of finding cohesion in the “multiplicity of complex conceptual structures”⁹—the scientific endeavor of rendering a culture from the thick description of anthropological research—they become, by their inherent synthetic nature, what he refers to as ‘fictions.’ However, while it will become a defining characteristic of the post-Literary Turn discourse that comes to argue the mere act of ‘setting pen to paper’ as equivalent to “perpetuating a literary act,”¹⁰ Geertz’s use of ‘fiction’ here is not the same as that which is dichotomously impregnated with the concept of ‘false’ or ‘made-up.’ Rather, it demonstrates an

⁵ Borrowing from Ryle’s ‘multi-layered sandwich,’ Geertz’s conception of ‘thick description,’ is compared to ‘thin description,’ the mere action of something, rather than the purposeful meaning behind that action. Both encompass a deeper understanding of what the utterer of an utterance meant in that vocalization. Geertz defines the difference between ‘mere action’ and ‘purposeful action’ as like the difference between a ‘twitch’ and a ‘wink.’ The twitch is an involuntary action, while the wink has a purpose-driven action underscoring the motion. See Gilbert Ryle, “The Thinking of Thoughts: What is ‘Le Penseur’ Doing?” (*University Lectures*, The University of Saskatchewan, 1968), accessed online via: http://lucy.ukc.ac.uk/CSACSA/Vol14/Papers/ryle_1.html (accessed 21 June 2013); and Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 3-33.

⁶ Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 6.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ David Hackett Fischer, “The Braided Narrative: Substance and Form in Social History” in Angus Fletcher, ed., *The Literature of Fact: Selected Papers from the English Institute* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 114.

etymological re-interpretation of *'fictio,'* meaning something 'made' or 'fashioned.'¹¹ For Geertz, this early perception of 'ethnography-as-fiction' is nothing more than an awareness of the writing process: an acknowledgment of ethnography as 'artifice,' an appreciation of the translation of another's culture into words on the page, and the recognition of the process involved in converting social discourse into inscription.¹² This re-focused attention on the 'fictionality' of ethnographic construction indicates the introduction of a new and unorthodox means of analysis, a discursive shift—"the enterprise may be seen as turning"¹³—that becomes the basis of an innovative and controversial type of genre with its own "kinds of constraints and rules of construction."¹⁴

While this genre is distinct for giving precise attention to the writing process, as well as to textual interpretation, it is also reinforced by an explicit 'epistemological concern' for how this type of writing 'textualizes' the objective discourse on the research being conducted.¹⁵ This again appears counterintuitive to the established conception of ethnography as "an activity that occurs in the field," and thus treated chiefly as "a method, rather than a product, of research."¹⁶ What develops from this is a 'fusion' of sorts, a coalescence of 'cultural analysis' with 'ethnographic description,' that Marcus and Cushman (1982) translate through the synthesis of the classic debate on hermeneutics, "between philosophical reflection about the nature of interpretation," and the "methodological attempt to create a science of interpretation."¹⁷

Yet, the Literary Turn is not merely defined by the sudden acceptance that doing anthropology is 'enmeshed in writing.' As the genre develops, so too do the elements that define it. More specifically, as the anthropologist's critical eye turns from interpreting culture to interpreting texts, the role of literary analysis becomes the discourse of choice. This is perhaps most evident in Clifford's (1983, 1986, 1988) distinct theoretical discussions, what might be argued as the quintessential sources on the development of the genre as a whole.

¹¹ Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 15.

¹² *Ibid.*, 19.

¹³ Geertz, *Works and Lives*, 142.

¹⁴ George E. Marcus, "Rhetoric and the Ethnographic Genre in Anthropological Research" (*Current Anthropology*, Vol. 21, No. 4, 1980), 507.

¹⁵ George E. Marcus and Dick Cushman, "Ethnographies as Texts" (*Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1982), 25.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 25-26.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.

For Clifford, ethnography is a product of hybridity, a polyvocal textual activity that is both science and art. Bridging this once great void are the literary themes at the locus of the Literary Turn—metaphor, figuration, and narrative—that when adapted to the construction of ethnography, “affect the ways cultural phenomena are registered, from the first jotted ‘observations,’ to the completed book, to the ways these configurations ‘make sense’ in determined acts of reading.”¹⁸ As Clifford further determines, the adoption of these literary qualities mirror, or even echo, the once conflicting processes of semiotics, post-structuralism, hermeneutics, and deconstruction. However, he also makes the distinction that while incorporating these approaches might blur the border between ‘science’ and ‘literature,’ their use does not necessitate one give up facts and accurate accounting for the supposed “free play of poetry.”¹⁹ Instead, in reading these texts as cultural concepts in written form filtered through the theoretical lenses of literary theorists such as Marx, Foucault, Dilthey, Ricoeur, de Saussure, and Derrida,²⁰ the genre of the Literary Turn develops a sense of reflexivity, a ‘grammatological’ acknowledgment that all texts are, in essence, a chorus of both writer and informant.²¹ This nod to the influence of allegory and polyvocality, the former drawing “special attention to the *narrative* character of cultural representations [emphasis in original],”²² and the latter developing a sense of the ethnographer as a ‘co-writer’ alongside his or her informants, grants the anthropologist an insight into his or her own voice as he or she records the voice of the Other.

What all of this eventually contributes to is the notion of transition mentioned above, what von Stuckrad (2003) later refers to as a sense of shaken self-confidence: “the *writing culture* debate demolished academic confidence in the scientists’ neutral role as an objective observer and placed their

¹⁸ James Clifford, “Introduction: Partial Truths” in James E. Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 25-26.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

²¹ Clifford distinctly employs the term ‘grammatology’ in reference to Derrida’s contention that there is no differentiation between the ‘written’ and the ‘spoken.’ “there is no need here to pursue in detail a disorienting project that is by now well known. What matters for ethnography is the claim that *all* human groups write—if they articulate, classify, possess an ‘oral-literature,’ or inscribe their world in ritual acts. They repeatedly ‘textualize’ meanings. Thus, in Derrida’s epistemology, the writing of ethnography cannot be seen as a drastically new form of cultural inscription, as an exterior imposition on a ‘pure,’ unwritten oral/aural universe [emphasis in original].” James Clifford, “On Ethnographic Allegory,” in James E. Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 117-118.

²² *Ibid.*, 100.

work in a cultural process of constructing meaning or just producing narratives [emphasis in original].”²³ By referring to the ethnographer as a ‘novelist manqué,’²⁴ Clifford acknowledges this as a shift from cultural construction to narrative production, what Geertz allegorically describes as the identity crisis affecting the North African Mule who “talks always of his mother’s brother, the horse, but never of his father, the donkey.”²⁵ As a literary ‘bastard type’ caught somewhere between “wanting to create a bewitching verbal structure,”²⁶ and the responsibility of communicating basic facts and ideas, the post-Literary Turn ethnographer is shifted into a hybridized place of anxiety, reduced thematically by Geertz into two issues pertaining to ‘signature’ and ‘discourse.’²⁷ Referring to the way the text is written, as well as the place of the author in writing it, these two aspects become symbols, abstractions with which we might begin to address the consequences of turning the focus of ‘doing’ anthropology toward the literary act in ‘writing’ ethnography. By adopting these two points we begin to more clearly see the ways in which the Literary Turn opened the possibility of reading fiction as if it were ethnography, guided by theoretical perceptions such as those made by Rapport (1994)—“Anthropological writings are works of the imagination, whose responsibility and credit must be tied to the romancer who dreamed them”²⁸—or even Geertz himself, whose notion that what anthropology does post Literary Turn is ‘faction:’ “imaginative writing about real people in real places at real times.”²⁹

This sense of theoretical transition plays a major methodological role in shaping our model of Ethnographic Criticism, especially in the way it opens the possibility of an homogenization between ethnography and fiction via their shared focus on performing a literary act. Therefore, our analysis here will turn toward Geertz’s two challenges, beginning with ‘discourse,’ so as to develop an understanding about the ways in which a focus on the text came to contest the standard method of ethnographic construction, as well as shed some light on how the acceptance of these texts as ‘written’ came to engender a reflexive and pragmatic acknowledgment—‘signature’—of the author’s existence

²³ Kocku von Stuckrad, “Discursive Study of Religion: From states of the Mind to Communication and Action” (*Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, Vol. 15, 2003), 255.

²⁴ Clifford, “Introduction”, 4.

²⁵ Geertz, *Works and Lives*, 8.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

²⁸ Nigel Rapport, *The Prose and the Passion: Anthropology, Literature, and the Writing of E. M. Forster* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 7.

²⁹ Geertz, *Works and Lives*, 141.

and role in the process itself. An awareness of these two challenges, and how they shape the discourse underscoring the meaning of doing anthropology, will likewise properly lead us toward the essential discussion below on how ethnographic fiction, and reading fiction ethnographically, became possible. Understanding the route that led to these experimental amalgamations will equally assist us in foundationally composing our own in Part Two.

1.3—Challenge One: The Formation, and Move Away From, Functionalist Ethnography

Prior to the Literary Turn, ‘proper ethnography’ is defined by a detailed practical process made up of both ‘being there’ and ‘being here.’ As Geertz rhetorically states: “What a proper ethnographer ought properly to be doing is going out to places, coming back with information about how people live there, and making that information available to the professional community in practical form.”³⁰ It does not, as he further describes, involve an overt focus on theory, wherein one might simply ‘loungue about’ a library, “reflecting on literary questions.”³¹ Focusing his own discussion on the changing perspectives of this ‘proper ethnography,’ it is here where Geertz pinpoints the locus of our first challenge. As he contends, because the proper means of doing ethnography was once cemented by the early twentieth-century process of functionalism, showing an excessive concern with “how ethnographic texts are constructed” would seem an “unhealthy self-absorption.”³² That is, by defining ethnography with the literary process involved in writing and forming a text, rather than with the process of participant-observation, the ‘doing’ begins to veer precariously toward reflexively exposing “how the thing is done.”³³ As he remarks, and to repeat ourselves from the Introduction, this sort of argument is like saying the focus on the literary, rather than the research process, is like exposing the method of any good magic trick: “Ethnography becomes, it is said, a mere game of words, as poems and novels are supposed to be [...] exposing how the thing is done is to suggest that, like the lady sawed in half, it isn’t done at all.”³⁴

The incorporation of the literary in the Literary Turn brings forth a number of questions, specifically aimed at how this re-focused combination of both participant-observation and the translation of

³⁰ Ibid., 1.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 2.

³⁴ Ibid.

fieldnotes into a literary form, might balance the objectively scientific with the subjectively literary. This is especially pertinent concerning the advancement of textual authority. That is, if the former has been designed in order to confer a sense of authority onto the endeavor, does the inclusion of the latter, and thus the creation of a genre that makes ethnography look as much like a ‘romance’ as it does a ‘lab report,’ generate a contention between the two? Moreover, considering the traditional ascription of strict functionality to ethnography as an activity that occurred as a part of the research process ‘within the field,’ can a text written using literary techniques, such as metaphor, dialogue, differentiated perspective, and narration be *as* objective as it once was? Together, these questions seem to be addressing a larger issue about how the Literary Turn converted ethnography from being a part of the research process as a whole, into a product in, and of, itself. However, and in order to address this in relation to how reading fiction ethnographically might challenge the ‘proper’ mode of ‘doing anthropology,’ we need to first understand how that pre-Literary Turn process came to be conventionalized. It is here where our discussion turns toward Tedlock’s ethnographic archetypes that we cited above.



Before there arose the professional figure of the ‘ethnographer,’ early scholars intent on sourcing material on “contemporaneous ‘savage,’ or ‘primitive’ peoples,” whom they regarded as “living cultural analogies with the past,” rarely traveled, but instead practiced the refined art of “armchair ethnology.”³⁵ That is, these scholars’ texts were dependent upon written accounts from travellers, missionaries, government officials, and other ‘amateurs’ not trained in what would become the dispassionate art of a “prescribed attitude of cultural relativism.”³⁶ As substantiating evidence, these early amateur accounts formed a particular type of genre, an ethnographic antecedent similar to ‘traveler’ and ‘explorer’ accounts, by means of a shared narrative motif: the “romantic discovery by the writer of people and places unknown to the reader.”³⁷ However, this sort of process breeds complication when the objective of one’s text is meant to be a holistic representation. How, one might

³⁵ George E. Marcus and Michael M.J. Fischer, “Ethnography and Interpretive Anthropology” in George E. Marcus and Michael M.J. Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), 17.

³⁶ Clifford, “On Ethnographic Authority,” 124.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

ask, does an armchair ethnologist such as Tylor or Frazer create a universal textual representation when the source material could be derived from biased or inaccurate notations? Or rather, how might these armchair ethnologists construct *any* sort of accurate representation without the slightest regard for first-hand knowledge and experience of the culture being represented? In answer to these questions there appears an ethnological shift, a move from ethnography solely written ‘here,’ to ethnography being conducted ‘out there:’ in the field and ‘off the veranda.’

Removed from the parochial confines of ‘being here,’ the goal of the ‘anthropologist in the field’ was not altogether different from the holistic intent of his armchair predecessor: the focus was still directed at creating a written representation of a whole culture. However, now that the research conducted was without an intermediary between author and subject, and based solely on the work of the researcher in the field, there arose the need for a system of organizing principles, the first of which dealt with the way in which this culture-as-a-whole might best be textualized. Thus, in fusing the “establishment of anthropology as an academic discipline” with the “elaboration of professional fieldwork,”³⁸ a style of realism became the definitive genre convention. Borrowed from the nineteenth-century literary conception, ethnographic realism sought to “represent the whole world or form of life,”³⁹ a system of writing meant to “allude to a whole by means of parts or foci.”⁴⁰ In essence, this writing offered a more detailed interpretation of the ‘otherworld,’ a textual representation of the cultural totality in its entirety. As a secondary organizing principal there then also arose the need for specific research techniques, with the reality of the text, alongside the author’s authority in writing it, organized into an “intimate link between ethnographic writing and fieldwork.”⁴¹

What this accumulation soon becomes is an amended type of theory and practice that would, roughly two decades into the twentieth-century, come to be established as a “powerful new scientific and literary genre.”⁴² As can be expected, though, with a new approach come new challenges, the remedy of which appear in a number of innovative tactics and procedures. For summary purposes, Clifford (1983), Firth (1999), and Marcus & Cushman (1982) abridge these solutions into six preliminary

³⁸ Marcus and Cushman, “Ethnographies as Texts,” 29.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Marcus and Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*, 23.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Clifford, “On Ethnographic Authority,” 124.

distinctions. First (1), there is the practical matter of separating the professional from the amateur, the anthropologist from the missionary. In that the latter might be otherwise distracted by the act of conversion, in order to get to the “heart of the culture,”⁴³ the former would need to apply a series of ‘analytic techniques,’ modes of ‘scientific explanation’ aimed at reaping a truly objective analysis. In further separating the professional from the amateur, this requires a more personal *experience*. It necessitates the act of (2) living amongst the people, physically witnessing culture, taking note of ‘characteristic behaviors,’ and becoming a ‘trained onlooker.’⁴⁴ In this process a methodology is formed, the actual, physical ‘doing’ of observation. No longer fettered by the university or library, the fieldwork-theorist is now out and amongst his or her subjects, learning their customs (3), speaking their ‘vernacular tongue,’ participating in their “initiation rites and funerals,” and attending “their marriage ceremonies.”⁴⁵ The process, then, of participant-observation is distinguished by the “directness and intensity of the relationship of its fieldworkers to the people among whom they work.”⁴⁶ However, even with this methodology ascribed, and even though the professional, with his “powerful theoretical abstractions,” might be better equipped at ‘getting to the heart’ of a particular culture, there still remains the issue of (4) constructing, from the parts gathered, a “central armature of structure of the cultural whole.”⁴⁷ That is, given the limited ability of a short research span, it would prove quite difficult to observe and record the ‘complex whole’ of an entire culture. Thus, the focus turns toward a thematic concentration on particular institutions, the holistic approach replaced with a method of getting at the ‘whole’ through “one or more of its parts.”⁴⁸ This new stance (5) offers a sort of genre identity, a re-focused ‘synecdochic’ or ‘rhetorical’ position, the individual informant suppressed by the ‘composite creation’ of a “normative role model or national character.”⁴⁹ Parts become assumptive microcosms or analogies of wholes, and by setting the “institutional foregrounds against cultural backgrounds in the portrayal of a coherent world,” the ethnographer’s product, his or her writing, in turn lends itself to the aforementioned “realist literary conventions.”⁵⁰ Lastly, this new ethnographic

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 125.

⁴⁵ Raymond Firth, “An Anthropological Approach to the Study of Religion” in Russell T. McCutcheon, ed., *The Insider/Outside Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader* (London: Cassell, 1999), 116-117.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 116

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Marcus and Cushman, “Ethnographies as Texts,” 32.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

structure renders the culture-as-a-whole as (6) ‘synchronic,’ the ethnography itself standing as a ‘sketch’ of an “ethnographic present.”⁵¹

The participant-observation made by the fieldwork-theorist thus functions as a ‘shorthand’ for the ‘continuous tacking’ between inside and outside.⁵² On one end, there is the acquisitive aspect of accumulating the Other’s “specific occurrences and gestures empathetically,” while on the other there is the return from the field and the process of situating “these meanings in wider contexts.”⁵³ From out of this going-out and coming-back a narrative of ‘question-discovery’⁵⁴ appears: the outsider enters a foreign culture, undergoes a ‘kind of initiation,’ which leads to a sense of ‘rapport,’ from which then emerges a representational text that is manufactured by the participant-observer.⁵⁵ Yet, even with this establishment of method and practice, there still persists the mystery of what, exactly, is meant by ‘text.’

Beyond even the ‘simple’ definition of ethnography as “an account resulting from having done fieldwork,” or the written form of that fieldwork out of which is shaped the identity of a whole “academic discipline,”⁵⁶ the meaning of ethnography has a much higher level of complexity.

According to Marcus (1980), whatever the particular arguments or topic might be, as a practical text to be read by a newly formed professional community, ethnography fails if it does not realize the “traditional genre characteristics” of everyday life, translated “across cultural and linguistic boundaries.”⁵⁷ In other words, it is a synthetic narrative, a written product with a degree of independence—“how culture is portrayed”—from that of the fieldwork on which it is based—“how culture is known.”⁵⁸ Yet, as a ‘representation’ of culture it performs a double act, that of decoding one

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Clifford, “On Ethnographic Authority,” 127.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ See James P. Spradley, “Chapter Three: The Ethnographic Research Cycle” in James P. Spradley, *Participant Observer* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1980), 33-34.

⁵⁵ Clifford, “On Ethnographic Authority,” 128.

⁵⁶ Marcus and Cushman, “Ethnographies as Texts,” 27.

⁵⁷ George E. Marcus, “Rhetoric and the Ethnographic Genre in Anthropological Research” (*Current Anthropology*, Vol. 21, No. 4, 1980), 509.

⁵⁸ James P. Spradley, “Chapter One: Ethnography and Culture” in James P. Spradley, *Participant Observer* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1980), 33.

culture, “while recording it for another;”⁵⁹ the initial goal of which, perhaps more than anything else, becomes the ability to “grasp the native’s point of view,” so as to realize “his vision of his world.”⁶⁰

Likely the most ideal representation of this discourse crystalizing into a distinct genre style can be found in Malinowski’s (1922) *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. Based upon his economic study of the Kula ring, Malinowski’s methodology presents a microcosmic depiction of a whole culture by means of a particular institution. In this same way, it becomes an exemplary form of functionalism, a manner with which we might distinguish the difference between the ethnographer’s report and the amateur’s account. Embodying the six distinctions listed above, *Argonauts* depicts the ethnographer as incorporating a certain type of ‘objective magic’ in formulating “the true picture of tribal life;”⁶¹ so that by eschewing the “biased [sic] and pre-judged opinions”⁶² once made by amateur, ‘white informants,’ the culture observed is more clearly translated via a “patient and systematic application” of certain codes, common sense, and “well known scientific principles.”⁶³ Only by achieving these goals, Malinowski argues, is the anthropologist capable of attaining the ‘imponderabilia’ of his or her subjects, their day-to-day processes only viewed through an internalized lens. What this does, stylistically, is shift the narrative language of ethnographic construction toward the scientific, the systematic, and the technical, further differentiating the variance between objective and subjective representation. That is, in reifying particular cultural institutions into “typological pigeonholes for cross-cultural comparison,”⁶⁴ this functionalism removes any sense of doubt that the ethnographic text is to be deemed more authoritative when compared to the untrained reflections of the amateur missionary or travel account.

It is here where we find perhaps the leading characteristic of the functionalist definition of ethnography: the necessity of objectivity in order to establish an authoritative voice.⁶⁵ However, the task of doing so is not without a few concessions. ‘Ethnographic realism,’ ‘participant-observation,’

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the western Pacific: An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea* (London: Routledge, 1922), 19.

⁶¹ Ibid., 3.

⁶² Ibid., 4.

⁶³ Ibid., 3-5.

⁶⁴ Marcus and Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*, 28.

⁶⁵ Edward M. Bruner, “Introduction: The Ethnographic Self and the Personal Self” in Paul Benson, ed., *Anthropology and Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 5-6.

‘functionalism,’ these elements act to shift the writing aspect of ‘doing anthropology’ into the context of a particular, interpretive science; and the goal of ‘ethnography-as-science,’ as Sperber (1982) defends it, is aimed at “an objective and general knowledge.”⁶⁶ However, given the interpretative process of ‘writing culture,’ ethnography-as-science is also situated at the crossroads between ‘science’ and ‘art,’ the artful fusion of the objective and subjective striking an awkward balance within the process of representation.

In order to remedy this issue, functionalist approaches, bolstered by a foundation that viewed the product of ethnographic research as the “outcome of a method or of an epistemological attitude essential to [the] social sciences,”⁶⁷ ensured a separation between the subjective and the objective, translated by Clifford as differentiating between the ‘poetical’ and the ‘political,’ or the literary from the scientific.⁶⁸ As such, with the rise of ethnography-as-science there begins the systematic ‘elimination’ of qualities unfitting the objective goal of the anthropologist-as-interpreter:

The qualities eliminated from science were localized in the category of ‘literature.’ Literary texts were deemed to be metaphoric and allegorical, composed of inventions rather than observed facts; they allowed a wide latitude to the emotions, speculations, and subjective ‘genius’ of their authors.⁶⁹

That literature is here circumscribed as being ‘non-utilitarian,’ the domain rather for the “playing out of experimental, avant-garde transgressions,”⁷⁰ in a converse distinction, ethnography-as-science reflects the opposite.

It is here where we come to the issue of the ethnographer’s voice, and how the concern of objectivity works to mute the author’s opinions, emotions, and personal reflections so as to prevent these sorts of ‘subjective views’ from “coloring objective facts.”⁷¹ Thus, the ethnographic text, with its dull, yet dependable style, assures a social scientific encounter with “reliable fact[s], precise thought, and well-funded conclusions based on carefully reasoned analysis.”⁷² However, this is still not without

⁶⁶ Dan Sperber, *On Anthropological Knowledge: Three Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 10.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

⁶⁸ Clifford, *Writing Culture*, 2.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁷¹ Geertz, *Works and Lives*, 9.

⁷² John Stewart, “The Literary Work as Cultural Document: A Caribbean Case” in Phillip A. Dennis and Wendell Aycock, eds., *Literature and Anthropology* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 1989), 97-98.

provocation, in that as this differentiation might eliminate the falsity of aesthetic intent on one end, it stimulates the ‘question of signature’ on the other. That is, as an objective scientist undertaking a writing project, dictated by its own genre, and underscored with a particular style, how does one define the writer’s identity, if at all? It is here, with this question of authorial signature within the text, where this discourse begins to shift away from the structure of functionalism, back toward a sense of the subjectively aesthetic.

This, we might say, is the direct catalyst that leads to the literary qualities of the Literary Turn: with the return of the author’s voice, the ethnographic focus shifts from the culture toward the fieldwork, experience, and process, transmuting ‘ethnography’ into an insider’s account of an outsider within an unfamiliar context. Then, as more texts become more literarily experimental, the limitations and restrictions drop away, revealing new styles; the aesthetic intent of the Literary Turn taking the form of textual creativity, with ‘ethnographic truth’ giving way to a particular construction made possible by “powerful ‘lies’ of exclusions and rhetoric.”⁷³ Soon, the concept of ‘fiction’ itself is redefined—or, perhaps more appropriately, etymologically revisited—leading to another re-conceptualization of ethnography as embodying “serious true fictions,” the truth-claims within now “inherently partial.”⁷⁴ These things equally considered, the rise in value of the author’s signature leads as well toward a contested interpretation, and thus analytical challenge, directed at the means of achieving ethnographic authority. It is to this second challenge in which we now turn.

1.4—Challenge Two: The Author’s Signature and Function, and the Crisis of Authority

The construction of a ‘writerly identity’ and the establishment of an ‘authorial presence’ within the text is something—as Geertz further claims—that has haunted the process of doing anthropology from the very beginning, albeit in a specifically ‘disguised’ way:

Disguised, because it has been generally cast not as a narratological issue, a matter of how best to get an honest story honestly told, but as an epistemological one, a matter of how to prevent subjective views from coloring objective facts. The clash between the expository conventions of author-saturated texts and those of author-evacuated ones that grows out of the particular nature of the ethnographic enterprise is imagined to be a clash between seeing things as one would have them and seeing them as they really are.⁷⁵

⁷³ Clifford, *Writing Culture*, 7.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Geertz, *Works and Lives*, 9.

The presence of the author within the text conjures a sense of ownership, whereby the author's fingerprints are found in the way the text has come into existence. This gives it an identity. Whether the text itself falls on either side of the clash between things seen through a perspective, or just as they supposedly 'are,' it still originates as a product of an individual's actions. This, Geertz states, is the 'author-function,' and this issue of both separating and identifying the author from/with the text, will become a major contributing factor to how we perform the Ethnographic Criticism to follow. For now, however, we must turn our attention toward a brief discussion of the origins of the 'author-function,' how that in turn depicts the ethnographic text as a form of artifice, as well as how it exposes a larger sense of the reflexivity inherent in recognizing the author's place as an author.



Even where functionalist approaches ensure there does not occur "too close a connection between authorial style and the reality presented,"⁷⁶ we still might discern a particular accent, either through the style of representation, or the way in which the research is formulated. These accents become attached to individuals, especially by means of interests, so that by recognizing the name attached to the text—such as Mead or Firth—we might know what to expect from the text itself. However, what a functionalist methodology is meant to do is separate the name from the individual, so that when reading these texts we do not see them as encompassing a 'Meadian' or 'Firthian' inflection.

With the Literary Turn this clear distinction becomes muddled. Where it was once wholly absent or, if nothing else, marginally relegated to footnotes or appendices, the presence of the author ceases being epistemologically disguised. In acknowledging the author's 'textual strategies,' that is, the literary qualities used to recreate culture within a written account, we also come to acknowledge that not only do these accounts have a genesis, they have a creator as well. How we then come to define the role of this creator plays a major part in the way ethnography is later conceptualized, based largely in part on Geertz's concept of the 'author-function,' which poses the significant question as to what, in anthropological terms, "an author is?"⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Clifford, *Writing Culture*, 13.

⁷⁷ Geertz, *Works and Lives*, 6-7.

In order to answer this, Geertz borrows—albeit critically—from Foucault’s ‘hyphenation,’ a determination the latter makes in his “What is an Author?”⁷⁸ (1977), that locates the ‘author-function’ between two particular discourses:

Foucault distinguishes there, perhaps a bit too sharply, between two realms of discourse: those, most especially fiction (though history, biography, philosophy, and poetry as well), in which what he calls the ‘author-function’ remains, for the moment anyway, reasonably strong; and those, especially science (but also private letters, legal contracts, political broadsides), in which, for the most part, it does not.⁷⁹

From these two distinctions, we might conclude that because the identity of the ethnographer comes attached to discursive ‘systems of thought,’ such as what we see with Malinowski or, as Geertz offers, such as we might see with ‘Radcliffe-Brownian Functionalism’ or ‘Levi-Straussian Structuralism,’⁸⁰ anthropological writings fall under the distinction of the more literary type: “it is clear that, in these terms, anthropology is pretty much entirely on the side of ‘literary’ discourses rather than ‘scientific’ ones.”⁸¹ However, we might also argue, both against Geertz’s use of Foucault’s hyphenation, as well as equally against Foucault’s ‘sharp’ distinction, that any text is inherently dependent upon an author and, as such, cannot be separated from that creator in even the most objective terms. Even prior to the Literary Turn authors are still fieldworkers, so that even when the research is conducted in the utmost functionalist and objective manner, the individual doing that anthropology is still an ‘individual,’ prone to a distinct style and accent.⁸² Likewise, we might also conclude that, with the rise of literary value, the author-function of post-Literary Turn ethnographic construction becomes something akin to a bipolarity, retaining the ‘factual’ objectivity of strict functionalism, while also appearing subjectively “evocative or artfully composed.”⁸³ If nothing else, then, the ‘author-function’ acts as a practical means of disassociation, guiding us in determining the relative subjectivity or objectivity of a text by looking at the amount of ‘authorial presence’ we might find within. What we mean by ‘presence,’ and how that is shaped ‘literarily,’ will come to determine a major shift in the adoption of reflexivity within anthropological writings, a reflexivity that challenges the notion that an author-absent text is more

⁷⁸ See Michel Foucault, “What Is an Author?” in Donald F. Bouchard, ed. *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*, Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simons, trans. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 130-131.

⁷⁹ Geertz, *Works and Lives*, 7.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² A good example is Crapanzano’s (1986) discussion of the ethnographer’s Hermes-like position of ‘boundary marker’ between subject and object: Vincent Crapanzano, “Hermes’ Dilemma: The Masking of Subversion in Ethnographic Description” in James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 51-76.

⁸³ Clifford, *Writing Culture*, 4.

authoritative—because of its objectivity—than an author-saturated one—because, as a subjective text, the author’s presence serves as substantiating evidence to support the author’s own work. This is made all the more apparent when we consider the text itself as a result of calculated choices, and thus as an artifice.

If we take into consideration that a text, regardless of the author’s level of presence within it, is still a product of that individual’s creating something, we must also come to recognize that what we are reading has been inspired by choice. That is, the author does not merely allow facts and information to form *ex nihilo* on the page, but rather chooses certain data in order to shape the narrative into a formulation, a ‘story,’ developed from, and arising out of, the chaos of in-the-field perceptions. This is a conscious act, and as such it is representative of the literary styles and processes inherent in any sort of writing, what Van Maanen (1988) translates as involving certain “narrative and rhetorical conventions,” such as personal expression, choice of metaphor, and textual organization.⁸⁴ Moreover, these conscious choices additionally highlight the ‘presentational’ or, more properly, ‘representational’ qualities of fieldwork writing, drawing further attention to their “inherent story-like character.”⁸⁵ For these reasons he refers to them as ‘tales,’ not entirely fictional in the sense that the facts within need to be placed between ‘quotation marks,’ but ‘fictional’ in that they are the byproduct of an interpretive act, constrained and limited by the author’s duty in decoding an observed narrative through “self-consciously selected words.”⁸⁶

Related to our discussion above on the literary influences that might define ethnography, recognizing the text as carefully constructed by *choice* draws out a number of questions that seem to challenge the authoritative reliability of objective functionalism, particularly in how it differs from those amateur accounts against which its methods seem more authentic. For instance, does merely recognizing the choices made by the ethnographer not diminish the text’s objective authority? That is, does recognizing that the ethnographer has self-consciously arranged the text in a certain way not allude to the fact that the culture, as it is, has now become culture, as an individual perceives it? In this way, like how learning the way the trick is performed diminishes the magic of the performance, does even

⁸⁴ John Van Maanen, *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 5.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

the most objective text not rely upon a subjective foundation, in that the author has chosen how it takes shape? After all, it might be argued that even when authority is granted by means of the artful narration of one's apparently strict objectivity, that same authority is diminished by the knowledge that the culture portrayed is the result of the conscious choices made by an intermediary between subject and reader. Consequently, we might equally see even the most author-absent text as still being 'authored,' and thus, just by means of the text's existence, as less authoritative. Given these revelations, then, we might ask, as Clifford (1988) does, how does someone attain the authority to "speak for a group's identity or authenticity" when they merely function as a mediator involved in a literary act?⁸⁷

These questions directly address the issue of authority after the Literary Turn; that is, after the acknowledgement of the author's existence, and thus of the ethnography as artifice, wherein the rules, restrictions, and limitations of objective functionalism seem to collapse under the application of literary analysis. They also speak to a rationalization in the shape of a balance—much like that seen in the discourse above—struck somewhere between an allegiance toward ethnographic functionalism and the creative act of writing. This is perhaps best demonstrated by a stylistic demarcation made between the ethnographer's omniscient and dispassionate voice—"the X do this"—and the more reflexive first-person account—"I saw the X do this."⁸⁸

In acknowledging and accepting the author's role in writing the text, there also arises a focus on the "substantive theoretical role" of self-reflection.⁸⁹ Gained through the "influence of perspectives on meaning and interpretation," but most notably through 'marks of enunciation,' self-reflexivity becomes a paradoxical device for proving and re-interpreting the ethnographer/fieldworker's "basic rhetoric of authority."⁹⁰ On one end, when the ethnographer becomes a character within the ethnographic narrative, the ethnography itself becomes both autobiographical—a description of the author's involvement in forming the work, not just the finished product—and dialogical—what Clifford calls the narration of "interpersonal confrontations."⁹¹ In this way, not only does the once dull and objective

⁸⁷ Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, 8.

⁸⁸ Marcus and Cushman, "Ethnographies as Texts," 31-32.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Clifford, *Writing Culture*, 14.

narrative become relatable to the reader by means of empathy and sympathy, it also provides a viewpoint that speaks toward an evidential experience. The text becomes a ‘speaking subject,’ something not just seen, but that “evades, argues, [and] probes back.”⁹² It gives a firsthand insight into the ‘complex interactions’ between researcher and subject, and provides the reader a look at the “emotions and personal beliefs” of the author without drastically hindering the ‘ethnographic intention.’⁹³ So as not to mask these ideologies in objective silence, this is what Laterza (2007) marks as an opportunity to “discern the personal bias of the ethnographer.”⁹⁴

On the other end, though, reflexivity also further blurs the line between science and art, wherein a character’s ‘descriptions and dialogues’ equally become literary portrayals of events in which those very characters are involved, alongside the author, as “part of the narration.”⁹⁵ This produces a sense of self-absorption, pointing the attention toward the author, not the subject, as if to acknowledge the former—and the former’s experience amid the latter—as the intended research target. In this way, ethnography is further re-conceptualized as an insightful report of the ethnographer’s feelings and emotions, rather than a snapshot or recreation of an unfamiliar culture for academic purposes.

Through acknowledging these elements—author function, the text as artifice, and self-reflexivity—the voice of the author defines a type of signature: a means with which ‘authority’ is achieved within the text, as well as another sense of ‘hybridization,’ a re-conceptualized process of consonance that translates the “intrusion of personal testimony”⁹⁶ into a statement that imparts value. In this way, textual authority becomes a negotiated principle, the center-point of debate between the foundations of functionalism and the heterodoxy of anthropological literary criticism.

This brings us to a conclusive point. From here, and after a brief interlude concerning the way the discussion above has inspired an ethnographic interplay between fact/fiction, our discussion below will turn from this sort of theoretical discourse, to an analysis of select data. In this way, not only will this

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Vito Laterza, “The Ethnographic Novel: Another Literary Skeleton in the Anthropological Closet?” (*Suomen Antropologi: Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society*, Vol. 32, No. 2, 2007), 131.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Marcus and Cushman, “Ethnographies as Texts,” 39.

Chapter assist in theoretically justifying our conception and use of Ethnographic Criticism in Part Two, it will equally provide solid examples to both support the theoretical analysis just provided, as well as substantiate the notion that our experimentation herein is not without a base upon which to grow.

1.5—Ethnography between Fact/Fiction

The re-interpretation of ‘ethnography’ after the Literary Turn tells a progressive story that speaks to a weakening barrier between fact/fiction by means of depicting the text as something artistically rendered. At this stage it will further assist our discussion to review a few specifics. First, and as a part of doing anthropology, ethnography was something intrinsic to functionalist research, equal in objective meaning to participant-observation, note taking, and learning another’s language. It was, solely, a science. Then, as we begin to view ethnography as a ‘product,’ the result of those other actions, it likewise begins to take on a particular meaning. It becomes action, the process of writing, of compiling ideas and crafting characters out of perceived individuals. As such, this writing depicts a style that seems to mimic certain literary qualities such as dialogue, plot, metaphor, and so on. Then, this perception of ethnography-as-literature comes to challenge the traditional idea of ethnography-as-science, the two forming a binary across two issues dealing with discourse—the way ethnography shifts from ‘part of the process’ to ‘product’—and signature—the means by which the author’s subjective presence in the text alters its scientific objectivity.

From out of this arises a consolidation, the idea that the concept of ‘fiction’ represents something both ‘made-from’ *and* ‘made-up.’ For example, Leach (1982), who perceives ‘insight’ as a type of ‘deep understanding’ only accessible via personal, emotional, and reflexive styles of writing, states that “social anthropology is not, and should not aim to be, a ‘science.’”⁹⁷ He concludes, rather, that ethnography is, if anything, “a form of art.”⁹⁸ Likewise, Marcus and Cushman, as well as Geertz, contend that the ‘fiction’ of ethnography is emulative of the ‘made-up’ qualities associated with “classic pattern[s] of development in literary genres,”⁹⁹ such as “telling stories, making pictures,

⁹⁷ Edmund Leach, “The Diversity of Anthropology” in Edmund Leach, *Social Anthropology* (Glasgow: Fontana Paperbacks, 1982), 52.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Marcus and Cushman, “Ethnographies as Texts,” 26-27.

concocting symbolisms, and deploying tropes.”¹⁰⁰ In this way, ethnography begins to appear more like Rapport’s citation above, something derived from one’s imagination: “for these writings are fictions, in which one form of life is represented in the categories of another.”¹⁰¹ As far as genre distinction is concerned, this consolidation appears like an inter-textual absorption, such as Van Maanen suggests by associating the holistic intent of ethnographic writing with “a novelist’s sense of narration.”¹⁰²

While this inter-textuality between ethnography and fiction, rendered here as the adoption of fictional style to objective translation—“social anthropologists are bad novelists rather than bad scientists”¹⁰³—appears as a progressive challenge to the functionalist style standardized prior to the Literary Turn, it is in fact more indicative of a ‘retreat.’ As Langness and Frank (1978) point out, a number of pre-functional accounts marked ‘unscientific’ by objective realism are, in fact, defined by this same sort of textual interrelatedness. Traced back to Bandelier’s 1890 story of the Keresan Pueblos, *The Delight Makers*, this early ethnographic genre depicts a hybridized style of factual/fictional, the representation of ‘sober facts’ as more “accessible to the general public.”¹⁰⁴ Likewise to Bandelier, we might find an equal hybridization with Rasmussen’s (1908) *The People of the Polar North* and Parson’s (1922) *American Indian Life*. Not unlike the roman à clef—a novel that fictionalizes real life—these early ethnographic fictions, as Langness and Frank concede, reveal a “legitimate if not perfectly ordinary means of description.”¹⁰⁵

Our data analysis below will address this consolidation by focusing on two literary outcomes: ethnography *written* like fiction, and fiction *read* like ethnography. By concentrating our discussion on these two literary consequences, this analysis will assist the intentions of this Thesis in two ways: first, by furthering the foundational importance theoretically mapped out in the discussion above with usable and tangible examples; and second, by thematically priming the experimental style of our own analysis in Part Two. That is, by rendering the means with which the Literary Turn inspired anthropologists to ‘fictionalize’ their ethnographies—which will equally affect the style of our Ethnographic Criticism—

¹⁰⁰ Geertz, *Works and Lives*, 140.

¹⁰¹ Rapport, *The Prose and the Passion*, 272.

¹⁰² Van Maanen, *Tales of the Field*, 131-132.

¹⁰³ Leach, “The Diversity of Anthropology,” 53.

¹⁰⁴ L.L. Langness and Geyla Frank, “Fact, Fiction, and the Ethnographic Novel” (*Anthropology and Humanism Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 1-2, 1978), 18.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

as well as how this then encouraged a critical assessment of fictional texts for their anthropological insight—the intent of that Ethnographic Criticism—the following will provide an almost point-by-point structure with which to bolster, as well as frame, our intentions in Part Two.

1.6—Fact/Fiction: The Ethnographic Novel

The genre of ‘ethnographic fiction’ is described as a ‘hybrid’ that bridges the “distance between literature and anthropology;”¹⁰⁶ blurs the “relationship between the ethnographer and the novelist;”¹⁰⁷ and advances a perspective on the “plots and counterplots of life”¹⁰⁸ not available to the objective and standard ethnographic text. Considered a type of, and even written like, a novel, this genre seeks to incorporate the *art* of writing into the scientific process of doing anthropology, retaining the focus on the “accurate description of another way of life,” but with the “addition of character and plot.”¹⁰⁹

Langness and Frank further describe this incorporation by means of a nominal appropriation:

If interpretation and explication of others’ lives is the goal, the novel may prove a better medium than the standard or topical ethnography. If we acknowledge our creative abilities rather than pretend they do not exist, if we allow ourselves to read perceptively, and if we are honest about our intent and limitations in presenting ethnographic materials, there would seem to be no compelling reason that an ethnographic novel would not be as useful or as legitimate as the standard monographs.¹¹⁰

Likewise, Fernea (1989) defines the ethnographic novel as a text dictated by the style used, applying the broad conception of ‘fiction’ to the adoption of literary form: “It is a text, like other literary texts, that in the course of presenting a fictional story creates a setting (or physical and social context), characters (or people), plot and action.”¹¹¹ This process, she contends, affords a number of advantages over the traditional ethnography: “The novelist need not shun conflict, anger, hatred, or passion, and may often become a participant in the drama of the novel in a way denied the ethnographer, who has in the past been at pains to observe carefully and not to become too involved.”¹¹²

¹⁰⁶ Mario Cesareo, “Anthropology and Literature: Of Bedfellows and Illegitimate Offspring” in Rose De Angelis, ed., *Between Anthropology and Literature: Interdisciplinary Discourse* (London: Routledge, 2002), 160.

¹⁰⁷ Janet Tallman, “The Ethnographic Novel: Finding the Insider’s Voice” in Rose De Angelis, ed. *Between Anthropology and Literature: Interdisciplinary Discourse* (London: Routledge, 2002), 12.

¹⁰⁸ Langness and Frank, “Fact, Fiction, and the Ethnographic Novel,” 21.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Elizabeth Fernea, “The Case of Sitt Marie Rose: An Ethnographic Novel from the Modern Middle East” in Philip A. Dennis and Wendell Aycock, eds. *Literature and Anthropology* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 1989), 154.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

Somewhat related, but more cautiously reasoned, Tallman (2002) makes the argument that the use of the ‘novel’ as a comparable medium acts as an ‘entry point’ to the cultural insight found within, serving the ethnographer as an “imaginative field of study itself.”¹¹³ Moreover, in comparing the ethnographer with the novelist she asserts that the once perceived separation—put in place by functionalism—appears, after the Literary Turn, as “somewhat artificial.”¹¹⁴ That is, as she asserts that both tend to consciously ‘stand apart,’ marginalized by the cultures they intend to describe, and bound by albeit differing disciplinary processes concerning the act of making the “familiar strange and the strange familiar,”¹¹⁵ the ethnographer and the novelist share more than just the construction of texts: both are observers, individuals separate from the group, whose attempts at putting ‘into words’ the “results of their observations and their ruminations on what they have observed,” equally draw on the “conventions and traditions of writers before them.”¹¹⁶ Though these similarities paint a picture of a correlation without complications, Tallman does not discount the differences either. Notably, where ethnographers give themselves the task of describing a culture, “in such a way that observers might come to similar conclusions were they to explore the same culture,” the novelist, unbound by such methodological restrictions, strives for a “fresh, unique, [and] original description of life.”¹¹⁷

These sorts of complications, given the experimentation of the genre in general, raise a number of questions as to what, exactly, is meant by the concept of an ‘ethnographic novel.’ For the sake of clarity we might state that what Langness and Frank, Fernea, and Tallman are discussing is a style of writing: developed within the intellectual climate wherein not only are ethnographies being treated like ‘literary texts,’ but novels are also being treated as ‘cultural’ ones, ethnographic fiction, or rather, ethnography written *like* fiction, depicts an amalgamated and unique textual format. Emerging out of this, we see a new vision of culture, re-structured “through imagination and art,”¹¹⁸ by ‘ethnographers-as-novelists’ who now use a “rich and flexible prose style quite beyond what anthropologists have employed to date.”¹¹⁹ Turning here from description to example, our discussion will begin with two Moroccan examples: Crapanzano’s (1980) *Tuhami: Portrait of a Moroccan* and Dwyer’s (1982)

¹¹³ Tallman, “The Ethnographic Novel: Finding the Insider’s Voice,” 13.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹¹⁸ Tallman, “The Ethnographic Novel: Finding the Insider’s Voice,” 21.

¹¹⁹ Langness and Frank, “Fact, Fiction, and the Ethnographic Novel,” 21.

Moroccan Dialogues.¹²⁰ While not in any measure the sort of ethnographic fictions we will discuss shortly, these two texts are ideal for easing us out of the strict functionalism described above, and into the experimental literary texts below. In fact, with the former's use of a single-character narrative, and the latter's conversational use of dialogue, their ability to slide precariously along the slippery axis between the ethnographic novel and the 'standard monograph' ideally places them right at the nexus between these two constructions.

∇

Considering the slow progression toward accepting the novel as a useful medium for ethnographic writing, our first example is initially "designed to shock."¹²¹ That is, given the anthropologist's wholly neutral position traditionalized by functionalism, Crapanzano's *Tuhami* is designed to offer the reader an opportunity to realize the ethical and political relationship cultivated between individuals within the ethnographic encounter. Focusing on the face-to-face confrontation, the point-of-contact between subject and anthropologist, Crapanzano's text means to 'shock' by jarring both the reader and writer out of the "complacency with which they have succumbed to the determinants of their respective endeavors."¹²² The experimentation in *Tuhami* is predominately found within its intention to turn the reader's eye toward the process of ethnographic construction, particularly in regard to the ethical and political ramifications inherent in the ethnographer's use of choice:

As anthropologists, we have a responsibility to the people we study, if not our readers, to recognize the ethical and political implications of our discipline. Every interpretive strategy, including those implicit within description itself, involves choice and falls, thereby, into the domain of ethics and politics.¹²³

However, Crapanzano's method of doing this is not without the use of unconventional—fictional—style. *Tuhami* utilizes a combination of certain genres, an integration of the 'case history'—similar to biography wherein the goal is to present a "view of the subject from the perspective of an outsider"—

¹²⁰ Further examples of this type, as cited by Wolf (1992) and Narayan (1999), are Schieffelin's (1976) *The Sorrow of the Lonely and the Burning of the Dancers* and Obeyesekere's (1981) *Medusa's Hair*. What differentiates these from our Moroccan texts is their focus on particular aspects of cultural re-construction, rather than on the adoption of the literary forms of narrative, plot, or characterization. See Margery Wolf, *A Thrice-Told Tale: Feminism, Postmodernism, and Ethnographic Responsibility* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 10; and Narayan, "Ethnography and Fiction," 135-137.

¹²¹ Vincent Crapanzano, *Tuhami: Portrait of a Moroccan* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980), xii.

¹²² *Ibid.*, xii.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, x-xi.

with the ‘life-history’—a style like the autobiography wherein the subject is presented from within “his own perspective.”¹²⁴ Stylistically, the text is both like, and unlike, both of these genres. It differs from the biography in that a great deal of the text is embodied by Tuhami’s direct ‘recitations,’ and it differs from the autobiography due to these recitations originating as responses to Crapanzano’s questions.¹²⁵ Moreover, because Crapanzano plays a significant role in the formation of Tuhami’s story—“as Tuhami’s interlocutor, I became an active participant in his life-history, even though I rarely appear directly in his recitations”¹²⁶—the text is a co-written, polyvocal encounter.

This is not, however, the only way in which *Tuhami* is a literary experiment. In that the text is meant to shock by providing both the ‘frozen picture’ of the subject and the subject’s culture, as well as offer a glimpse of the encounter between subject and author, the interrelated style drifts carefully along the border of our two conceptions of fiction. In one respect, Crapanzano’s formation of the text so as to locate within Tuhami’s story an allusion toward the “traditional Moroccan social hierarchy, patterns of authority, and attitudes toward paternal and maternal figures,”¹²⁷ is representational of the holistic conception of fiction as ‘made-from.’ In another, guided by the “permitted ‘blend’ of the imaginary and the real,”¹²⁸ the use of Tuhami as a character, brought to life by means of dialogue and narrative storytelling, reflect the idioms of fiction as ‘made-up.’ This latter category is further reflected not only in the shared style of the text and Crapanzano’s voice throughout—“Tuhami was, as I have said, an illiterate Moroccan Arab”¹²⁹—but is also found in his own reflection of the text as relational to the ‘modern novel.’ For these reasons, then, *Tuhami* demonstrates an inaugural emersion, a poly-thematic treatment of literary style incorporated into an objective construction.

Equally driven by a shared concern with providing the reader a text that properly reflects “the nature of the fieldwork experience,”¹³⁰ Dwyer’s *Moroccan Dialogues* follows from *Tuhami* with a focus on ‘transcription;’ and it is designed around what Dwyer perceives as the need for a form of writing that

¹²⁴ Ibid., 8.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 11.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 7.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 27.

¹³⁰ Kevin Dwyer, “The Purpose(s) of Transcription: Transcription Practice in Three Books” (*Interval(le)s*, Issue 4/5, 2008), 208.

moves beyond the “depersonalized, decontextualized, and non-reflexive perspectives”¹³¹ of traditional objectivity. However, this is not meant as a call for a text that is entirely subjective or absolutely author-saturated:

I did not want to overemphasize the subjectivity and/or interiority of Self (that is, of the anthropologist and his/her own society), nor did I want to foster the illusion that there could be an ‘objective’ transcription of lived experience into a text supposedly faithful to it—on the contrary, I believed it to be quite obvious that the very idea of a text ‘faithful’ to lived experience was oxymoronic.¹³²

As he further argues, because ‘traditional’ anthropological genres are dependent upon a “contemplative epistemology that effectively divorces Self from Other and places the Self beyond criticism,”¹³³ this has the inevitable tendency to lead toward a ‘systematic neglect,’ on the part of the anthropologist, of three fundamental ‘dialogical’ features of the experience itself: its ‘temporal dimension,’ ‘contingent nature,’ and nature of ‘embarkation.’¹³⁴ With these in mind, and in answer to the quintessential question, “what is the larger purpose of the text,”¹³⁵ Dwyer’s focus on ‘transcriptions,’ defined as “transformations of oral communication into written form,”¹³⁶ and seen as distorted by the ‘clear research project’s’ suppression of the “spontaneity and normal behavior” between subject and observer, acts as a thematic challenge.¹³⁷ Thus, and so he concludes, a concentration on the dialogical encounter between subject—Other—and object—Self—permits an exposure of these deficiencies in such a way as to convey the experience itself, without repeating these oversights to the detriment of the anthropologist’s work.

By allowing his subject—the ‘Faqir’—to tell his own story, in his own words, Dwyer is attempting to further allow the spontaneity of the encounter to be his text’s stylistic guide. As such, the Faqir’s story is dialogical, the encounter and relationship between Dwyer—object—and the Faqir—subject—appearing on the page much like a scripted conversation. In further establishing his reasoning, he defines this dialogical structure as a rejection of what he deems the two customary, and thus traditionalized, styles of textual presentation in the anthropological encounter:

¹³¹ Ibid., 207.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid., 202.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid, 201.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Kevin Dwyer, *Moroccan Dialogues: Anthropology in Question* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 21.

One is to interpret the experience according to the norms of 'science' and to create an object for study (or, as the anthropologist might say, an 'Other') that is strictly distinct from the subject who studies it (the 'Self'). [...] Or, the anthropologist may reject science and insist on the unique and personal aspects of the experience, trying to recount that experience subjectively, in a manner somewhat akin to a novel."¹³⁸

This latter rejection is equally two sided: first, because he sees the scientific approach as radically distorting the interactional experience by overlooking the "role played by the anthropologist in constructing the situation," and second, because in the subjective description this experience is presented 'naively,' so that the text appears without consulting the "implications of the anthropologist's presence and comportment."¹³⁹ In this way, he equates the textual process of 'filling in the spaces' within the dialogical encounter as conducting an act of 'made-from' fictionalization: "the anthropologist may take substantial liberties in remodeling the object, organizing it into selected themes, neglecting 'irrelevant' details, combining separate events and ignoring chronology—all in accord with the canons of science."¹⁴⁰

Overall, his eleven dialogues¹⁴¹ take up the notion of fictional style in a rather similar manner to Crapanzano's. By focusing solely on the dialogue and allowing his subject to speak for himself, his text marks a progressive move toward a particular literary genre. This is by all means due in part to his challenge toward the customary manner of textualizing culture, each of which reveal a facet of his text's novelization: the dialogical process, the saturation of Dwyer within the text, and the means by which the 'magic' of the process is revealed. Moreover, his use of dialogue speaks to a methodology that, not unlike the 'oral history,' casts each participant into roles like characters, as suggested by his description of each under the banner 'Cast of Characters' at the start of the text.¹⁴²

The literary experimentation of *Moroccan Dialogues*, aimed at presenting culture without the deficient involvement of textual translation is, like *Tuhami*, symbolic of the ironic transmutation of 'ethnography' alongside criticisms of the restrictions posed by objective functionalism. This is

¹³⁸ Ibid., xv.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ It should be noted that Dwyer's use of 'dialogue' is neither wholly new nor unique, in that he cites at least three previous samples that, in his estimation, introduce the method, but do not fully extend its capabilities. These are Lewis' (1961 and 1965) *The Children of Sanchez* and *La Vida*; Mintz's (1974) *Caribbean Transformations*; and Castaneda's (1968-1993) 'Don Juan series.' See Dwyer, *Moroccan Dialogues*, 277.

¹⁴² Dwyer, *Moroccan Dialogues*, 19-20.

somewhat suggested in Tedlock's (1987) own experimental defense of the former text's apparent lack of ethnography, where in his own constructed dialogue with himself—monologue?—he both defends and critiques Dwyer's own constructivism: "those interviews are ethnographically formed and shaped at every step, and they would be even if we stripped away Dwyer's commentaries."¹⁴³ As he further argues, the ethnography is in fact still present, only now, and in order to permit the anthropological encounter the freedom of action, it has been marginally relegated to footnotes and personal commentary, accounting for "45 percent of the book."¹⁴⁴ When compared to Marcus and Fischer's (1986) initial description of the author's voice in traditional ethnography, we find an ironic example of the way in which these texts have advanced the notion of ethnographic discourse and signature:

Unlike the functionalist ethnography in which the writer was absent or had only a marginal voice in footnotes and prefaces, the presence in the text of the writer and the exposure of reflections concerning both his fieldwork and the textual strategy of the resulting account have become, for very important theoretical reasons, pervasive marks of current experiments.¹⁴⁵

Perhaps more 'bridge' than blending, these Moroccan examples exhibit the early adoption of the "inherent story-like character"¹⁴⁶ of fieldwork accounts: while at the same time both 'sophisticated and naïve' and 'confessional and analytic,' the rhetorical style of these accounts yields to that of the autobiography or "ironic self-portrait,"¹⁴⁷ at the center of which stands the ethnographer, now both a writer of the story, as well as a character within it. Moreover, in their precarious use of fictional style, there appears as well an attempt here at reviving an essence lost to the more structured and objective text, a sense of 'evocation' found in the course of the researcher becoming one with his or her subject. In this process the ethnographer undergoes a sort of transformation, not just in literary style, but also of his or her place within the larger development of research and writing.

This 'sense of evocation,' what Stewart (1989) associates with a vivid literary implementation,¹⁴⁸ and what Tyler (1986) extols over mere 'representation,'¹⁴⁹ speaks to an insertion of the ethnographer into

¹⁴³ Dennis Tedlock, "Questions Concerning Dialogical Anthropology" (*Journal of Anthropological Research*, Vol. 43, No. 4, 1987), 328.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Marcus and Fischer, "Ethnography and Interpretive Anthropology," 42.

¹⁴⁶ John Van Maanen, *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 8.

¹⁴⁷ Clifford, *Writing Culture*, 14.

¹⁴⁸ John O. Stewart, *Drinkers, Drummers, and Decent Folk: Ethnographic Narratives of village Trinidad* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 8-12.

¹⁴⁹ Stephen A. Tyler, "Post-Modern Ethnography: From Document of the Occult to Occult Document" in James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 130.

his or her field of inquiry. Like Dwyer's renewed marriage of the once divorced Self and Other, this likewise depicts an outsider who is speaking to us from inside the culture he or she means to recreate. This becomes one of the defining characteristics of ethnographic fiction, the ethnographer's text itself shaped in such a way as to depict a quasi-autobiographical insider's account, an evocative description that is defined as either being "written from within the culture" by a professional insider or outsider,¹⁵⁰ or as a representation of the ethnographic experience itself. This latter description comes from Marcus and Fischer, whose definition of the 'ethnographic novel' is that of a product of dissatisfaction that takes the duplicitous form of a particular methodological type:

Such literatures offer not only expressions of indigenous experience, unavailable in any other form, but also constitute, as similar literatures do in our own society, indigenous commentaries as a form of autoethnography that in particular concerns itself with the representation of experience.¹⁵¹

This newly established and multi-meaning style of writing, the 'auto-ethnography' is a summation of the 'going native' immersion of the ethnographer in his or her own text through the process of self-reflexivity and fictional incorporation, what Fernea—echoing Marcus and Fischer—defines as "written by an artist within the culture."¹⁵² Admittedly, the term has a much wider genealogy,¹⁵³ so that before examining the examples below, a brief explication is necessary in order to clarify our own interpretation and use herein.

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The initial use of the term can be traced to Heider's (1975) study of the Dani in West New Guinea, and his inquisitive approach to 'what people do—"*akhuni nena hakakhatek* [emphasis in original]."¹⁵⁴ Experimental in its own way, Heider's conception of 'auto-ethnography' stems from asking the 'absurdly simple' question, 'what do people do,' to sixty Grand Valley Dani children, the result of which provided a definition of the lived experience of the Dani in terms of the "routine activities of

¹⁵⁰ Fernea, "The Case of Sitt Marie Rose," 154.

¹⁵¹ George E. Marcus and Michael M.J. Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), 74.

¹⁵² Fernea, "The Case of Sitt Marie Rose," 154.

¹⁵³ In addition to those discussed below, see also Patricia Sikes, ed., *Autoethnography*, Four Volumes (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2013); and Leon Anderson, "Analytic Autoethnography" (*The Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, Vol. 35, No. 4, 2006), 377.

¹⁵⁴ Karl Heider, "What Do People Do? Dani Auto-Ethnography" (*Journal of Anthropological Research*, Vol. 31, No. 1, 1975), 3.

gardening and cooking,” rather than “in terms of war and ritual.”¹⁵⁵ He refers to this definition as a Dani auto-ethnography: “‘auto’ for autochthonous, since it is the Dani’s own account of ‘what people do,’ and ‘auto’ for automatic, since it is the simplest routine-eliciting technique imaginable.”¹⁵⁶

Beyond this genesis, it is perhaps with Reed-Danahay’s (1997) conception where we receive the most balanced interpretation of the term. Built from Hayano’s (1979) notion as a position focused on the ‘insider’ status of the ethnographer,¹⁵⁷ differentiating between auto-ethnography as a written text from a distinctly ‘insider’s’ perspective—either by a member of a culture, or by someone adopted into it—and ‘autobiographical writing,’ Reed-Danahay uncovers a double-sense typology.¹⁵⁸ On one end there is the ‘nativisation’ of ethnography, the process by which the text becomes a “form of writing wherein the ethnographer is the native.”¹⁵⁹ This type is affected by the author’s position in the text itself, such as suggested by Van Maanen (1995), who defines it as the process in which the “culture of the writer’s own group is textualized,”¹⁶⁰ or as Strathern (1987) conceives it, as the idea of anthropology “carried out in the social context which produced it.”¹⁶¹ On the other, there is what she classifies as the ‘biographical type,’ that defined by Brandes (1982), Denzin (1989),¹⁶² and Wolcott (1995)¹⁶³ as writing that mimics the biographical ‘case-history’ and autobiographical ‘life-history’ previously discussed herein, the text composed as either a “strictly first-person narrative told by ‘a commoner, an ordinary member of his or her society,’”¹⁶⁴ or in which the “anthropologist himself or herself is the

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 7.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 3.

¹⁵⁷ David M. Hayano, “Auto-Ethnography: Paradigms, Problems and Prospects” (*Human Organization*, Vol. 38, No. 1, 1979), 98.

¹⁵⁸ Deborah Reed-Danahay, “Introduction” in Reed-Danahay, ed., *Auto/Ethnography: Rewriting the Self and the Social* (Oxford: Berg, 1997), 5.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ John Van Maanen, “An End to Innocence” in John Van Maanen, ed., *Representation in Ethnography* (London: SAGE, 1995), 9.

¹⁶¹ Marilyn Strathern, “The Limits of Auto-anthropology” in Anthony Jackson, ed., *Anthropology at Home* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1987), 17.

¹⁶² Norman K. Denzin, *Interpretive Biography* (London: SAGE, 1989). See also most recently, Norman K. Denzin, *Interpretive Autoethnography* (London: SAGE, 2014).

¹⁶³ Wolcott’s short description is quite similar to Heider’s, in that he uses the term to define the process of adapting a woman’s own story as a complementary enhancement of his ethnography, an ‘ethnographic autobiography’ he labels ‘autoethnography’ due to the researcher’s place as ‘principle figure’ in the telling. See H.F. Wolcott, *The Art of Fieldwork*, 2nd ed. (Walnut Creek: Alta Mira Press, 1995), 240.

¹⁶⁴ Reed-Danahay citing Brandes, “Introduction,” 6.

autobiographical subject.”¹⁶⁵ As a fusion of ethnographic and autobiographical style, this conception rejects the perception of the ethnographer as an ‘objective outsider,’ while at the same time incorporates certain “elements of one’s own life experience when writing about others.”¹⁶⁶ For our interests herein, her double-sense definition works as a stipulation that, as we shall see, not only assists in elucidating how ethnography is constructed literarily,¹⁶⁷ but also directs our reading of it toward an experimental appreciation of how the shifting identity of the ethnographer helps transcend the wall of separation that once strictly demarcated the scientific from the artistic.

∇

Where Reed-Danahay’s theoretical analysis gives us an insight into how the concept comes of shape, it is Ellis’ (2004) practical usage, in the process of defining it, that perhaps works best as a transitional example with which to introduce the ethnographic novels below. Experimental to the point of meta-narration, Ellis’ *The Ethnographic I* presents the fictional style of auto-ethnography by means of a fictionalized academic course, taught by the author, and told through plot, dialogue, and narration. Working with a definition put forth in a previous text with Bochner (2000), Ellis depicts auto-ethnography as an “autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural.”¹⁶⁸ Her definition here is anchored solidly on the latter end of our spectrum between fact and fiction, particularly in how it adopts thematic elements related to “poetry, fiction, novels, photographic essays, personal essays, journals, fragments, and layered writing,” in which the action and dialogue within the text are “dialectically revealed *through action, feeling, thought, and language* [emphasis in original].”¹⁶⁹ Indeed conceived as a shift in the ethnographer’s position from outsider to insider, Ellis’ equation of auto-ethnography with fictional

¹⁶⁵ Stanley Brandes, “Ethnographic Autobiographies in American Anthropology” in E.A. Hoebel, R. Currier, and S. Kaiser, eds., *Crisis in Anthropology: View from Spring Hill, 1980* (New York: Garland Press, 1982), 202.

¹⁶⁶ Reed-Danahay, in reference to Denzin, “Introduction,” 6.

¹⁶⁷ See also her discussion of literary criticism, and ‘auto-ethnography’ as a two-point post-modernist ideology: “It synthesizes both a postmodern ethnography, in which the realist conventions and objective observer position of standard ethnography have been called into question, and a postmodern autobiography, in which the notion of a coherent, individual self has been similarly called into question.” Reed-Danahay, “Introduction,” 2.

¹⁶⁸ Carolyn Ellis and A. P. Bochner, “Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity: Researcher as Subject” in N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln, eds., *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishing, 2000), 739.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

forms—“thus, autoethnography claims the conventions of literary writing”¹⁷⁰—marks a point along our progression wherein the style of writing has become dependent upon a theoretical approach, the methodological concerns of which focus on the same conditions pertinent to the way a novel “engages readers in its plot.”¹⁷¹

We might state, then, that the novels presented below—Jackson (1986), Knab (1995), and Richard and Sally Price (1995)—are ‘true ethnographic fictions’ in that they represent the theoretical methodologies of literary auto-ethnography in practical form.¹⁷² That is, where Ellis’ text above, and Wolf’s (1992) text below, stand with a foot each on the shores of theory and practice, these three examples display ethnographic fiction and auto-ethnography as it functions and appears in words on the page. It should as well be noted that signifying these as ‘true’ does not denote a sense of ‘truthfulness’ or ‘factuality,’ but rather indicates a representational ‘purity.’ As such, while literary in that they each employ the tropes of plot, dialogue, and characterization, they are not auto-ethnographically equal, so that while we may be able to further state that they are collectively auto-ethnographic in their inclusion and use of reflexivity and literary narration, they do not uniformly share the same perceptions of that term.

Divided into three parts—the political and historical contextualization of Sierra Leone, followed by two unique ethnographic examinations—Jackson’s *Barawa and the Ways the Birds Fly in the Sky* is told via a fictionalized third-person narration, with Jackson himself appearing within his text as if existent upon two planes of consciousness between memory and narrative invention. He describes himself as ‘The Anthropologist,’ Michael, a ‘Kuranko Bard’ cast as narrator, who seizes upon the stories told to him by others so as to shape the text into an “allegory of cultures in contact.”¹⁷³ It is in this way that his own story becomes ‘analogous to others,’ the story of the Barawa functioning as much like a fictional narrative as his own. Stylistically, Jackson’s novel presents an auto-ethnographic immersion, the author/ethnographer faced with the challenge of presenting a first-hand experiential interpretation of the Other written from “within their consciousness of history,” and in order to bridge

¹⁷⁰ Carolyn Ellis, *The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel about Autoethnography* (Walnut Creek: Alta Mira Press, 2004), xix.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, xx.

¹⁷² See also Adam Ashforth, *Madumo: A Man Bewitched* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

¹⁷³ Michael Jackson, *Barawa and the Ways the Birds Fly in the Sky* (Washington, D.C.: The Smithsonian Institution Press, 1986), 4.

the gap “between aspects of his own experience and theirs.”¹⁷⁴ Once characterized, then, Jackson’s narrated Self becomes synchronous with the Barawa Other, a genealogical intermarriage based on commonality between subject and object:

For it was his hope that anthropology might move away from a yearning for essences, causes, and determinate meanings to an open-ended quest for connections and juxtapositions—striking common chords, finding common ground, disclosing common historical horizons without the pretense of arriving at any necessary truth.¹⁷⁵

Thematically similar, though told from a first-person perspective, Knab’s *A War of Witches* begins with an allegorical introduction that sets up the plot, conflicts, and leading characters of the text. Excusing himself from a recording session with an informant—‘Don Inocente,’ whom he describes as a “master narrator, an accomplished teller of tales”¹⁷⁶—Knab, the narrator/protagonist places himself into a metaphorical tableau, wherein he becomes an eavesdropping outsider listening to his subjects converse in a dialect—Nahuatl—they believe he is unable to translate. This unexpected observation reveals to Knab—and us—that not only is Don Inocente a witch doctor, but that the interaction between him and his ‘client’ involves a contractual agreement of murder. While literarily depicted as a ‘happy accident,’ this chance encounter serves a unique narrative purpose. It sets both Knab and his text on a specific trajectory, and draws him—as well as us, empathetically—into an unexpected and unknown culture. In this way, his narrative is shaped around the thematic elements of mystery and intrigue, the telling of a story within a story, with Don Inocente as his guide and informant. Though classified in the same category as *Barawa*, *A War of Witches* is a comparatively different ethnographic novel. First, the differentiation between third- and first-person narration places Knab in an altered state of characterization, generating a sense of autobiographical transference wherein the action, conflicts, and dialogues are not just happening to Knab the author/ethnographer, but to the reader as well. Additionally, where Jackson’s Part One alludes to the ‘factuality’ of his text, Knab includes two substantiating and wholly objective venues: an historical Afterword that offers the reader a glimpse of the facts within the fiction; and a glossary of terms, so as to remind the reader that though it looks fictional, the story within the text is actually based in fact. Lastly, with his focus on mystery, an allegorical nod to the process of detection in researching and writing ethnography, Knab’s text develops what Pierson (1989) refers to as the comparative literary style between ethnography and

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 3-4.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 4

¹⁷⁶ Timothy J. Knab, *A War of Witches: A Journey into the Underworld of the Contemporary Aztecs* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), 2.

mystery fiction: by means of the mystery novelist's "extensive use of a variety of geographic and cultural settings," as well as the "considerable cultural information" they adopt in their attempts at presenting finite details as 'evidence,' detective literature looks in many ways quite ethnographic.¹⁷⁷

In much the same way that the mystery element plays a role in shaping the content and plot of Knab's text, we see this repeated in Richard and Sally Price's *Enigma Variations*. Perhaps the most distinctive of our examples here, their novel presents an equally symbolic narrative, the story on the surface—two anthropologists tasked with proving the authenticity of certain artifacts—providing an outlet for the story hidden beneath—a metaphorical correlation with the difficulty in determining something as authentic, such as an ethnographic text. That is, in their fixation on differentiating the genuine from the fabricated, and battered by the 'mental Ping-Pong' of these sorts of binary oppositions,¹⁷⁸ their investigations of the physical artifacts in the story become stand-ins for the verbal artifacts an anthropologist collects in the field. While the uniqueness of their text is distinctively found in this metaphorical symbolism, it is also located in the plot as well. Where our previous examples stick seemingly close to an ethnographic format, *Enigma Variations* never quite separates itself from the mystery narrative. Because of this, and because the artifacts in the text might also be seen as symbols of the culture in which they exist, the process of their authentication equally becomes a symbol of the translation of that culture into a written text. In this way, when we eventually discover that the artifacts they are investigating for the fictionalized Musee d'Equatoria—perhaps based on the Musée Des Cultures Guyanaises that opened in 1995—are indeed forgeries, this becomes a caveat for the perceptions we might have about what might *look* real or fake, a difficult and obsessive—even life-threatening in their telling—task that leaves a blemished mark on the implicit foundation of ethnographic authenticity. This final statement is perhaps best embodied by the conclusive description of their fictionalized selves chasing the ghost of an eccentric art dealer—who played a major role in their narrative—and their final description of him as a theoretical 'third man.'¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ James C. Pierson, "Mystery Literature and Ethnography: Fictional Detectives as Anthropologists" in Phillip A. Dennis and Wendell Aycock, eds., *Literature and Anthropology* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 1989), 15.

¹⁷⁸ Richard Price and Sally Price, *Enigma Variations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 41 and 153.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 154-155; this reference to the 'third man' is perhaps aimed at their epigraphic use of dialogue from Orson Welles' film *The Third Man*, in which Mr. Popescu and Holly Martins discuss the dangerous issues with mixing fact and fiction.

Running through each of these examples is a shift into the unknown or the taboo, both in writing style, as well as in subject matter. This positions each of them in such a way as to mark a significance in their experimental content, the subject matter only accessible via this sort of non-traditional experimentation. These novels are heavily metaphorical, filled with characters, conflicts, and emotional reflections, which draw the reader into fictional worlds that are no less real. Perhaps this is the most poignant aspect of the ethnographic novel, of ethnographies *written* like fiction: a style that not only presents a re-created culture in a new and engaging way, but that brings the reader, either professional or not, into the world itself. Alongside the facts and details, then, is an emotional connection with the author and the author's subject, a metaphorical self-reflection on the process of constructing ethnography in general, and an imposture of the way in which ethnographers attempt to enter the minds of their subjects in order to see their world through their eyes. This method is indeed a seminal part of conducting life histories, of writing an informant's autobiography, and allowing them to speak for the culture itself. In an exchange of perspective and literary embodiment, this has the equal power to make any individual who reads such a text an anthropologist in their own way: the reader embodies the ethnographer, who has embodied the informant, so that their culture becomes that much more accessible.



To conclude our progressive discussion here on the literary influences that have affected *writing* ethnography, we turn to a final example that, in contrast to Ellis' application of the theoretical in practical form, should act as a decent mode of transition. In critical response to issues of 'colonialism' in ethnography, Wolf focuses her *Thrice-Told Tale* on the experimental remedies of post-modernism, presenting three different types of writing—invented fiction, 'unanalyzed' fieldnotes, and objective ethnographic text—as testable data that each reflect, in different ways, the influence of textual translation on in-the-field research.¹⁸⁰ While admittedly accepting that each of these three stylistically differentiated texts “involve the same set of events,”¹⁸¹ she does not accept that they stand as equal accounts. Moreover, she uses this differentiation to argue that while her invented fiction might “evoke

¹⁸⁰ Margery Wolf, *A Thrice-Told Tale: Feminism, Postmodernism, and Ethnographic Responsibility* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 7.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

a setting, a social context, an involvement of all the senses in ways that enhance understanding,”¹⁸² it does not equal its matching ethnographic account in “conveying information, analysis, and understanding about gender, shamanism, and power relations in a Chinese community.”¹⁸³ While this criticism is indeed indicative of the issues addressed by post-modernist and literary interpretations of ethnographic construction, rather than focus on the borrowing of fictional style in order to add an artistic nuance to a scientific text, it is mostly concentrated on the *possibility* of fiction standing in as ethnographic writing. As such, while her overall criticism acts as a decent bookend to Ellis’ *The Ethnographic I*, her critical refusal to acknowledge an invented fiction—such as her *Hot Spell*—as being equally authentic as a ‘proper’ ethnography, conveniently leads us to the “blurry rather than sharp”¹⁸⁴ aspect of *reading* fiction as a source of cultural insight.

1.7—Fact/Fiction: The Novel as Ethnography

With the analysis above, our notion about the influences and outcomes of the Literary Turn revealed the consequences a literary effect might have on the style and process of *writing* an anthropological text like a novel. With the short analysis below, our attention will turn toward the secondary outcome: these same influences turned toward the utility, or even ability, of reading a novel like an ethnography. While this might seem like a somewhat disjointed progression, it actually shares many of the same roots as our first outcome. One in specific reaches all the way back to Malinowski himself who, though critical of the novel as a ‘trashy’ substitute to non-fiction, spoke highly of Conrad’s writing as a “window open on life.”¹⁸⁵ In fact, in Sam’s (1974) study of Malinowski’s ‘addiction’ to fiction during his time in New Guinea, he cites the anthropologist as considering Conrad’s writing as “a surrogate reality,”¹⁸⁶ a textual representation that, though seemingly beneficial to our attempts at capturing the ways of life of a different culture, is still divorced from the authentic nature of an ethnographic non-fiction. This quite poignantly sums up the discussion below.

¹⁸² Ibid., 59.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ellis, *The Ethnographic I*, 332.

¹⁸⁵ Bronislaw Malinowski, *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term*, Norbert Guterman, trans. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967), 278; what’s more, Malinowski’s affinity for Conrad, with whom he shared Polish heritage, is to such a point that in reference to a comparison between W.H.R. Rivers and Rider Haggard, he is cited as stating: “I shall be their Conrad.” See Raymond Firth, ed. *Man and Culture: An Evaluation of the Work of Bronislaw Malinowski* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957), 6.

¹⁸⁶ Henry W. Sams, “Malinowski and The Novel; Or, Cultural Anthropology Versus Mere Fiction” (*The Journal of General Education*, Vol. 26, No. 2, 1974), 134.

In the following review we will look at certain theoretical and practical examples of scholars who have attempted to answer the question: if ethnographic texts are read critically for their literary merits, which then demands a more literary and reflective means of writing that makes ethnography look like realist fiction, would the next logical step not be to consider those same fictions as offering cultural insight in an auto-ethnographic sense? The answer, as we shall see, will not only provide another facet to this Chapter's progressive consideration of the ways in which we might blur the line between fact and fiction in the pursuit of cultural insight, it will also ultimately influence the methodological style with which we will analyze our own chosen fictions in Part Two.



To begin, Fernea (1989) traces within this further blurring of fact/fiction what she refers to as an underlining 'strangeness,' an odd and blatant disregard for "written works of the imagination," given the anthropologist's and the ethnographer's shared "interest in myth, legend, and proverb."¹⁸⁷ As such, she argues that if the novel—in her case Anan's *Sitt Marie-Rose* (1982)—were to be analyzed as an experimental ethnography, not too unlike the ethnographic novel, then the invented 'short pieces' and 'voices' of the characters could easily be interpreted as equal to "quotations from interviews and fieldnotes."¹⁸⁸ Therefore, because the novel's intent is focused on providing the reader with the "sequences of events in the society" portrayed within, as well as the "reactions of individual informants to those events,"¹⁸⁹ its ethnographic nature is validated. However, though this experimental analysis offers another analytical interpretation of the blurred relationship between objective and subjective texts, and while Fernea's argument supports the 'logical next step' from writing ethnography like fiction to reading fiction as ethnography, it leaves out the essential discussion of exactly how that might be done.

With Banks (1990), this issue begins to get resolved, as for him the novel becomes a useful tool for deciphering how cultural concepts are imagined, presented, acknowledged, and then used. Reflective

¹⁸⁷ Fernea, "The Case of *Sitt Marie Rose*," 153.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 160.

of Anderson's (1983) notion of 'imagined communities,'¹⁹⁰ Banks' inspiration for examining fictional texts stems from his attempt at understanding a Malaysian Islamic resurgence as seen through the works of novelists writing from within that resurgence itself. Using four novels as examples, and in analyzing the plots and characters in regard to the factors affecting social solidarity found within, Banks is enabled to "abstract reasonably coherent conceptions of Malay society."¹⁹¹ As such, he is likewise able to reveal how these authors 'gain their audience' by "encapsulating, crystalizing, and articulating shared social ideas and sentiments," so that their culturally related readers might "build on positive images and reject negative ones."¹⁹² Thus, less fiction-as-ethnography and more fiction-as-discursively-fashioned, these novels become sources for understanding how novels themselves—"symbolic constructs that draw upon their author's perceptions of the real world"¹⁹³—might shape, and be shaped by, a 'perceived reality.'¹⁹⁴ While this method reveals more of an insight into how cultural transitions alter fictional accounts within that transition, and how, in reverse, those fictional accounts might then shape the results of that cultural transition, the novel-as-ethnographic here is indeed a plastic distinction. As a conclusion, Banks attempts to solidify this through Anderson's conception that national communities selectively draw upon their own history in order to "foster social solidarity," in much the same way a "novelist may construct a plot and create characters to suit didactic purposes."¹⁹⁵

This conception of the novel as an ethnographic 'source' is equally found in Stewart (1989), and then picked up by Handler and Segal (1990), and Eriksen (1994). In each, the novel becomes a secondary source for the ethnography, a 'case study' that is beneficial, yet still unequal, much like Malinowski's notion of 'surrogate reality.' With Stewart this is embodied by Turner's (1975) concept of 'social drama,'¹⁹⁶ wherein the "relationships between a selected number of individuals" within a novel are interpreted against the "social environment to which, and for which, they are responsible."¹⁹⁷ In this

¹⁹⁰ See our discussion of Anderson in the Conclusion

¹⁹¹ David J. Banks, "Resurgent Islam and Malay Rural Culture: Malay Novelists and the Invention of Culture" (*American Ethnologist*, Vol. 17, No. 3, 1990), 531.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 532.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 531.

¹⁹⁶ By 'social drama,' Turner means: "a device for describing and analyzing episodes that manifest social conflict." See Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1974), 23-60, and 78-79.

¹⁹⁷ John Stewart, "The Literary Work as Cultural Document: A Caribbean Case" in Phillip A. Dennis and Wendell Aycock, eds., *Literature and Anthropology* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 1989), 111-112.

way, as a case study, the novel becomes useful by revealing culture as a ‘subject of discourse’ for the ethnographic text. In a similar manner, Handler and Segal’s treatment of select novels by Jane Austen as though they contain “the record of a social world amenable to cultural analysis of the kind typically practiced by symbolic anthropologists,”¹⁹⁸ determines the novel-as-source as an exemplar of both ‘intercultural translation’ and ‘intracultural defamiliarization.’¹⁹⁹ Using these novels as sources for which they might interpret both the cultural construction within the writing of ethnography, as well as in the anthropological process itself, they equally rely on the ‘organizing principles’ of the novel-as-medium in order to comprehend a “social world that is partially foreign and partially familiar.”²⁰⁰

While these two examples provide an introductory insight into the utility of the novel as an ethnographic source, Eriksen’s distinction between the scientific and the artistic—“fictional accounts [...] present persons and events which have been invented by the writer [...] anthropological texts try to present a few aspects of social reality as accurately as possible”²⁰¹—provides for an equally dualistic relationship between the notion of the novel-as-source and the novel-as-description. His intention with these two forms is further delineated between two points, on one end set on exploring both the “possible practical uses of fiction in ethnographic research,”²⁰² while on the other making sure to maintain the oppositional relationship between ‘fictitious’ and ‘anthropological’ modes of writing. By means of the former, he recognizes the fiction as something that is evidentially expedient to the understanding of social constructs, but that needs to be cautiously approached: “novels, which are simultaneously the production of a society and contributions to the self-definition and reification of that society, have the additional virtue of presenting some kind of ethnographic evidence—although the status of such ethnographic material can be uncertain.”²⁰³ That is, though he acknowledges the “qualities of a sociological analysis”²⁰⁴ found in certain fictions, he affirms not to make use of these novels as ethnographic surrogates: “they cannot be used as plain ethnography since they do not profess

¹⁹⁸ Richard Handler and Daniel Segal, *Jane Austen and the Fiction of Culture: An Essay on the Narration of Social Realities* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1990), 149.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 150.

²⁰¹ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, “The Author as Anthropologist: Some West Indian Lessons about the Relevance of Fiction for Anthropology” in Eduardo P. Archetti, ed. *Exploring the Written: Anthropology and the Multiplicity of Writing* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1994), 168-169.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 168.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 171.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 190.

to represent the truth.”²⁰⁵ For this reason, he stipulates the importance of clarifying the novel-as-source—“the reader must be familiar with the society at the outset of the reading”—from the novel-as-description—the reader of which need not have “such prior knowledge.”²⁰⁶ As examples, he defines Mittelholzer’s (1979) *A Morning at the Office* as a source, and Naipaul’s (1961) *A House for Mr. Biswas*, as a description.

While he maintains that *A Morning at the Office* is “an important piece of Trinidadian ethnography,”²⁰⁷ he also adds that where the novel might be read as a “micro-sociobiological analysis of social relations,”²⁰⁸ its insights and virtues can only be fleshed out properly when compared with “research carried out in Trinidad during the same period,”²⁰⁹ such as Braithwaite’s (1953) *Social Stratification in Trinidad*. In this way, and even though he lauds the narrative’s “fine nuances of inter-ethnic micro-relations,” he is unwilling to acknowledge it as “hard ethnographic evidence,”²¹⁰ due in most part to what he refers to as Mittelholzer’s ‘exaggerated and biased’ depictions. Thus, *A Morning at the Office* becomes *complementary* to the ethnography, offering insight into the culture itself, but necessitating a pre-existing knowledge about that culture to support its validity.

In comparison, where he equally uses Naipaul’s *A House for Mr. Biswas* as a discursive source with which to examine similar ethnographic monographs—such as Niehoff and Niehoff (1960) and Klass (1961)—he concedes that this novel is perhaps more accessible: “Naipaul is able to describe urban-rural relationships in a way unavailable to the Niehoffs and Klass, since their studies were classical anthropological community studies.”²¹¹ For this reason, he further concedes that because the novel “assumes some of the same ambitions as the anthropological analysis,”²¹² and because of Naipaul’s position within the cultural milieu depicted in his text, it becomes difficult to determine “where the storytelling stops and the analysis begins.”²¹³ This does not, however, and for reasons of style and format, distinguish it as something ‘more’ than fiction: “Unlike Klass’s and Niehoff’s monographs, it is

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 174.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 172.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 174.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid., 181.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid., 183.

unsystematic and contains no testable or tested hypotheses; it does not attempt to assess the representativity of the sample and does not purport to account for mechanisms of integration in the community.”²¹⁴ In this way, Eriksen’s dual conception of source vs. description becomes somewhat more discursive-based, his description of Naipaul’s novel as representing an “ethnographic description of the East Indian community in the first half of this century,” discursively substantiated by his simultaneous depiction of it as a “description of Trinidadian society which has reflexively fed back into the society with which it deals.”²¹⁵

Alongside these distinctions, Eriksen’s contribution here offers our interests a formulaic guideline with which to structure the methodology of our Ethnographic Criticism, demarcating the discursive influences that label the differences between the novel-as-source and the novel-as-description. For the former, the novel functions alongside statements from informants like raw cultural insight in need of representation, while the author represents an aspect of that culture, akin to a self-reflective auto-ethnographer. With the latter, it serves as a ‘face value’ description, a kind of ‘ethnographic documentation’ that, unlike the novel-as-source, can stand alone, as well as alongside, more ‘ethnographic’ monographs. As based on his samples, Eriksen defines these as such: “*A Morning at the Office* is mainly an ethnographic statement and *A House for Mr. Biswas* is part ethnography and part an aspect of Trinidadian society.”²¹⁶ However, and though his examinations seem to bend a bit toward the experimental, he concludes with a thematic disclaimer, ensuring the novel and ethnography maintain their separateness: “what fiction gains from its vividness, freedom to experiment and evocative techniques, it loses in its lack of accuracy, empirical comprehensiveness and attempt to establish interesting comparative dimensions.”²¹⁷

Eriksen’s caveat here brings us to a conclusion, specifically for its differentiation between those things gained and lost through reading fictions out of the context of its made-up quality. This is, in fact, somewhat reminiscent of Narayan’s (1999) own warning about the dangers of slipping too close to the fictional side of our spectrum between the made-from and the made-up: “if one is free to invent other people and their lives, why even bother with the inconvenient dislocations and anguished ethical

²¹⁴ Ibid., 184.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 189.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 190.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 193.

ambiguities of fieldwork?”²¹⁸ As we transition here toward the conclusion of this Chapter, these admonitions will take center focus, both in a summary fashion, as well as in order to describe the way the discourse discussed herein will influence our textual analysis to come.

1.8—Conclusion: The ‘How’ of Using Fiction

Through the discourse and data analyzed within this Chapter we have, in short, reduced a much larger discussion to specific points. While this is a regrettable characteristic of the reductive process in designing a methodological foundation, it is likewise essential to its purpose. As one of the three ‘pillars’ that we intend to erect beneath the Ethnographic Criticism in Part Two, this Chapter’s focus on ethnography, by means of Tedlock’s archetypal ‘mythic history of anthropology’—amateur observer, armchair ethnologist, professional ethnographer, and gone native fieldworker—provided a foundation upon which to test our hypothesis concerning the ‘how’ of using fiction for cultural insight.

First, in our discussion of the manner with which the Literary Turn shifted the focus of ‘doing anthropology’ from fieldwork and trained observations, to the literary act of weaving the data collected in that process into a narrative, we established a theoretical route that might notionally support our use of fiction in Part Two. Secondly, our turn toward practical examples provided further justification via two outcomes: ethnography written like fiction and fiction read like ethnography. While the theoretical discussion in that first part is essential to our understanding of the practical examples in the second, it is from the latter where we might more directly locate this Chapter’s role as a pillar of Ethnographic Criticism.

The two novels that will be examined in that analysis—*Black Dogs* and *Enduring Love*—will be treated in a somewhat peculiar fashion. That is, while our interpretation will define them as ‘descriptions,’ rather than ‘sources,’ they will also be viewed as creative examples of auto-ethnography, particularly because of the role their narrators play in their formation. In this way, our analysis will be thoroughly influenced by the discourse reviewed herein. However, while our discussion about the way McEwan’s fiction has been examined in Chapter Two—and thus the manner with which our discussion will build on this—will deal with this a bit more specifically, our conclusion

²¹⁸ Kirin Narayan, “Ethnography and Fiction: Where is the Border?” (*Anthropology and Humanism*, Vol. 24, No. 4, 1999), 144.

here will return once more to the precarious nature of ethnography's place at the nexus between fact and fiction.

Our hypothesis at the start of the introduction considered the possibility that we might find the same sort of cultural insight in an invented fiction as we would an objective ethnography, which in its own way poses a secondary criticism about the way ethnography, in a textual manner, is just as equally designed as a novel. This, of course, is not a completely original notion. For example, we might consider Geertz's comparison of ethnography as fiction, "in the sense that they are 'something made,' 'something fashioned,'"²¹⁹ Laterza's perception that "any written representation of reality will involve some degree of fictionalization;"²²⁰ or Ortner's (2006) more direct statement: "ethnographies are false, made up, and more generally are products of a literary imagination that has no obligation to engage with reality."²²¹ These appraisals seem to quite casually blur the line between fiction and non-fiction, to the point that we might merely continue their contentions by stating here that the novels we intend to examine are authoritatively equal to an ethnography on the same subject, an argument we could easily balance atop the reasoning that justifies writing ethnography like fiction, or reading fictions like ethnography. However, before we turn our attention to that particular discussion, it would prove beneficial for our larger introduction of Ethnographic Criticism to first introduce those novels. In the following Chapter, this introduction will be made via a continuation of the discussion started here. We refer to this as a 'continuation,' because the structure of this examination will mimic the 'writing-to-reading' paradigm drawn out above. That is, where this Chapter's focus was predominately aimed at the way in which the Literary Turn inspired a more literary style of ethnographic writing, and thus warranted an experimental approach to reading novels ethnographically, the following Chapter will continue that latter discussion by linking the anthropological means of doing this with an existing style of literary criticism. From out of this discussion, our conception herein of Ethnographic Criticism will gain another layer of nuance, both in how it might be applied, as well as in how we might apply it in regard to our hypothesis concerning the analogous relationship between ethnography and fiction.

²¹⁹ Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 15.

²²⁰ Laterza, "The Ethnographic Novel," 125.

²²¹ Sherry B. Ortner, "Reading America: Preliminary Notes on Class and Culture" in Sherry B. Ortner, *Anthropology and Social Theory: Culture, Power, and the Acting Subject* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 61.

CHAPTER TWO—DATA: READING

“The novelist’s privilege, according to Ian McEwan, is to step inside the consciousness of others, and to lead the reader there like a psychological Virgil. Again and again in McEwan’s books, it is the interior monologue of the characters, and that monologue’s encounter with the ‘truth’ in the outside world, that grips us. Whether paralyzed, obsessed, filled with guilt, or operated on, the brains of McEwan’s protagonists construct their mental world as we, the readers, watch and empathize.”

—Matt Ridley, *Ian McEwan and the Rational Mind*, 2009¹

2.1—Introduction: The ‘Why’ of Using Fiction

In the previous Chapter, our focus was directed at a methodological discussion concerning ‘ethnography,’ and the means by which that form of writing might be constructed like, and sourced or described within, certain types of fiction. As a foundational discussion, it helped clarify *how* our Ethnographic Criticism might consider reading a fictional text for cultural insights about a particular identity. In that same way, it also presented the first of our three foundational pillars that make up the description of Ethnographic Criticism. Where it spoke directly to the ‘ethnographic insight’ of our hypothetical intent in creating and conducting that Ethnographic Criticism, this second Chapter will introduce the ‘fictional texts’ we have chosen to do that. Before delving into that discussion, however, we must first turn to a rationalization of sorts, a three-part justification for reading fiction—rather than non-fiction—that will also further elucidate *why* we have chosen such an experimental approach.



If we were intent on discovering the process with which an individual within a particular context might construct his or her religious identity, one traditional means of doing so would be to turn to ethnographic data or case studies. This would demand an examination of certain pertinent details: an understanding of the discursive qualities underlining that individual’s own personal conception based on a larger, yet explicit discursive field; how this conception, when adopted by that individual, might transform according to their interests; and a larger holistic understanding of the context within which these two things took place. These details would usually ‘come together’ through ethnographic sources that might also provide us with a diverse and multi-layered snapshot of individual, as well as group,

¹ Matt Ridley, “Foreword: Ian McEwan and the Rational Mind” in Sebastian Groes, ed. *Ian McEwan: Contemporary Critical Perspectives* (London: Continuum, 2009), vii.

identity formation. However, if in our initial research we discovered a paucity of ethnographic data concerning our chosen concept, then our best option would be to conduct our own observations ‘in the field.’ It is in regard to these methods concerning Atheism, particularly in a British context, that we have created, and will conduct, our Ethnographic Criticism.

At present, there are three reasons why an examination of Atheist identity construction might benefit from such an experimental analysis. First, and as we will demonstrate further in the third Chapter, there currently exists a scholastic disagreement in how we define the term itself, the product, as we will conclude, of a predominant theoretical generalization. What this means for conducting a more traditional type of ethnographic examination is an issue of clarity: we might find one ethnography focused on the ignorant *lack* of belief in a particular ‘God,’ while another might focus on the specific *rejection* of that—or any other—God. Moreover, these two sources might even be of the same subjects, giving us two dialectically opposed notions about how that Atheism is utilized in the process of identification, let alone who might be *identified* as ‘Atheist.’

Second, rather than a complete *lack* of ethnographic data on Atheist identity, there seems a more focused interest in quantitative analysis, such as we see with Zuckerman’s (2007) “Contemporary Numbers and Patterns,” or Hout and Fischer’s (2014) discussion of the role played by political backlash and generational change in stimulating ‘non-religiosity’ in the United states. Again, while this does not indicate a complete absence of identifying data, it equally does not offer us a more specific ‘ethnography of Atheism.’ Rather, the ethnographic data we do find for our context is either ulterior within studies about broader concepts that ‘look like’ Atheism—such as Day’s (2009 and 2011) sociological analyses of how ‘articulations of beliefs’ reflect where individuals might “define and locate legitimate sites of power, meaning, and authority”²—or within ‘in-process’ analyses that have yet to be published. Worth citing here, these are best exemplified by Engelke’s participant observation of the British Humanist Association;³ Mumford’s emphasis on political and marginalized

² Abby Day, “Believing in Belonging: An Ethnography of Young People’s Constructions of Belief” (*Culture and Religion*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 2009), 263.

³ Matthew Engelke, “In spite of Christianity: Humanism and its Others in Contemporary Britain” (*Non-Religion and Secularity Research Network Annual Lecture*: London School of Economics, 28 November 2012), 12; accessible via the Economic and Social Research Council website at: <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-000-22-4157/outputs/read/933e529e-a881-4ac2-9b7b-324f94acb06a> (accessed 12 January 2014).

‘emotional responses’ as the motivation for asserting an actively nonreligious identity;⁴ the results of Catto and Eccles’ *Young Atheists Project* at the University of Lancaster⁵ and how it reveals a nuanced look at the way young Atheists become ‘engaged with atheism’ as a reaction to particular “religious attitudes within their immediate social environs;”⁶ and Aston’s focus on how ‘heritage’ dictates particular traits concerning her informant’s “ritual symbolism” and “textual and visual language” within the confines of the “contemporary landscape of organized and everyday non-religious action.”⁷ While the former type of data demonstrates an example of our first justification, providing case-by-case dialogical interpretations of seemingly contradictory ‘beliefs,’⁸ these latter examples—at this point in time—can only offer us introductory snapshots of how certain individuals are attempting to do an ‘anthropology of Atheism.’⁹

This brings us to our third reason for turning to experimentation, dictated by two specific issues. First, given the precariousness of Atheists ‘in the field’ who do not wish to assign themselves to a ‘negative connotation,’ we are forced to adopt differing types of ‘definitions,’ even re-conceptualizations of the term ‘Atheism.’ When accompanied with the theoretical generalizations from our analysis in Chapter three, we begin to lose more and more clarity about what it is we are actually examining. Secondly, Atheists are not currently what we might refer to as ‘culturally organized,’ in that they do not belong to a particular cultural system. Nor are they ‘tribal’ in the sense of an organization based on kinship and

⁴ Mumford, “Atheism and Anthropology, 3; see also her research profile at the University College of London: http://www.ucl.ac.uk/anthropology/people/graduate_students/l_mumford (accessed 15 February 2014).

⁵ [http://www.research.lancs.ac.uk/portal/en/projects/the-young-atheists-investigating-secularism-today-amongst-britons-ages-1325\(f2d5bc15-a31a-485e-b3b7-35bef92aaa6\).html](http://www.research.lancs.ac.uk/portal/en/projects/the-young-atheists-investigating-secularism-today-amongst-britons-ages-1325(f2d5bc15-a31a-485e-b3b7-35bef92aaa6).html) (accessed 15 February 2014).

⁶ Titled, “A Sociological Investigation of Young People in Britain’s Active Non-Religious Identities,” see Mumford, “Atheism and Anthropology,” 3.

⁷ See Katie Aston, “Report: NSRN annual Lecture 2011: Atheism Explained by Jonathan Lanman.” Accessed via <http://nonreligionandsecularity.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/nsrn-annual-lecture-2011-events-report-katie-aston.pdf>. (Accessed 14 December 2012); as well as her research profile at the Goldsmith’s webpage via: <http://www.gold.ac.uk/anthropology/current-students/katieaston/> (accessed 15 February 2014).

⁸ See her discussion of the ‘non-religious’ beliefs of ‘Chris,’ ‘Hannah,’ ‘Patrick,’ ‘Becca,’ ‘Andrew,’ and ‘Robert’ in Abby Day, *Believing in Belonging: Belief and Social Identity in the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 99-103; or ‘Jordan’s’ precarious statement: “I’m Christian but I don’t believe in owt,” in Day, “Believing in Belonging,” 265-266.

⁹ Much of this information derives from Mumford’s (2011) NSRN Events Report on the ‘Atheism and Anthropology’ workshop conducted at the University of London, and sponsored by the European Association of Social Anthropologists: Lorna Mumford, “Atheism and Anthropology: Researching Atheism and Self-Searching Belief and Experience Workshop” (*NSRN Events Report of the Atheism and Anthropology Workshop*: 21 September 2011, accessible via: <http://nsrn.net/2011/12/14/new-events-report-atheism-and-anthropology/>), accessed 15 February 2014.

heritage, making it that much more difficult to enter their world in order to conduct fieldwork.¹⁰ While the ethnographic examples above have found certain success in engaging with and entering into the ‘community’ of humanist organizations, this is by no means the same as conducting a ‘traditional’ type of ethnographic research.



For our own experimental approach, we have chosen to direct our focus toward a particular case-study analysis, using fictional depictions of Atheism as representations of Atheist identity constructions. While this is not an entirely unfamiliar approach, as we saw at the end of our discussion in the previous Chapter, in order to substantiate that ‘anthropological’ language with a more direct literary analysis, we need to first acquaint ourselves with the discourse inherent in the methodological and theoretical process which that entails. While this will definitely assist our efforts by introducing the fictions we have chosen as our ‘data,’ it will equally act as a link between the anthropological and literary foundations underscoring both this and the first Chapter. This will take the shape of a number of examinations, so that the structure of this Chapter will both build upon, and differ from, the previous one. We will begin with an examination of the existent scholarship on ‘religion and literature,’ which will then lead us to a more specific discussion of ‘Atheism and literature,’ a new and emerging style of literary study. By presenting this first, we will equally be ensuring that our analysis in Part Two is built upon two specific foundations: the discourse on reading fictions ethnographically—as described by Fernea, Banks, and Eriksen in the previous Chapter—and the larger category of using fiction to study religion. Next, our attention will turn to Ian McEwan, in order to both contextualize our chosen texts within the context in which they were created, as well as link the anthropological notions of using fiction as a source for cultural insight with the Ethical Criticism predominately used to critique his writing. This process will reveal a marriage of sorts, a correlation between the methodology adopted through our analysis of the Literary Turn, and Ethical Criticism’s focus on character self-construction. This will in turn lead us to our next discussion, the ‘ethnocriticism’ we will be using to build this connection, which will likewise direct us toward the theoretical discourse that we will take up in our

¹⁰ This is becoming less of an issue with the ascent of organizations such as the Sunday Assembly. Of course, we are still faced with the issue of re-conceptualization as not all members of the Sunday Assembly, nor the organization itself, is accepting of the title ‘Atheist.’ See <http://sundayassembly.com/about/> (accessed 4 August 2014).

analysis concerning the process of identity construction. With this established, we will conclude the Chapter with a detailed introduction of our chosen texts, focusing on the characters that will be central to our examination, as well as on how these texts themselves will function within our critical assessment of the Atheism revealed within them.

2.2—A/Theism and Literature

There is a distinct sense of interdisciplinarity within the overlap between literary-styled ethnographic construction—the writing of ethnographic fiction, and reading fiction ethnographically—and the method and process of conducting literary analysis. Hass (2007)—citing Said (1978)¹¹—alludes to this as a type of ‘textuality,’ a term that speaks to a combination of analyses, such as we might find in discussions about the interdisciplinarity between studying religion and interpreting literature: “[the] expanded grammar of cultural production and interpretation that carries one back into the material world through the critical parsing and syntactical analysis of its structures.”¹² Likewise, this interdisciplinarity speaks to two particular viewpoints: the study of religion *as* literature, and the study of literature as having something to say *about*, or *to*, religion. Within these perspectives we find the discourse shifting away from a less distinct notion of ‘religion and literature,’ toward a more habituated ‘theology and literature.’

While this shift appears in somewhat vague interpretations, such as with Ratti’s (2013) theological-based notion of ‘post-secularism,’¹³ it can also be found in more specific analyses, such as Detweiler’s (1989) ‘pragmatic use’ in an attempt at deciphering the production and consumption of fiction within the context of social and cultural—religious-based—desire fulfillment.¹⁴ With the latter we find a

¹¹ Edward W. Said, “The Problem of Textuality: Two Exemplary Positions” (*Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 4, No. 4, 1978), 673-714.

¹² Andrew Hass, “The Future of Literature and Theology” in Andrew Hass, David Jasper, and Elisabeth Jay, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of English Literature and Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 852.

¹³ He defines this as a ‘negotiated term’ that conveys less a return of religion after the secular age, and more an amalgamated continuation of both the secular and the religious. See Manay Ratti, *The Postsecular Imagination: Postcolonialism, Religion, and Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 21-23.

¹⁴ Robert Detweiler, *Breaking the Fall: Religious Readings of Contemporary Fiction* (London: MacMillan, 1989) 37, and 54-59. See also Detweiler’s “Art/Literature/Religion: Life on the Borders” in Robert Detweiler, ed., *Art/Literature/Religion: Life on the Borders* (*Journal of the American Academy of Religion Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 2, 1983), 1-7.

foundation both journalistic¹⁵ and monographic, embedded with theoretical perspectives that range from addressing the ‘obsession with theory’ within post-modern evaluations of fictional—mythical—narratives (Detweiler and Jasper 2000,¹⁶ Knight 2009¹⁷), to more explicit literary analyses of Biblical accounts. This more Biblical-focused type is represented by examples such as Jasper’s (2004) postmodernist focus on the desert as an inter- and extra-Biblical sacred space;¹⁸ Wright’s (2007) focus on the ‘midrash’ as an inter-textual literary metaphor that, under his scrutiny, becomes a larger symbol of the innate need to repeat sacred stories within secular fiction;¹⁹ or Tate’s (2008) post-secularist conclusion that even cynical fictionalizations of Biblical narratives—such as Crace’s *Quarantine*—provide evidence of a wider ‘return’ to religion.²⁰ This discourse is perhaps crystalized most clearly in Hass, Jasper, and Jay’s (2007) *Oxford Handbook on Literature and Theology*, which delineates between three theoretical conduits: reading the Bible literarily, reading literature Theologically, and Theology presented as literature.

Where this discourse removes much of the ambiguity in determining what is more precisely meant by ‘religion’ in the interdisciplinarity between ‘religion and literature,’ it also presents a thematic bias, shifting the notion of religion into a normative category that depicts it as ‘Theology.’ For our own intentions this is less problematic than it is fortuitous, for it is from out of this bias that the sub-field of ‘Atheism and literature’ emerges.

∇

Because it represents a somewhat new perspective in the study of religion and/in literature, the examples we might use to define ‘Atheism and literature’ appear quite varied. More than anything, this

¹⁵ For example: *Christianity and Literature* (<http://www.pepperdine.edu/sponsored/ccl/journal/>); *Religion and Literature* (<http://religionandlit.nd.edu>); and *Literature and Theology* (<http://litthe.oxfordjournals.org>).

¹⁶ Robert Detweiler and David Jasper, eds., *Religion and Literature: A Reader* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), xi.

¹⁷ Mark Knight, *An Introduction to Religion and Literature* (London: Continuum, 2009), especially 24-40, and 105-111.

¹⁸ David Jasper, *The Sacred Desert: Religion, Literature, Art, and Culture* (Malden: Blackwell, 2004), 1-14, and 70-109.

¹⁹ Terry R. Wright, *The Genesis of Fiction: Modern Novelists as Biblical Interpreters* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007), 1-10, and 169-173; see as well his chapter on Biblically reading Bakhtin and Tolstoy in Mark Knight and Thomas Woodman, eds. *Biblical Religion and the Novel, 1700-2000* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2006), 25-39.

²⁰ See Andrew Tate, *Contemporary Fiction and Christianity* (London: Continuum, 2008).

variance is a product of differing thematic foci, the majority of which seem to be dedicated to representation: examinations that interpret how Atheism is presented within particular fictions through the creation and development of Atheist characters. For example, Sutherland (1977) and Bullivant (2008b) both offer interpretations of characters within Dostoevsky's fiction, the former on the Atheism of 'Ivan' in *The Brother's Karamzaov*, and the latter on Dostoevsky's creation of what he calls 'pseudo-Atheist' characters, such as Raskolnikov, Kirillov, and Ivan Karamazov, in *Crime and Punishment*, *Demons*, and *The Brothers Karamazov*. Likewise, we see similar discussions with Smith's (1991) investigation of 'objectivism' and its notions of individualism and Atheism in post-industrial fictions like Rand's *The Fountainhead* or *Atlas Shrugged*, Lackey's (1998) more gender-specific focus on 'sympathetic description' in Woolf's "A Simple Melody," and Arbeit's (2006) exploration of what he refers to as a 'dictionary definition' of Atheism in O'Connor's "A Good Man is Hard to Find," Wright's *Black Boy*, and Chappell's *Brighten the Corner Where You Are*. In more contemporary contexts, we have examples such as Holderness' (2010) examination of the 'post-Dawkins' style science-based Atheism within Crace's *Quarantine*, as well as Kane's (2011) analysis of the dystopian style of Atheism found within the search for 'self' in McCarthy's post-apocalyptic *The Road*. While these interpretations might themselves be interpreted as unique discursive examinations, explanations of Atheism as it is presented—or rather, represented—within an aesthetic media, they likewise offer a brief introduction to the early establishment of this particular subfield. In comparison, then, the four texts toward which we now turn might best be defined as this sub-field's theoretical foundation.

As part of the *Cambridge Studies in Romanticism*, Priestman's (1999) *Romantic Atheism* explores the links between poetry and the earliest public displays of 'explicit Atheism' during the Romantic period in Britain. Placed within what he perceives to be an absence of scholarship in both the 'history of ideas' and 'literary studies,' Priestman notes the unfortunate absence of literary examinations of Atheism as being based upon either the belief that doing so would be "barely conceivable" or somehow "crudely beside the point."²¹ To remedy this, he offers that the medium of poetry is a "special kind of discourse"²² for this endeavor, due in part to its ability to present Atheism in a less imaginative form

²¹ Martin Preistman, *Romantic Atheism: Poetry and Freethought, 1780-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 1.

²² *Ibid.*, 1.

because it is “affirmative from a single subjective position.”²³ As for Atheism itself, rather than defining it outright, he applies the term topically, characterizing it as an issue or ‘concern’ within the “period called *Romantic* [emphasis in original],”²⁴ which he localizes contextually via Berman’s (1988) citation of 1781 as the “birth of avowed atheism” in Britain.²⁵ He adopts this topical designation because, as he himself acknowledges, it is too difficult, if not impossible, to know for certain if the authors within his discussion—Blake, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley, Byron, and Keats—were, in fact, ‘Atheistic,’ especially in consideration of what he terms the ‘simplistic description’ given to the belief that there is no God.²⁶ For his intentions, then, this affords him the ability to decipher the term’s literary, even lyrical, usage as something akin to an ‘Atheist discourse,’ the concept itself manifested as a challenge toward the orthodox religious and social pre-eminence of the time. His choice of poetry, he further asserts, thusly provides a means by which to synthesize these two discourses into a contextual harmony, focused upon the former’s use of Romantic themes such as ‘nature’ and ‘imagination,’ in relation to the latter’s conceptual foundations.²⁷ By tracing these authors’ nominal use—as well as virtual representation—of an historically contextualized “positive, unapologetic atheism as a phenomenon,”²⁸ he is able to link the literary with the philosophical, while at the same time propose a theoretical means to do so.

In a somewhat conflicting investigation, particularly in his re-conceptualization and thus re-definition of ‘modern Atheism,’ Gordon’s (2002) *Literary Atheism* offers two types: naïve and sophisticated. While he labels the former as shaped by the conviction that the Theist’s belief in the existence of God can be proven or disproven objectively and with empirical evidence, he classifies the latter as an Atheism that is able to acknowledge the Theist’s God as something to be subjectively “understood intellectually as myth or metaphor.”²⁹ By adopting literary language, and in shifting his re-

²³ Ibid., 7

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Berman cites this moment as inaugurated by the pseudonymously named William Hammon who, in 1781, declared: “Be it therefore for the future remembered, that in London in the Kingdom of England, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty-one, a man has publicly declared himself an atheist.” Priestman, *Romantic Atheism*, 12-13; as well, see David Berman, *A History of Atheism in Britain from Hobbes to Russell* (London: Routledge, 1988), 113.

²⁶ While this brief definition is unpacked in some detail in the first chapter of his text, it still appears to be infected with notions of ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ differentiation. See Priestman, *Romantic Atheism*, 14-15, 18-20, 31-45.

²⁷ Ibid., 7.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ David J. Gordon, *Literary Atheism* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 5.

conceptualization into the discourse on perceiving ‘belief’ and ‘myth’ within the borders of literary texts, Gordon differentiates his ‘two types’ by means of a marriage between ‘positive/negative’ and a pragmatic acceptance of one’s own particular context. As such, he states that while the naïve Atheist is more dogmatic in his or her ability to enter into, as well as retreat from, the spirit of texts that represent supernatural intervention in human affairs,” the sophisticated Atheist knows outwardly that the ‘God idea’ that he or she is challenging is “always mediated by social and psychological circumstances, whatever its strength.”³⁰ Gordon gives this sophisticated Atheist the title, ‘literary,’ because it marks this individual as a person who can be described as “not believing in the ghosts of religion” but who, due to cultural context, is continuously “haunted by them.”³¹

To exemplify this idea of ‘haunting,’ he cites a statement made by the character Hamm in Beckett’s (1957) *Endgame*: “The bastard!! He doesn’t exist.”³² Because this statement appears as a reaction to a failed prayer, and is thus ‘ironic’ in character, Gordon uses it to define an ‘unbeliever’ as someone “who must acknowledge some sort of residual presence”³³ of that which they are denying. In this way, and in adopting a subjective viewpoint, the ‘literary’ aspect of Gordon’s sophisticated Atheism rests solely in the imagination, placing the ‘Literary Atheist’ in a quasi-dualistic relationship with the ‘naïve’ Atheist’s empirical-based argument. As the Literary Atheist must, by Gordon’s type, contend with an idea “inside oneself,” he relates this process to the “characteristic activity of the literary imagination,” which he then compares to the “emergence of conceptual atheism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.”³⁴ Linking this to the works of literary scholars he deems ‘Atheistic,’ and whose writings he argues demonstrate a literary style that served to ‘weaken’ traditional theology,³⁵ his conception here marries literary language with certain Enlightenment discourses. In this way, and if we perceive his text as foundationally built upon Priestman’s use of poetry as a discourse infected by religious protestations, Gordon’s definition of Literary Atheism as a discursive type of “severe poetry” offers a unique theoretical marriage between making sense of Atheism, and developing an analysis of literary things.³⁶

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Samuel Beckett, *Endgame: A Play in One Act* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009).

³³ Gordon, *Literary Atheism*, 5.

³⁴ Ibid., 6.

³⁵ Such as Descartes, Diderot, Locke, Voltaire, and Hume; Ibid., 12.

³⁶ Ibid., 40.

Along similar lines, particularly in regard to Priestman and Gordon's discursive interpretations, Bradley and Tate's (2010) *The New Atheist Novel* is directly inspired by the 'New Atheist' discourse established by Harris' *The End of Faith* (2004), and substantiated by Dawkins (2006), Dennett (2006), and Hitchens (2007). Drawing a connection between the discourse of New Atheism and the Atheism they source within the fictional narratives of four English novelists—McEwan, Amis, Rushdie, and Pullman—Bradley and Tate hypothesize the latter as constituting a “new and powerful creation mythology” for the former. Moreover, they contend that these novels, through the process of ‘mythopoeia’ or ‘aestheticization,’ perform an “implicit anthropological service.”³⁷ In this way, the connection they make between what they call the ‘New Atheist cult’ and the Atheism within these particular fictions, represents a practical mythologization: the fictionalization of the polemical and reactive Atheism promoted by the ‘New Atheists’ in response to September 11, 2001, aesthetically made available to a large reading audience.

Additionally, this mythologization generates an associative link between sacred/secular and fiction/non-fiction. As they argue, the New Atheist novel exists as a culmination of the New Atheist philosophy, a “literary reception of the New Atheism” that incorporates a new type of literary genre, a “secular object of devotion” that offers a ‘sacred,’ yet no less secular, text with which to present a “this-worldly experience of grandeur, consolation, freedom and even redemption.”³⁸ By placing these two textual entities side-by-side, their conception of the New Atheist novel shifts this type of fiction into something more than mere aesthetic text, so that through the ‘anthropological service’ mentioned here, it is transmuted into something like a sacred text, serving the mythological need of a new, more vitriolic, definition of Atheism.³⁹

Nevertheless, it should also be critically noted that despite the cleverness of their hypothesis, their analysis ultimately suffers from a problematic misguidance. This is partly an issue of chronology. Because New Atheism, according to their own definition, is dependent on the rise of fundamentalist

³⁷ Arthur Bradley and Andrew Tate, *The New Atheist Novel: Fiction, Philosophy and Polemic After 9/11* (London: Continuum, 2010), 7.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁹ See also Grayling's attempt to create a secular sacred text that might ‘replace the Bible’ for an Atheism void of such objects: A.C. Grayling, *The Good Book: A Humanist Bible* (New York: Walker Publishing Company, Inc., 2011), especially the “Epistle to the Reader.”

theism after September 11th, then their conception of the New Atheist novel as a mythologized form of this discourse falls into discordancy on a number of occasions. For example, when they discuss McEwan's *Atonement* (2001), Amis' *Yellow Dog* (2003), Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy (1995, 1997, 2000), and Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) and *Satanic Verses* (1988) they are putting the proverbial cart before the horse, as each of these fictions were published prior to their New Atheist counterparts. However, where we might concede that these analyses may theoretically work, Bradley and Tate fail to make this connection. In all likelihood, this is due to their examination being somewhat belied by their own concept, so that their interpretations of McEwan, Amis, Pullman, and Rushdie as 'mythopoeically' embodying a New Atheist discourse fails to acknowledge that both the New Atheist texts and the New Atheist novels are discursively influenced by, as well as representative of, a similar sort of developing discourse about how Atheism is being both defended, as well as fictionally constructed. By trying to prove their hypothesis, or perhaps simply in trying to argue that Atheists require sacred texts, they fail to see both as discursive sources that, as we shall argue herein, are more easily accessible when we cease trying to 'define' Atheism itself.

As a last 'foundational' text, we turn to Schweizer's somewhat precarious notion about expressions of literary Atheism. Though in an earlier publication (2011) his addressing the lack of analysis on the idea of 'hating God,' which he titled 'misotheism,'⁴⁰ is slightly relatable to our discussion here, his later (2013) addition to the *Oxford Handbook of Atheism* is more specifically directed at interpreting 'literature and Atheism,' an interrelated literary phenomenon that he contends is somewhat new. In fact, he goes so far as to state that no form of thematized Atheism existed in any 'major' work of fiction prior to the mid nineteenth century.⁴¹ He further argues that this is in large part the result of a definitional discrepancy, an inconsistency that he attempts to remedy with his own two-part description: 'explicit' and 'implicit.' This dichotomy, however, is not without precarious issues, especially in his borrowing the overly ambiguous conventional definition of Atheism as something either 'positive' or 'negative'—and thus 'explicit' or 'implicit.'

⁴⁰ Bernard Schweizer, *Hating God: The Untold Story of Misotheism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 8.

⁴¹ Bernard Schweizer, "Literature and Atheism" in Stephen Bullivant and Michael Ruse, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Atheism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 683.

For example, his conception of a text that is implicitly Atheist as consisting of “works that are wholly and entirely secular, i.e. works without any religious content whatsoever,”⁴² is inherently troublesome. Defining a fiction as implicitly Atheist by the mere fact that the narrative does not, in any way, discuss some religious theme—applying, we can only assume, an extremely broad definition of ‘religion’—seems normatively ‘Theistic,’ as a ‘lack’ of a thematic discussion of ‘religion’—Theism—within a fiction predisposes that fiction as being inherently—implicitly—Theist. He attempts to mitigate this issue by stating that “since religious thinking, imagery, and rhetoric are so ubiquitous in human discourse,” seemingly associating all forms of discourse with fiction, then it is “almost impossible to produce a work that fits the criterion of this type of implicit atheist literature exactly.”⁴³ He concludes thus that a ‘pure’ form of implicit literary Atheism is “hard to come by.”⁴⁴

It is for this reason that his analytical focus aims at ‘explicit’ manifestations of Atheism, in two forms: ‘approving,’ or pro-Atheist, and ‘disapproving,’ or anti-Atheist. By distinguishing this type of explicitness by means of the author’s use of Atheism as a “prominent story element,” central to the characters’ “thoughts and dialogues,”⁴⁵ and thus as a product of authorial intention, he is able to cite a number of authors—as well as their texts—that explicitly reflect this sort of intention. Beginning with Dostoevsky’s *The Brother’s Karamazov*, he compares the explicit Atheism of Dostoevsky’s Ivan Karamazov to that of Dr. Rieux in Camus’ *The Plague*, and Cass Seltzer in Goldstein’s *36 Arguments for the Existence of God*. By paralleling the ‘Atheists’ from within these texts, Schweizer is equally able to decode a thematic progression in the way these author’s literary Atheism is manifested within the world of their own fictional creations. In this way, this progression provides a differentiation of sorts, the expressed Atheism of Dostoevsky—“accompanied by tortuous self-doubts, by fears of recriminations, and by copious self-exculpation”—is comparably distinctive to that of contemporary, even ‘casual,’ expressions: “what is happening more frequently is that atheist perspectives are unspectacularly, almost casually, woven into the fabric of twenty-first century fiction.”⁴⁶ Thus, like Atheism culturally expressed, the discernible transition detailed in Schweizer’s literary treatment

⁴² Ibid., 686.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 687.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 710.

shows an intriguing progression from one generation to the next, wherein these literary expressions resonate with their ‘real-world’ cultural reflections.



While these four texts succeed in constructing the early phase of the subfield on Atheism and/in literature, they have equally established an underlying thematic essence: Atheism as a discursive concept, a representation—as well as representative—of Atheism in literary form. That is, though they do not—at least equally—declare this their theoretical intention, the manner with which they address, approach, and examine the ‘Atheism’ in their chosen fictions is heavily discursive-based. This is, we might contend, an inevitable, even unavoidable, method. After all, within their collective literary analyses—and despite their faults—we can distinguish a certain type of discursive analysis: Priestman with ‘romantic Atheism;’ Gordon with ‘Literary Atheism;’ Bradley and Tate with ‘New Atheism;’ and Schweizer with ‘progressive Atheism.’ It is to this interpretation that our own investigation intends to contribute. However, though it will express a contribution in regard to the conception of Atheism as a discursive signifier, it will also offer a unique perspective in its focus on the ‘ethnographic’ aspect of this perception. That is, where these four texts might hint at the discursive meaning of Atheism discovered by reading fictional constructions of it, our intention is to do this same sort of analysis with a more direct focus on Atheism as an identity, particularly in how that identity is textually expressed, such as we saw in our discussion of ethnography in the previous Chapter. This process is not, admittedly, without a foundation of its own, which brings us to the aforementioned marriage between ethnographic construction and Ethical Criticism. From here our discussion turns to our chosen author, as well as to a description of the Ethical Criticism predominately used to interpret his fiction, which we will adopt, and amend, in order to both isolate the notion of identity construction in Ethnographic Criticism, as well as align the latter with the former.

2.3—Ian McEwan and Ethical Criticism

The four novelists chosen by Bradley and Tate construct their fictions from very different genre and stylistic points of reference. For pragmatic reasons, we might divide them into two broad categories: Rushdie and Pullman representing fantasy, and McEwan and Amis representing realism. While these

are not perfect categorizations, given the plasticity with which their fictions symbolize either genre, for our own intentions this is an important differentiation. That is, while we might be able to decipher a unique type of Atheist identity from within the more fantastical fictions of Rushdie and Pullman—especially the latter’s *His Dark Materials* trilogy—in order to read these fictions with an ethnographic intent it is important that they more closely mimic the realism adopted in ethnographic construction. What this means is that Ethnographic Criticism is reliant upon a particular genre style, an exclusivity of necessity. In other words, the fictions examined by this method need to look ‘as if’ they are stylistically real, what Seaboyer (2005) links to a particular literary convention: “a literary historical tradition that goes back to an eighteenth- and nineteenth-century focus on plot- and character-driven narratives, in which psychologically believable individuals function in familiar, everyday worlds rather than in fantastic or allegorical ones.”⁴⁷

Of the two novelists in Bradley and Tate’s ‘realism’ category, we have chosen McEwan, for three specific reasons. First, his career has been predominately focused on realist fiction. Developed out of productive ‘turns,’ his novels have repeatedly addressed political and social issues pertinent to his surroundings and context, so that the narratives themselves represent interactions with actual historical events and often ‘real-world’ individuals. Second, within this realism, his novels are also very character-driven, so that these interactions appear often in the form of character—identity—development. In the case of Atheism, this development offers a unique description and representation of how Atheism-as-identity has taken shape via more specific dialogical interactions between individuals. Third, his novels have become popular both commercially and critically. While this might seem to merely depict his work as ‘successful,’ it also shows his ability to transcribe the worlds of his creation in a way that is accepted, even sought after, by the reading public. For our intentions, this ‘success’ translates into accessibility, further translating his fiction into ideal data. From here we turn to a more in-depth discussion of his work, as well as to how it has been critically perceived with a focus on the ‘ethics’ of self-orientation.

⁴⁷ Judith Seaboyer, “Ian McEwan: Contemporary Realism and the Novel of Ideas” in James Acheson and Sarah E. Ross, eds., *The Contemporary British Novel* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 23.

Emerging within a new generation of English literature, McEwan's success as a novelist is easily determined. His novel *Amsterdam* was awarded the Man Booker Prize in 1998, and two of his previous works, *The Comfort of Strangers* and *Black Dogs* were shortlisted for the prize in 1981 and 1992. His novel *Saturday* was awarded the University of Edinburgh's James Tait Black Memorial Prize in 2005, and in 2000 he was bestowed the title of Commander of the British Empire. He also accepted—amid some controversy—the Jerusalem Prize for the Freedom of the Individual in Society in 2011. Commercially, his fictions have progressively gained 'bestseller' status, more so after his 2001 novel *Atonement* was adapted into an Academy Award winning film in 2007.⁴⁸

Since his first publication of two short story collections, *First Love, Last Rights* (1975) and *In Between the Sheets* (1978), McEwan has published—at the time of this writing—thirteen novels: *The Cement Garden* (1978), *The Comfort of Strangers* (1981), *The Child in Time* (1987), *The Innocent* (1990), *Black Dogs* (1992), *Enduring Love* (1997), *Amsterdam* (1998), *Atonement* (2001), *Saturday* (2005), *On Chesil Beach* (2008), *Solar* (2010), *Sweet Tooth* (2012), and *The Children Act* (2014); as well as two forms of children's literature: *Rose Blanch* (1985) and *The Daydreamer* (1994). He has also published six screenplays—*Jack Flea's Birthday Celebration* (1976), *Solid Geometry*, *The Imitation Game* (both based on previously printed short stories and published in 1982), *The Ploughman's Lunch* (1985), *Sour Sweet* (based on the novel of the same name by Timothy Mo, 1989), *The Good Son* (1993), an oratorio, *or Shall we Die?* (1983), and a libretto, *For You* (2008), both of which were set to music by Michael Berkeley.

From a critical perspective, and in order to structure their examinations, the critics discussed below have delineated his narratives by certain points of departure, thematic shifts in focus where differing subjects have defined the dominant theme, the first occurring with *The Child in Time*. Prior to this somewhat fantastical and dystopian novel, his previous publications were seen as indicative of a popular genre of 'shock' literature, so that his two short story collections and first two novels were equally categorized by their 'grotesque fantasies' about death, incest, rape, murder, sexual mutilation,

⁴⁸ The film adaptation was Directed by Joe Wright. It was nominated for six Academy Awards, including Best Picture and Best Adapted Screenplay, and won for Best Original Score.

brutal violence, and general anti-social behavior, usually, but not always, involving children or adolescents. These same examinations likewise placed McEwan himself within the brotherhood of the ‘enfants terribles,’ a title given to the generation of ‘angry young men,’ English authors first published in the late 1970s, and whose literary focus on neo-realism was built upon, but highly different from, that of their predecessor’s.⁴⁹

Perhaps his greatest point of departure came after the publication and critical acclaim of *The Comfort of Strangers* in 1981. Labeled his ‘move abroad,’ this shift is marked by his brief withdrawal from writing novels and his turn to writing screenplays, a shift that equally marks his movement away from the genre of ‘shock’ literature, and his entrance into the category of historical and political fiction. Possibly the clearest example of this is his screenplay, *The Ploughman’s Lunch*. Set against the backdrop of the Falklands War and the Conservative Party Conference in 1982, one underlying theme we might consider is the subtlety with which McEwan depicts how an individual may intentionally construct history in order to frame it as something entirely authentic. This notion of fictional historicity, of the inauthentic being marketed and sold as truly authentic, is metaphorically revealed in the title itself, the ‘ploughman’s lunch,’ which is exposed as a marketing campaign to convince Briton’s that eating it somehow links them to their agrarian roots. For McEwan, this becomes a larger statement about how easy it might be to alter one’s perception of what is historically ‘true,’ stating that his inspiration for writing the screenplay itself was based on the issue of not knowing where it is that history comes from: "I thought our subject might encompass the uses we make of the past, and the dangers, to an individual as well as to a nation of living without a sense of history."⁵⁰

It is this focus on the historical, or rather, on his fictional interpretations of history, as well as his ability to blur the line between the real and the invented, between what we might call the ethnographic and the fictional, which distinguishes McEwan’s narratives from that of his contemporaries. However, this interpretation has been somewhat overlooked by the critical examinations of his work, relegated to brief references and contextualizations in order to delineate the aforementioned ‘shifts’ and ‘transitions’ that mark his career. These range from analyses of his move toward the political and

⁴⁹ Jack Slay, Jr., *Ian McEwan* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996), 3.

⁵⁰ Ian McEwan, “Introduction” in Ian McEwan, *A Move Abroad: Or Shall We Die?: An Oratorio and The Ploughman's Lunch* (London: Picador, 1989).

historical after *The Comfort of Strangers*, an interpretation of the superficially psychoanalytic correlations between himself and his characters, and the search for post-modern reflections of ethics and morality within unorthodox settings. While these interpretations have provided a varied perspective on his fiction, lifting a veil of sorts to reveal a number of different thematic interpretations, they have also provided an excellent backdrop against which we will build our own analysis.

∇

Ryan (1994) and Slay (1996) present the first critical examinations of McEwan's fiction up to the publication of *Black Dogs* in 1992. Both are short analyses, the former focused on what Ryan calls McEwan's 'art of unease,'⁵¹ and the transformation of his fiction from shock and awe toward the thematically re-aligned "apprehension of the power of love and the possibility of redemption."⁵² Though limited to the point of introduction, Ryan's diminutive discussion of *Black Dogs* provides for our own interests a valuable connection between the text's narrator Jeremy and McEwan himself as representing a relationship of self-reflection: "McEwan is writing a family history of his own adopted ideas, turning the searchlight on himself to find out what he has come to think and what kind of author his writing has made him."⁵³ Slay's examination is broken into three overlapping thematic categories: neo-realism, politics, and feminism. Placing McEwan into a realist milieu built upon the traditions of authors such as Dickens, Eliot, and Carlyle, Slay sees him and his contemporaries as 'continuing the tradition,' their fictionalizations acting to 'transmogrify' the "horrors of slums and labor conditions" with more contemporary issues, such as the "terrors of nuclear armaments and unconscionable patriarchies."⁵⁴ Then, built from this sense of neo-realism, he distinguishes McEwan's fiction as progressively portraying the "duplicious nature of British politics" in which the Body Politic is not

⁵¹ Kiernan Ryan, *Ian McEwan: Writers and Their Work* (Plymouth: Northcote House Publishers, Ltd., 1994), 3. Ryan also contributed a chapter to Peter Child's *Ian McEwan's Enduring Love* in which he discusses the religious undertones of that text alongside the metaphor of the "falling man" in a literary and religious sense. See also his "Sex, Violence, and Complicity: Martin Amis and Ian McEwan," in Rod Mengham, ed. *An Introduction to Contemporary Fiction* (Cambridge: Polity, 1999), 203-218.

⁵² Ryan, *Ian McEwan*, 3.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁵⁴ Slay, *Ian McEwan*, 4. Slay's two other publications on McEwan appear in 1994 in the journal *Critique* under the title "Vandalizing Time: Ian McEwan's 'The Child in Time,'" and in 1995 in the journal *Notes on Contemporary Literature* under the title "The Absurdity of Love: Parodic Relationships in Ian McEwan's *Reflections of a Kept Ape* and *Dead as they Come*." See also Malcolm Bradbury, *The Modern British Novel, 1878-2001* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001), 416-543.

only distorting, but also reinventing, “past histories in order to better serve their present needs.”⁵⁵ Lastly, he notes the effect this political focus has on McEwan’s view of the “brutalization and mistreatment of women,” observing a thematic shift between *The Comfort of Strangers* and *The Child in Time* that is ‘increasingly more feminist’ in its depiction of gender equality and the importance now placed on female characters.⁵⁶ In both critical accounts Ryan and Slay acknowledge a sort of ‘principle concern’ in McEwan’s early fictions, perceiving them as narratives shaped by inter-relational and dialogical reflections of the social worlds in which they are incorporated, so that they become, in a general sense, comparable ‘microcosms.’⁵⁷

Byrne’s (2004) analysis presents a wholly unique—and truly unorthodox—perspective on McEwan’s fiction, focusing as much on the author himself as on his writing. Her ‘psychodynamic approach’ is in part a critical response to certain structuralist forms of Literary Criticism in which any links between the author and text are ‘bracketed off,’ and where the concentration focuses “entirely on the form,” rather than the “actual *content* of the story [emphasis in original].”⁵⁸ By means of interpreting the “connections between his work and his life,” she challenges the notion that the critic must first remove the author’s intentions, reasoning that any attempt at interpreting the ‘unconscious motives’ of the characters in a text must, of necessity, “start in the unconscious mind of the author.”⁵⁹ As a methodological framework for this unconventional interpretation she prescribes the analytical perceptions of Freud’s ‘components of personality,’ alongside Jung’s sociological archetypes. Then, and by using this framework as a formula, she articulates an overall dichotomous yin within McEwan’s texts, a ‘sandwiched’ interplay between the “search for spiritual abnormal values,” and the

⁵⁵ Slay, *Ian McEwan*, 8.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁵⁸ Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 83; 82-85, and 87; see also, Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, Wade Baskin, trans. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 15-17, and 71-109; Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics* (London: Routledge, 1975); and Peter Barry’s chapter on “Structuralism” in Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory: An Introduction on Literary and Cultural Theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 38-59.

⁵⁹ Bernie C. Byrnes (originally as Christina Byrnes), *The Work of Ian McEwan: A Psychodynamic Approach* (Nottingham: Pauper’s Press, 2004), 15; see also her supplementary publications via the same publisher: *Sex and Sexuality in Ian McEwan’s Work* (2004); *Ian McEwan’s Atonement and Saturday* (2006); *McEwan’s Only Childhood: Development of Ian McEwan’s Metaplot* (2008); and *Ian McEwan’s On Chesil Beach: The Transmutation of a Secret* (2009). As well, see Bernie C. Byrnes, “Ian McEwan—Pornographer or Prophet?” (*Contemporary Review*, Vol. 266, Iss. 1553, 1995), 320-323.

overbearing control of “dark elements from the personal and collective unconscious.”⁶⁰ Within this confliction, she isolates the superego, ego, and id within what she deems a mythopoetic ‘polarity of opposites,’⁶¹ manifestations in the unconsciousness of select characters that present as difficulties with ‘masculine self-identification’ and the ‘problems of sexual functioning’ that coincide with certain power issues.⁶² For our own interests, Byrne’s use of these Jungian oppositions, these ‘universal symbols’ that depict a disputatious relationship between good and evil⁶³—or male and female—is suggestive of the dialectical means by which these same characters shape their respective identities. Additionally, her somewhat playful interpretation of McEwan’s characters as embodying characteristics shared by their real-world counterparts will play an integral role within our own experimental reading.

Malcolm’s (2002) *Understanding Ian McEwan*—as part of a series on contemporary British authors—compliments the biographical and contextually historical analysis of McEwan’s work up to the publication of *Amsterdam* with an introduction to the interpretation that will become the predominant focus of the six book-length texts to follow: Ethical Criticism. Building his ethical interpretation upon the hypothesis that McEwan’s social and political disaffections have assisted in shaping his narratives—“the 1970s and early 1980s mark an important point of departure in contemporary British fiction, the clear emergence of a new generation or grouping of writers and of new concerns in fiction”⁶⁴—Malcolm contends that McEwan’s ‘points of departure’ are best defined by his balancing the historical/political representations discussed above within the context of an ethical construction based on empathy. Citing four distinct features found in the fictions emerging from this new generation—(1) a fascination with political and social history, (2) a cosmopolitan curiosity, (3) a “considerable prominence of genre mixing,” and (4) a meta-fictional reflexivity “that constantly reminds the reader it is fiction”⁶⁵—Malcolm traces the ethical means by which McEwan responds in

⁶⁰ Byrnes, *The Work of Ian McEwan*, 17.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 18.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ David Malcolm, *Understanding Ian McEwan* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002), 6. See also his “The Media-Genic and Victorian Mr. McEwan?” in Rudiger Ahrens and Heinz Antor, eds. *Anglistik*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (2010).

⁶⁵ Malcolm, *Understanding Ian McEwan*, 6.

four equal ways: (1) his presentation of women, (2) his interests in rationalism and science,⁶⁶ (3) the moral perspectives of his narratives, and (4) the fragmentariness of his novels.⁶⁷ In classifying McEwan's responses to these four features via a functional itemization based upon certain thematic elements in reference to the empathetic thread running through each text, Malcolm forms his discussion around a basic, transcendent hypothesis: the reader "gains access to reality through texts that are not transparent windows, but particular shapings of events through language, narrative, and genre."⁶⁸

The first wholly direct approach to McEwan's fiction considering the Ethical Turn, which Muller-Wood (2009) later defines as located in content, in "what is being said rather than how it is being formulated [emphasis in original],"⁶⁹ is Schemberg's (2004) *Achieving 'At-one-ment.'* Originally published as volume 26 of the journal series *Anglo-Amerikanische Studien*, Schemberg centers her interpretation upon the late twentieth century dissatisfaction in an utter lack of questions pointing toward 'moral philosophy,'⁷⁰ with an added focus on certain theoretical formations of the 'self' in *The Child in Time*, *Black Dogs*, *Enduring Love*, and *Atonement*. These formations are based upon a particular perception of 'self' as the product of a type of 'pattern building,' a linguistic response to an epistemic crisis characterized by the post-modernist "absence of ultimate truth."⁷¹ As Schemberg concludes, in our post-modern attempts at resolving epistemological and ontological questions pertaining to 'who we are' and 'where we are going,' we find ourselves "guided by a difficult to define and mostly tacit ideal of 'at-one-ment.'⁷² This introspective reconstruction of 'self,' of re-aligning oneself to an ethos in the process of 'narratively' constructing "coherent stories about who, where, and

⁶⁶ See also Jane F. Thrailkill, "Ian McEwan's Neurological Novel" (*Poetics Today*, Vol. 32, No. 1, 2011); and Jonathan Greenberg, "Why Can't Biologists Read Poetry?: Ian McEwan's *Enduring Love*" (*Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 53, No. 2, 2007).

⁶⁷ Malcolm, *Understanding Ian McEwan*, 13-18.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁶⁹ Muller-Wood continues: "Ethical criticism of this kind typically takes it for granted that texts transmit a particular, usually transformative (and therefore didactic) message." See Anja Muller-Wood, "The Murderer as Moralizer or, The Ethical Early McEwan" in Pascal Nicklaus, ed., *Ian McEwan: Art and Politics* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Wiener, 2009), 41; see also Booth (2001), 16-29; Phelan (2005), 222-236.

⁷⁰ For example, see Booth (1988), Miller (1989), Nussbaum (1989), Taylor (1989), and Benhabib (1992).

⁷¹ Claudia Schemberg, *Achieving 'At-one-ment.'* *Storytelling and the Concept of the Self in Ian McEwan's The Child in Time, Black Dogs, and Atonement* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2004), 7-8.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 8.

what we are” in reflection of the “accounts of others,”⁷³ exposes a literary correlation between character development and epistemological ‘self-making.’ This process is attached to fictional storytelling—notably that of McEwan—by following the ethical process by which the characters and narrators within these texts “structure their world, endow it with meaning, and strive for ‘at-one-ment’ in their lives.”⁷⁴ In summation, and as we shall see in the next four main texts, ethical critics claim that in order to gain orientation in a ‘world of uncharted diversity,’ human beings become dependent upon certain structures of meaning, which, when perceived through literature, mimic an acquaintance between humanity and the “structuring and meaning-giving task that narrative in general, and fictional storytelling in particular, perform in our lives.”⁷⁵

The second of these ethical criticisms appears in a number of publications by Childs, which include an edited collection of criticism (2006), a chapter in his collection of twelve contemporary British novelists (2005), an essay within a section of ‘critical readings’ in his own book-length analysis of *Enduring Love* (2007), and a chapter in a volume on McEwan’s interests in morality and politics edited by Nicklas (2009). Running through each of these publications is the common thread of Ethical Criticism, against which he traces McEwan’s varying thematic interests. For instance, in his introduction to *The Fiction of Ian McEwan* he makes the case for an integral progression in the author’s fiction, not unlike the ‘points of departure’ in Malcolm’s account, but isolated now in reference to the re-orientation essential to an ethical interpretation. This, he claims, is seen through a ‘three-phase’ evolution, beginning with the short story collections and their focus on challenging the normative societal claims of masculinity/femininity, which then continues through the ‘transformative’ “rites of passage of great intensity” in the novels between *The Child in Time* and *Enduring Love*. It then culminates in the “self-reflexive historical” fictions of *Amsterdam* and *Atonement*.⁷⁶ Arguing against the presupposition that the dominant thread connecting McEwan’s work is a sense of the ‘macabre,’⁷⁷ Childs concludes that there is, running throughout these texts, a process of “delineating

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 10.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 9.

⁷⁶ Peter Childs, “Introduction” in Peter Childs ed. *The Fiction of Ian McEwan: A Reader’s Guide to Essential Criticism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 6.

⁷⁷ See also Jergen Shlaeger, “Whose Afraid of Ian McEwan?” in Ramon Plo-Alastrue and Maria Jesus Martinez-Aflaro, eds. *Beyond Borders: Re-Defining Generic and Ontological Boundaries* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2001), 185-197.

individual reactions to crisis” by means of empathetic self-analysis.⁷⁸ Perhaps Child’s most lasting contribution to this ethical discourse is his alignment of the notion of empathy to the ethics of self-construction, an imaginative process by which individuals ‘modify,’ or at least ‘better comprehend,’ their own actions through the eyes of an other.⁷⁹ As Childs argues, this process, described by McEwan himself as the “core of our humanity,” “the essence of compassion,” and the “beginning of morality,”⁸⁰ demands an “impulse towards storytelling,”⁸¹ a nod in the direction of the ethical response to the post-modern sense of disorientation.

This equally represents what Head (2007) calls a “persistent human hunger for narrative,”⁸² a hunger not unaffected by “a variety of key social and political changes,”⁸³ and caught somewhere between the loss of a universal British identity in the twentieth-century, and the ideology of the novel as a formal sense of ethic-building. It is then driven on by what he refers to as an equally persistent “quest for an ethical world-view.”⁸⁴ While linking the former to a number of chaotic transitions—“fading colonialism; the dissolution of the British class structure; educational reform; the transformation of family life; and the second wave of feminism”⁸⁵—and the latter with the ‘resuscitation’ of associating ‘morality’ with the novel, he isolates the ‘ethical foundation’ of these things to a “significant consonance,” an investigation of both the self and morality via comparative readings of certain literary texts alongside “critical work[s] in narrative ethics.”⁸⁶ While his *Ian McEwan: Contemporary British Novelists* appears to merely repeat the ethical criticisms described above, there is one specific way in which Head’s analysis stands out. This concerns his argument that in addressing the “central issues of our time,”⁸⁷ by linking morality and the novel through reclaiming it as a “key site for the exploration of

⁷⁸ Childs, *The Fiction of Ian McEwan*, 6.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁸⁰ Ian McEwan, “Only Love and then Oblivion” (*The Guardian*, 15 September 2001), accessed via: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/sep/15/september11.politicsphilosophyandsociety2> (15 February 2014).

⁸¹ Peter Childs, “Critical History,” in Peter Childs, ed. *Ian McEwan’s Enduring Love* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 36.

⁸² Dominic Head, *Ian McEwan: Contemporary British Novelists* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 1; see also Dominic Head, “On Chesil Beach: Another ‘Overrated’ Novella?” in Sebastian Groes, ed. *Ian McEwan: Contemporary Critical Perspectives* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 115-123.

⁸³ Head, *Ian McEwan*, 5.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

the human domain and moral being,”⁸⁸ fictions like McEwan’s become something more than mere aesthetic: “the novel is a significant form of cultural expression.”⁸⁹

According to Wells (2010), these ‘cultural expressions’ are themselves shaped by the lens through which we view them. Arguing that McEwan explicitly focuses the reader’s attention on certain elements, shaping perceptions of history in order to affect a literary outcome, and using characters as representative vessels for particular social perspectives—such as the growing social dichotomy between men and women between the 1960s and 1980s⁹⁰—Wells isolates the ‘face-to-face’ interaction that takes place between these characters, and within their contexts, as the locus of his ethical analysis. Reflective of the empathy cited by Malcolm and Childs, Wells’ interpretation is anchored to the philosophical ideology of alterity,⁹¹ of identity defined by ‘literary moments’ when individual characters are pitted against one another “at crucial points of decision,” during which they must choose “between self-gratification, or even self-preservation and general benevolent action.”⁹² These moments, which he sees as concentrated acts of ‘ethical decision making,’ create clear points of ‘identification’ for McEwan’s readers who, according to Wells, “must bring their own sense of judgment to the situations.”⁹³ This promotes the text to a realm of meta-fiction whereby “the self consciousness of these key encounters thus extends beyond the texts themselves, as readers are induced to reflect upon the values underlying their own dealings with others.”⁹⁴ Wells sees this sense of self-forming at the foundation of an individual’s identity, as well as a condition that can be found in each of McEwan’s novels, from June’s encounter with evil in *Black Dogs*, between Briony Tallis and Private Latimer in *Atonement*, and between Henry Perowne and Baxter in *Saturday*. Each of these interactions

⁸⁸ Ibid., 14.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 1.

⁹⁰ See also Angela Roger, “Ian McEwan’s Portrayal of Women” (*Forum for Modern Language Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 1, 1996).

⁹¹ See Levinas (1999, 2003), Peperzak, Critchley, and Bernasconi (1996), Critchley and Bernasconi (2002), and Davis (2004).

⁹² Lynn Wells, *Ian McEwan: New British Fiction* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 15; see also Lynn Wells, “The Ethical Otherworld: Ian McEwan’s Fiction” in Philip Tew and Rod Mengham, eds. *British Fiction Today* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 117-128. See also Tammy Amiel-Houser, “The Ethics of Otherness in Ian McEwan’s *Saturday*,” (*Connotations*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 2011/12).

⁹³ Wells, *Ian McEwan*, 15.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

is built upon McEwan's own conception of morality through empathy wherein the "sense that other people exist"⁹⁵ presents the reader with a guide for their own self-construction.

At the apex of these Ethical Criticisms is Moller's (2011) *Coming to Terms with Crisis*. Her published Doctoral Thesis,⁹⁶ Moller's text builds upon Wells' emphasis on alterity and ethic-building by focusing on the 'moments' in McEwan's novels when his characters are "faced with a sudden, unforeseeable crisis in their lives," that challenges their sense of stability, and thus demands an individualized 're-orientation.'⁹⁷ It is, then, within this re-orientation where she locates a sense of 'ethic-building,' particularly through the lens of alterity, which she defines in "terms of the interactive encounters between individuals."⁹⁸ Though mimetic of the texts referenced above, Moller's interpretation offers a new perspective by drawing out the confrontations between McEwan's characters through three thematic clusters: contingency and crisis, the dichotomy between innocence and experience, and the personal orientation between autonomy of the self and one's commitment to society.⁹⁹ By breaking from the linear format taken up by the six previous critics, this deviated concentration grants her perspective a more thematic-based analysis, where "attention to the continuities" between these confrontations, allows her focus to be on the "ethical implications inherent in the novels," rather than on each story's historical relevance in chronological context.¹⁰⁰ As she concludes, because McEwan's novels "address central problems of contemporary life dominated by experiences of ontological and epistemological uncertainties," they can equally be considered as "fictional realizations of the search for a coherent identity under the conditions imposed by a postmodern, heterogeneous society,"¹⁰¹ bridging a gap of sorts between the thematic elements in the novels—ethical self-making—with those of the real world—Britain's post-war, post-modern identity crisis.

⁹⁵ Ian McEwan quoted in Ramona Koval, "Interview with Ian McEwan," *Erudition* (4 April 2004).

⁹⁶ For other Theses/Dissertations, see also Gauthier (2009), 83-133; O'Hara (2009); and Smith (2010), 78-90.

⁹⁷ Swantje Moller, *Coming to Terms with Crisis: Disorientation and Reorientation in the Novels of Ian McEwan* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2011), 12.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

This scholarship's focus on Ethical Criticism appraises McEwan's fiction in order to make sense of both his, and his context's, shaping of ethical and moral belief structures beyond conventional notions about epistemology and ontology. While based in Literary Theory, this process also hints heavily at a quasi-anthropological approach, within which we might slide the conversation away from the structuralized interpretation of McEwan's formation of a certain type of ethic-building, toward a consideration of his narrative's wider cultural implications, and thus how it might serve a particular 'anthropological service.' Likewise, this focus on the ethical equally links the perception of these texts as representations of self-constructions with the ways anthropological ones document, compile, and present cultural epistemologies about particular 'others.' Within this relationship, and secured under the canopy of the interplay between literary theory and ethnographic construction, McEwan's fiction—or rather, specific fictions—might take on a more nuanced and anthropological significance. As such, we might consider how these fictions, now seen as supplying a sense of ethical identity construction, might equally be seen as providing a sense of evidential authority as it pertains to a particular type of cultural or religious identity. That is, in borrowing from the methodologies of the scholarship cited above, wherein McEwan's novels become inter-relational and dialogical microcosmic reflections of real-world identity construction, we might take a step further with a critical reading that appraises his fiction as an ethnographic source. This is not, unfortunately, something we might simply mimic from the examples discussed in our analysis of the Literary Turn. Rather, this sort of inter-disciplinary interlinking requires a bit more nuance, and the discussion to which we now turn should offer us a stronger template by which we might develop a pragmatic correlation between the 'ethics' of Ethical Criticism and the identity construction at focus in our Ethnographic Criticism.

2.4—'Ethnocriticism' and Identity Construction

Underlying the inter-disciplinarity of Ethnographic Criticism is an approach that seems to equally blur the line between anthropological writings, and the narratives revealed, observed, and recorded in the process of observation: Ethnocriticism. First developed by Krupat (1992), Ethnocriticism denotes a sense of inter-mingling, of combining the discourse and narratives of sources that would, traditionally, be delineated by the differentiation of Self and Other. Krupat compares this to the notion of 'frontier,'

that “shifting space in which two *cultures* encounter one another [emphasis in original],” wherein notions of ‘liminality’ or ‘betweenness’ take the shape of dialogues.¹⁰² As he states, the subsequent crossing one does to record such dialogical data carries with it a sense of ‘cosmopolitanism:’

The ethnocritical perspective manifests itself in the form of *multiculturalism*, a term I take to refer to that particular organization of cultural studies which engages otherness and difference in such a way as to provoke an interrogation of and a challenge to what we ordinarily take as familiar and our own [emphasis in original].¹⁰³

This likewise speaks to what he calls a ‘polyvocal polity,’ an organization made up of two separate voices, speaking different languages, but that become, in the process of cultural translation, a singular discourse.¹⁰⁴ Similarly, and in noting a correlation with Clifford’s reference to Bakhtin’s conceptualization of ‘polyvocality,’ Wong (1995) substantiates Krupat’s idea here of the liminality and multi-voiced position of the translator—anthropologist—as standing upon a middle ground, a position “between and of two cultures.”¹⁰⁵

As a literary critique, Krupat’s creation of Ethnocriticism has roots that are linked exclusively to issues we have seen thus far discussed, such as the dialogical representation of the encounter between subject and object. Thus, in that it regards “border and boundary crossing,”¹⁰⁶ his Ethnocriticism is specifically ‘oxymoronic,’ making use of “apparently oppositional, paradoxical, or incompatible terms” that, in acknowledging the ‘imperialism’ of speaking for an other, or in telling our own story as theirs, creates an approach that allows for a ‘decidable,’ if not “polysemous and complex meaning.”¹⁰⁷

While Ethnocriticism is not without its faults,¹⁰⁸ we shall make use of its notion of polyvocality to bolster the inter-subjectivity of our own approach. As such, we might state that where it was missing in the discourse on reading fictions ethnographically, the notion of Ethical Criticism adds an important methodological perspective with its overview on the post-modern traits of character development as

¹⁰² Arnold Krupat, *Ethnocriticism: Ethnography, History, Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 5.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

¹⁰⁵ Hertha D. Wong, “In Search of a Dialogic Criticism: Ethnocriticism and Native American Literatures” (*American Quarterly*, Vol. 47, No. 1, 1995), 160.

¹⁰⁶ Krupat, *Ethnocriticism*, 26.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁰⁸ See Scheiber, “Mirrors and Menageries,” 374; Wong, “In Search of a Dialogic Criticism,” 159; Dennis Dutton’s review, “Arnold Krupat’s *Ethnocriticism*,” in *Philosophy and Literature*, Vol. 17, 1991, 188-192; and Hartwig Isernhagen, “Culture, Fiction, Literature: Between the New Historicism and Ethnocriticism” (*Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik*, Vol. 41, No. 2, 1993).

identity construction. However, both discourses are flawed by their own subjective limitations. The process of reading fiction as ethnography is limited by its necessity in distinguishing fiction from ethnography, while Ethical Criticism is limited by its focus on orientation and re-orientation as isolated to fictions not considered ethnographically authoritative. Our approach, then, will *ethnocritically* combine these discourses into a polyvocal unit, the defining characteristic of which will be our focus on Atheism-as-identity, and the means by which ‘real-world’ identities are shaped within realistic, though no less ‘fictitious,’ contexts. While we will later return to this ‘marriage,’ and its methodological importance for our intentions below, it is to the notion of ‘identity construction,’ both individual and group, and in the manner with which we will direct our analysis of McEwan’s novels, in which we now turn.



Painted with a broad stroke, ‘identity’ is a “multi-dimensional classification.”¹⁰⁹ According to Jenkins (2004), it consists of ‘map-making,’ of charting the ‘human world’ and discovering our place in it, both as individuals, as well as “members of collectivities.”¹¹⁰ He further declares it as the discursive human capacity, through language, of knowing “who we are, knowing who others are, them knowing who we are, us knowing who they think we are,” and so on.¹¹¹ As well, and perhaps most important, he marks identity as a process, rather than a thing itself, the means of identification being “something that one *does*,” rather than “something that one can *have* [emphases in original].”¹¹² However, he also emphasizes that this differs from the process of mere categorization or ‘hierarchical organization,’ in that it is not a process of simply shifting objects into relatable groups, such as ‘A,’ ‘B,’ and ‘C.’ Because identity construction is so multi-dimensional and interactional, it is likewise a social endeavor, so that while what we classify as an ‘A’ might fit well with another ‘A,’ aspects of that secondary ‘A’

¹⁰⁹ Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity*, Third Edition (London: Routledge, 2008), 5; see also Richard D. Ashmore, Kay Deaux, and Tracy McLaughlin-Volpe, “An Organizing Framework for Collective Identity: Articulation and Significance of Multidimensionality” (*Psychological Bulletin*, Vol 130, No. 1, 2004).

¹¹⁰ Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 5.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*

might also fit well with aspects of a 'B,' and so on.¹¹³ This leaves us, then, with the question of how this process leads toward a notion of identity construction.

Berger and Luckmann (1966) contend that identity is formed by 'social processes,' much like that mapped out above.¹¹⁴ It is then "maintained, modified, or even reshaped by social relations," which are themselves "determined by the social structure" within which they exist.¹¹⁵ As well, these social structures engender 'identity types,' which then become recognizable by a progressive reduction of one's understanding of where they stand in the world. As an example, they offer a hypothetical American who, in acknowledging his difference from a Frenchman, then also acknowledges how he differs by measures of municipality from his fellow American. Then, within even that level, this same individual might discover how he differs socially with an individual of different social or economic position, such as between an 'executive' and a 'hobo.'¹¹⁶ While seemingly opposed to Jenkins' processual structure concerning the categorization of identities 'A,' 'B,' and 'C' above, Berger and Luckmann's 'types' here are not meant as such. Rather, these are verifiable examples of identity "observed in everyday life," and are assertions that might be confirmed or refuted by means of 'pre-theoretical,' and thus, 'pre-scientific' experience. This condition is a nod to Weber's (1949) notion of the 'ideal type,' the categorical process of identifying relatable characteristics within particular phenomena, and their citation here is meant to signify what they deem the 'pre-scientific' organization of identity that has yet to be applied to that sort of empirical categorization. Additionally, though they seemingly disagree on the means by which an individual defines him or herself in reference to another—difference—they and Jenkins are saying similar things about the difficulties of so strictly categorizing individual identities.¹¹⁷

Furthermore, for Berger and Luckmann identity construction stems from a progression beginning with a particular type of relationship, what they call the "phenomenon that emerges from the dialectic

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Penguin Books, 1966), 194.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 194.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 194-196; and Max Weber *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, E. Shills, & H. Finch, Trans (New York: Free Press, 1949), 90-114.

between individual and society.”¹¹⁸ Formed by an habitualization, or, rather, by a routinization wherein the meanings behind actions become ‘embedded’ within a “general stock of knowledge,” these dialectical actions signify a narrowing of ‘choices.’¹¹⁹ These choices then become institutionalized, and are enacted as a ‘pattern of activity’ when individuals acknowledge their doing them through communication with other individuals who are themselves doing them as well. This process thus alleviates the need to perpetually define each and every situation, and further develops a sense of ‘the way things are’ within a now “substantial, and secure, environment” that becomes something more than, or, at least, something more akin to, an organized entity or collectivity that begins to take the shape of a ‘group dynamic.’¹²⁰

This collective environment of identities forming together involves both ‘inclusion’ and ‘exclusion:’ “our similarity is their difference and *vice versa* [emphasis in original].”¹²¹ According to Jenkins, a group or ‘human collectivity’ comes to exist when members of that group both recognize the existence of the group itself, as well as their membership within it.¹²² In this way, a group cannot exist without the formation of human identities, nor can they behave or act independently, or have a “definite, bounded material existence in time and space.”¹²³ The most substantial kind of group, Jenkins states, is the “somewhat fuzzy and unclear” formal organizations.¹²⁴ Defined functionally, this type of organization is a particular kind of ‘institution,’ embodying a number of traits:

there are always members; members combine in the pursuit of explicit objectives, which serve to identify the organization; there are criteria for identifying, and processes for recruiting, members; there is a division of labour in the specification of the specialized tasks and functions performed by individual members; and there is a recognized pattern of decision-making and task allocation.¹²⁵

Of course, given the functionalist mentality of these traits, an ‘organization’ might just as much consist of a myriad different types of organized identities, ranging from a ‘New Guinean men’s house,’ to a ‘bowling club,’ or even the ‘United Nations.’¹²⁶

¹¹⁸ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 195.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹²⁰ Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 158.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 102-103.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 9.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 167.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

In order to narrow these down, Jenkins distinguishes two more concise types: small informal groups and small-scale formal organizations. The small informal group consists of the “local reality for each of us,” which is composed of “families, peer groups, or friendship circles.”¹²⁷ The small-scale formal organization is, like the small informal group, deeply “implicated in the everyday construction”¹²⁸ of collectivity. This latter group is composed of “sports clubs, religious congregations, schools, voluntary organizations, business and political party branches,” as well as similar entities.¹²⁹ While seemingly just as varied, this differentiation between group-types provides a framework by which we might deem an organization ‘informal,’ as something organized in close proximity to one’s ‘inner circle,’ and ‘formal,’ as something as personal as the informal group, but more publically delineated. As well, this differentiation between formal and informal also provides further insight into the differentiation made by those within a group, about those without. In both accounts, routinizing oneself as a member of either group requires a categorization of the Other: “defining ‘us’ involves defining a range of ‘thems’ also.”¹³⁰ It is here, within this notion of similarity and difference, as well as within the inclusivity of excluding others, where we discover “what we are in what we are not.”¹³¹ This last distinction can be more efficiently delineated via three orders: the ‘individual’ order—“the human world as made up of embodied individuals and what-goes-on-in-their-heads”—the ‘interaction’ order—“the human world as constituted in relationships between individuals, in what-goes-on-between-people”—and the ‘institutional’ order—“the human world of pattern and organizations, of established-ways-of-doing-things.”¹³²

The communicational quality of this sort of inclusivity derives from an “*internal-external dialectic of identification* [emphasis in original].”¹³³ By this is equally meant the “simultaneous synthesis of (internal) self-definition and the (external) definitions of oneself offered by others,” what might better be defined as a concept of ‘selfhood.’¹³⁴ With an emphasis on the equality between ‘similarity’ and ‘difference’ in the inherent dialectic within the collective differentiation seen above, selfhood is defined by Jenkins as “a way of talking about the similarity or consistency over time of particular

¹²⁷ Ibid., 11.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 102.

¹³¹ Ibid., 103.

¹³² Ibid., 39.

¹³³ Ibid., 40.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

embodied humans.”¹³⁵ This ‘embodiment,’ though an essential aspect of the differentiation made between the self and others—“individuals identify themselves and are identified by others, in terms that distinguish them from other individuals”¹³⁶—is also dependent on similarity. This is perhaps the overall crux of Jenkins argument, that dialectic, as he sees it, is not merely about the difference between two opposing ideas, but is also about the internalized similarities as well. When applied to the process of identification, this paradoxical notion of ‘attachment with’ and ‘differentiation from,’ signifies a “game of playing the vis-à-vis” between seeing oneself as similar to those who see themselves as different from others.¹³⁷ This is itself signified by an amendment from ‘similarity *or* difference,’ to ‘similarity *and* difference.’

As such, a committed and sole emphasis on the ‘difference paradigm,’ defined by a heterogeneous scholarship of notable theorists such as Derrida (1963), Butler (1990), Irigaray (1993), Taylor (1994), Benhabib (1996), Hall (1996), Seidman (1997), and Gilroy (2006),¹³⁸ seems to mistakenly misunderstand the relationship between similarity and difference, in that “neither makes sense without the other.”¹³⁹ That is, neither should be placed above the other, so that both contribute to the process of identification: “to identify something as an A is to assert that it has certain properties in common with all other As, and that it differs from Bs, Cs and so on.”¹⁴⁰ Said differently, to say ‘who I am,’ is also to say ‘who or what I am not,’ as well as ‘with whom I have things in common.’¹⁴¹ Both similarity—internal—as well as difference—both internal and external—are matters of ‘meaning,’ and as such further involve the process of interaction: “agreement and disagreement, convention and innovation, communication and negotiation.”¹⁴²

Lastly, as a social construction, the process of identity formation requires ‘validation.’ That is, it requires an acknowledgement by others in order to exist, a process described by Goffman (1959) as the

¹³⁵ Ibid., 102.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 18; see also James A. Boon, *Other Tribes, Other Scribes: Symbolic Anthropology in the Comparative Study of Cultures, Histories, Religions and Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 26.

¹³⁸ Jenkins uses this ‘roll call’ in order to substantiate his argument that the predominate lens through which identity has been self-defined has been tinted by the idea of ‘difference.’ See Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 19-27.

¹³⁹ Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 21.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid., 16.

‘presentation of the self.’¹⁴³ Applying a ‘dramaturgical analysis’ to the study of interaction, and citing within the face-to-face—vis-à-vis—confrontation between individuals a sense of choice not unlike the way in which an actor might ‘switch’ or ‘change’ their persona in order to become someone wholly different from themselves, Goffman’s conception offers a ‘presentational’ aspect to an individual’s process of meaning-making that equally avoids any notion of anxiety or embarrassment felt in how they are perceived. As it necessitates not just a choice on the part of the individual in how he or she wishes to be seen through the eyes of another, but also requires the interaction with an individual against whom he or she defines him or herself as different, this ‘presentation’ both entails and dramatizes the “interface between *self-image* and *public image* [emphases in original].”¹⁴⁴ This additional paradigm of insider/outsider distinguishes one final layer in defining the process of identity construction: “not only do we identify ourselves in the internal-external dialectic between self-image and public image, but we identify others and are identified by them in turn.”¹⁴⁵

The overall emphasis of this survey leads us to the notion that it is through acknowledging the merits of both ‘similarity’ and ‘difference,’ in the dialectical process of identification, where we create a much clearer understanding as to what we mean when we define ourselves, others, and the way others define themselves and us in return. By distinguishing these processual parts—the dialectics of similarity and difference within the paradigms of self/self, self/group, and group/group—we equally find a sense of ‘collective mobilization,’ a pursuit of shared objectives that also speaks to a “characteristic theme of history and social change.”¹⁴⁶ For our intentions with Ethnographic Criticism herein, this process of ‘identity construction’ will help shape our style of literary analysis, particularly concerning the way in which McEwan’s characters shape their own identities within the boundaries of similarity/difference and interactional validation. However, just as much as their dialectical—and dialogical—exchanges are essential to their identity construction, so too is the environment in which this takes place.

¹⁴³ See Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* (London: Allen Lane, 1959), notably 6-24.

¹⁴⁴ Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 42.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 24.

As such, part of Berger and Luckmann's argument is that "identity remains unintelligible unless it is located in a world."¹⁴⁷ What they mean by this is that any sort of interpretation or analysis of any sort of social construction—identity formation—must "occur within the framework of the theoretical interpretations within which it and they are located."¹⁴⁸ In essence, what they mean is that identity is not constructed in a void. Thus, accompanying any type of interpretation or analysis would, for the sake of clarity, need a functional or working description of what that social environment looks like. For example, if our intent was to distinguish how and against whom a particular type of 'identity' was formed within a particular time and place, we would, at the start, need to have at least a minimal or functional appreciation of what that time and place looked like, as well as against whom that identity was constructed. This necessity acts as an ideal transition here, as it requires us to turn from this more theoretical discussion to an introduction of the two novels on which our analysis in Part Two will be focused. Therefore, it is to a description of that context, and the individuals who populate it, in which we now turn.

2.5—Texts: *Black Dogs* and *Enduring Love*

McEwan's 'Atheist trilogy'¹⁴⁹—*Black Dogs* (1992), *Enduring Love* (1997), and *Saturday* (2005)—appear roughly at the midpoint in his career. While each demonstrates an accessible resource for particular examples of Atheism, we have chosen two: *Black Dogs* and *Enduring Love*. While the rationale for choosing to exclude *Saturday* will be justified within the discussion below, this decision is mostly due to the contextual alignment between the others. These two novels offer us an insightful look at Atheist identity construction from two positions: historical and philosophical. That is, where in the first we are introduced to a specific historic type of Atheist identity, in the second that same Atheism is seen as progressively philosophized, so that in reading these texts chronologically not only will we see how these 'Atheisms' are defined in context, but also how they are relatable to the discourse used to define Atheism-in-general. This is not to say, however, that this does not carry through into *Saturday*, which it does. Rather, even though that text's exceptional representation provides an important insight into an Atheism that is, as Bradley and Tate argue, a discursive

¹⁴⁷ Berger and Luckman, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 195.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ So titled here because the lead characters of these novels are, by their own admission, Atheists. This should not be seen as a dismissal or oversight, however, of the Atheists who infrequently appear throughout his other fictions, such as Briony in *Atonement*, or Thelma in *The Child in Time*.

illustration of New Atheism, using it herein would hinder our hypothetical experimentation for reasons that will become more apparent below.



Black Dogs was published in 1992 and is McEwan's fifth novel and seventh publication of fiction. It is bookended by *The Innocent* (1990), a novel about Cold War espionage that follows a young English postal engineer to Berlin shortly after the Second World War, and *Enduring Love* (1997). As much as *The Child in Time* (1987) marked a shift in thematic focus, moving McEwan's fiction from the demographic of 'shock literature' into the category of 'serious' fiction, *The Innocent* marks a shift toward historic realism. Guyver (2009), citing Head, remarks that this shift consists of a 'stylistic departure' toward a "significant phase of political writing."¹⁵⁰ As well, he characterizes it as a distinct 'venture' beyond McEwan's earlier focus on the 'private sphere,' which then leans toward a wider historical perspective encompassing the "legacy of major twentieth-century social and political upheavals."¹⁵¹ While the 'shock' is not entirely vacant from *The Innocent*, and no less metaphorical in its placement—such as the dismemberment of the character 'Otto' as a symbol for the joint American, British, and German re-building of Berlin—the narrative focus is less directed at depraved acts aimed at challenging the reader's perception of certain social mores. Instead, *The Innocent* defines a point in McEwan's career where his narratives begin to orbit around actual historical events. Plot-points are suddenly located in real-world chronology,¹⁵² and real-life individuals become characters¹⁵³ whose interactions with their invented counterparts help shape both the flow of the story, as well as the way the characters define themselves. Like snapshots of actual people in actual places at actual times, after *The Innocent*, McEwan's fiction becomes something more akin to the holistic representation of a whole

¹⁵⁰ Lynn Guyver, "Post-Cold War Moral Geography: The Politics of McEwan's Poetics in *The Innocent*" in Pascal Nicklaus, ed., *Ian McEwan: Art and Politics* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2009), 87; see also, Head, *Ian McEwan*, 91-92.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² The text takes place in Berlin between 1955 and 1956 and orbits around the lead character, Leonard's, contribution in the joint CIA and MI6 endeavor to dig a 400 yard—it ended up being 600—tunnel beneath the Soviet High Command in order to tap into their communication lines with Moscow. See Frederick P. Hitz, *The Great Game: The Myths and Reality of Espionage* (London: Vintage, 2005), 81-85.

¹⁵³ Leonard's neighbor in Berlin is George Blake, a double agent who oversaw part of the British SIS team involved in the creation of the tunnel, and who alerted the Soviets of the tunnel in advance of its creation. See David Stafford, *Spies Beneath Berlin* (London: John Murray, 2002), 95-115.

by means of select foci that we saw predominating the description of ‘ethnography’ in the previous Chapter.

Black Dogs is a first-person narrative written some time between November 1989 and 1992, based on notes taken during interviews starting in 1985. Its focus orbits around a family myth derived from an event that occurred during the honeymoon of June and Bernard Tremaine in 1946. This focus might be deemed ‘historic’ because the dialogues that discuss how this myth took shape are told against the backdrop of the early deconstruction of the Berlin Wall, thus bookending it between World War II and the Cold War. The narrator of the story is June and Bernard’s son-in-law, Jeremy, whose interest in their four-decade estrangement is built upon his curiosity as to how religious ideologies could so alter the outcome of a seemingly content marriage. Though a character with his own unique voice who equally signifies a microcosmic representation, Jeremy also symbolizes the role of the author as he guides us through the process by which a writer translates his research and subjects into a literary creation. As Childs (2005) notes: “Jeremy increasingly becomes an image of the novelist, of the observing outsider trying to make sense of the lives and opinions of others.”¹⁵⁴

Like *The Innocent*, the story continues McEwan’s use of realism, building itself atop historical reality by placing characters within real-world contexts for narrative effect. As well, the narrative itself is dialogically-driven, a step away from the plot-focused style in *The Innocent*, which provides a more nuanced depiction of identity construction within the process of similarity and difference. Considered both ‘episodic’ and ‘fragmented,’¹⁵⁵ *Black Dogs* is organized into functional vignettes, each providing more substance to the story as a whole as it leads toward a conclusive summation. Structured almost like a biographical memoir, the first Three of the novel’s Four Parts focus on a specific character, including Jeremy. The first is devoted to June’s perspective concerning the text’s ‘myth,’ while the second provides Bernard’s. The Third is more solipsistic and self-reflective, almost to the point of being a diary, riddled with Jeremy’s anxieties about properly re-creating June and Bernard’s case-history. The Fourth is a mostly dispassionate factual re-telling of the event that shaped the myth. This Fourth Part is the summation of the text as a whole, a conclusive dénouement where the subjectively

¹⁵⁴ Peter Childs, “Ian McEwan: The Child in Us All” in Peter Childs, *Contemporary Novelists: British Fiction Since 1970* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 165.

¹⁵⁵ Tim S. Gauthier, *Narrative Desire and Historical Reparations: A. S. Byatt, Ian McEwan, Salman Rushdie* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 119.

ambiguous nature of the first Three Parts seems to be resolved by the ‘unproblematic’ and objectively ‘factual’ nature of its style.¹⁵⁶ In reading these Four Parts as divided into two distinct voices, we begin to see a chronologically reversed progression of our earlier discussion on ethnographic construction: the subjective, self-reflective fieldwork account leading to a more objective representation.

Read critically as an attempt to engage the reader in notions of historical authenticity, McEwan’s switch in narrative style between the first Three Parts and the Fourth has inspired a number of discussions concerning both accuracy and reliability. For example, and as Childs (2006) notes, if we are to interpret Jeremy as a “faithful and reliable conduit” through which we can view the relationship between June and Bernard, then this shift from subjective to objective style should cause us to question both his ‘reliability,’ as well as our reliance upon his ‘ability,’ to properly create a consistent document.¹⁵⁷ Likewise, as Gauthier (2009) argues, this is more so the case when the prior Three Parts additionally act to remind us of the difficulty in unifying and contextualizing “distinct voices into a coherent narrative.”¹⁵⁸ Because Bernard’s and June’s stories seldom agree, and because they each tell a different perspective of similar events, then Jeremy’s job of compiling their viewpoints into a singular narrative appears all that more difficult. What’s more, when framed as an investigation in which the reader embodies Jeremy’s investigative position in an attempt to “uncover the true significance of an event that occurred in the past,”¹⁵⁹ then McEwan’s narrative differentiation between Parts One through Three and Part Four creates both the “illusion that things can be put in perspective,” as well as highlights the intrinsic fact that in compiling narratives there will “always be more than one version of the events.”¹⁶⁰ Lastly, as Wood and Wood (2007) contend, this employment of two narrative types drives the more acute reader toward a “more critical understanding of history,” wherein the problematic and ambiguous nature of the dual perspectives in Parts One through Three further illustrate the “impossibility for the historian to ever occupy the position of a fully neutral observer.”¹⁶¹ This is

¹⁵⁶ Anja Müller-Wood and J. Carter Wood, “Bringing the Past to Heel: History, Identity and Violence in Ian McEwan’s *Black Dogs*” (*Literature and History*, Vol. 16, No. 2, 2007), 53.

¹⁵⁷ Childs, *The Fiction of Ian McEwan*, 109.

¹⁵⁸ Gauthier, *Narrative Desire and Historical Reparations*, 21.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹⁶¹ Müller-Wood and Wood, “Bringing the Past to Heel,” 53.

especially the case, so they conclude, when one considers Jeremy's involvement in 'writing' the text as a whole alongside the "unproblematic, factual account" of Part Four.¹⁶²

The way that McEwan has designed *Black Dogs* provides for us a theoretical means by which to relate this invented fiction to texts that are deemed 'true' or 'formed,' particularly in light of that latter type of writing's ability to both decode and record culture simultaneously. Because of his use of realism, and because the dialogical processes applied by his characters to define themselves appear within a narrative that is itself a critical examination—and re-creation—of the process in which this same thing occurs in ethnographic construction, this novel becomes a thematic source that is uniquely accessible. In reading *Black Dogs* against the backdrop of writing culture, that is, as a bridge between the two definitions of 'fiction' discussed in the previous Chapter, we begin to see in the structure of the text itself echoes of the formatting challenges initiated by the Literary Turn. Because McEwan's formation of the novel appears as a reflection of the process of both participant-observation and the functionalism inherent in textually re-creating an observed culture, it equally becomes a representation of the literary transition from absolute objectivity toward more creative and reflective subjectivity.

In fact, were we to comparatively align the Four Parts of *Black Dogs* with examples, such as Malinowski's *Argonauts*—as objective ethnography—and *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term* (1967)—as subjective fieldwork account—the fragmented or disorganized quality of the novel becomes less about questions of authority or contingency in different narrative perspectives, and more about the process of formulating an objective text, wherein the author gingerly balances between being present or absent within the narrative itself. In the first Three Parts, 'Wiltshire,' 'Berlin,' and 'Majdanek, Les Salces and St. Maurice de Navacelles 1989,' our narrative guide, Jeremy, an outsider drawn to his mother and father-in-law for reasons of religious curiosity, describes the difficulty inherent in representing his subjects accurately and, in the process, in guarding his empathy from too biased a position on either side of their opposing claims. In recreating the dialogues with his subjects, those times when he is present in the discussion, taking part in, directing, and even responding to certain aspects of the process, Jeremy's Four Parts demonstrate the process by which an ethnographer, such as Malinowski, performs the act—even art—of crafting a distinct cultural representation. As

¹⁶² Ibid.

well, it equally demonstrates the intricate balancing act integral—or, perhaps even inevitable—in shaping an Other’s culture alongside paradoxical notions about ‘creativity’ and ‘fact.’ This is perhaps most succinctly demonstrated by Jeremy’s depiction of the ‘myth’ that guides his focus: “It was a story whose historical accuracy was of less significance than the function it served [...] it was a myth, all the more powerful for being upheld as documentary.”¹⁶³

Lastly, though this introduction has declared *Black Dogs* an ideal textual bridge between fictional representation and ethnographic construction, in this same process it equally provides us an excellent source through which we might decipher the Atheist identity construction within. Through the dialogical means in which Jeremy records and re-creates the opposing positions of June and Bernard, we gain access to how they themselves, as representatives of the process by which this type of Atheism is defined as an identity, become equally demonstrative of a particular type of processed Atheism. Without delving too deep into this discussion just yet—and in order not to expose the magic before the illusion—this type reveals a process of transition, a passage from one distinction to the next, a concentrated depiction of the larger shift in twentieth-century Atheism from an established political ideal to a philosophical conclusion that appears caught within a void awaiting a re-association. We might relate this to what Van Gennep (1960) and Turner (1966, 1967) refer to as a transitional or marginalized stage that represents something that is “neither this nor that, and yet is both.”¹⁶⁴ This ‘Atheism-in-progress,’ appears, as we shall see in our analysis in Part Two, as both historically and philosophically ‘liminal.’



Enduring Love was published in 1997 and marks both a philosophical turn in McEwan’s use of realism, as well as a point of commercial popularity and scholarly attention. It is bookended by a short piece of children’s fiction, *The Daydreamer* (1994), and the novel *Amsterdam* (1998). While *The Innocent* marked a turn in his fiction toward the realism we find in *Black Dogs*, his focus on

¹⁶³ McEwan, *Black Dogs*, 50.

¹⁶⁴ Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), 99; see also Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966), 95; and Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960), 11, 18, 20-21, and 105.

philosophical perceptions in *The Daydreamer* represents a thematic shift not fully addressed in the realism of *The Innocent* and *Black Dogs*. Offering as well a somewhat nostalgic step back toward the fantasy found in his early short story collections, the seven Chapters in *The Daydreamer* give brief accounts of a young boy, Peter Fortune, as he daydreams his way through his early youth. These vignettes are shaped around philosophical depictions of metamorphic fantasies where, in the course of his coming-of-age, Peter learns to develop his sense of self through a series of empathetic transformations, both physical and metaphorical. Across these short Chapters, written with a ‘simple prose’—“[a] book for adults about a child in a language that children could understand”¹⁶⁵—we find the locus of the philosophical turn that marks the differentiation between the representations of Atheism in *Black Dogs* and *Enduring Love*.

Thus, the realism in *Enduring Love* moves away from the distinctly historical, such as that in *Black Dogs*, and becomes, as Schemberg notes, more philosophical: “in *Enduring Love*, the conflict between mysticism and rationalism is removed from the domain of politics and history which shaped much of the characters’ lives in *Black Dogs*.”¹⁶⁶ In that the interactions between the characters are less historically anchored, they appear more as ‘analogies,’ what Seaboyer refers to as representations of the “urgent dilemmas surrounding rapid change,” in an ever evolving ‘post-industrial’ Britain.¹⁶⁷ This does not, however, mean that the text is entirely disassociated from the familiar functionality and realism of the ‘everyday world.’ In fact, though the characters within might stand for rhetorical ideologies, the wider philosophical discussion plays out across a distinct setting. The novel’s twenty-four chapters are interspersed with references to a “known (or knowable) public world,”¹⁶⁸ demonstrating a ‘verisimilitude’ of dates and locations that can be “pointed out on a good map of the respective area.”¹⁶⁹ Across the text these pin-points remind us that the story itself is playing out upon a stage that exists within a represented world, further raising the narrative from the level of the invented and the made-up, toward the level of the ethnographically formed and made-from. However, this does not mean that the narrator’s narration goes wholly unchallenged. Like we saw in our introduction to *Black Dogs*, *Enduring Love* is interspersed with a number of instances where the authenticity of his

¹⁶⁵ Ian McEwan, *The Daydreamer* (London: Vintage, 1994), 9.

¹⁶⁶ Schemberg, *Coming to Term with Crisis*, 67.

¹⁶⁷ Seaboyer, “Ian McEwan,” 23.

¹⁶⁸ Paul Edwards, “Solipsism, Narrative, and Love in *Enduring Love*” in Peter Childs, ed., *Ian McEwan’s Enduring Love: Routledge Guides to Literature* (London: Routledge, 2007), 79.

¹⁶⁹ Schemberg, *Coming to Term with Crisis*, 27.

account is questioned by alternative points of view, as well as opposing voices that contest his perception of things. This provides for us a further outlet in connecting the narrative itself with the issue of authority discussed in the previous Chapter. These appear in the form of letters that are chronologically inserted into the narrative, as well as an Appendix that, like Part Four in *Black Dogs*, serves to objectively substantiate the text by offering an evidential source to the narrator's representation. This is also, we might note, similar to the substantiating additions made by Jackson and Knab in *Barawa* and *A War of Witches*.

As well like *Black Dogs*, this first-person narrative is almost formulaic in its use of a trio of differing perspectives, wherein the individual characters are shaped as representatives of particular points of view. Throughout the scholarship on the text, as well as through evidence from within the novel, this trio comes to represent three specific perceptions. The narrator is Joe Rose, a forty-eight¹⁷⁰ year old “well-known science writer,”¹⁷¹ whose devotion to “the power of reason,”¹⁷² presents itself as an almost “snobbish belief in the epistemological superiority”¹⁷³ of objectivism and rationalism. As such, his character represents a “rational, scientific mind-set,”¹⁷⁴ that is built upon certain scientific theories such as evolutionary psychology and genetics.¹⁷⁵ Joe's ‘common-law wife,’¹⁷⁶ Clarissa, is an English Professor who specializes in Romantic literature. Her perspective, as befitting her occupation and interests, is filtered through the “lens of canonical high art and literature.”¹⁷⁷ Hers is a “more synthetic vision,” a reliance upon both feeling and thought, that reaches “beyond reason.”¹⁷⁸ The third perspective is represented by the psychologically deranged Jed Parry, a young man whose obsession with Joe manifests itself into a benign religiosity, his psychosis—‘de Clerembault's syndrome, or ‘erotomania’—taking the shape of a “highly individualistic Christianity.”¹⁷⁹ While each of these three characters represent distinct ideologies which, as we shall see, develop into points of identity, it is

¹⁷⁰ Though Joe never gives us his age, through his description of Jed Parry—“he was twenty-eight”—in reflection of himself—“he was twenty years younger”—we can deduce he is forty-eight. McEwan, *Enduring Love*, 12-13 and 65.

¹⁷¹ McEwan, “Appendix I,” *Enduring Love*, 237.

¹⁷² Wells, *Ian McEwan*, 69.

¹⁷³ Schemberg, ‘Achieving At-one-ment,’ 55.

¹⁷⁴ Clark and Gordon, *Ian McEwan's Enduring Love*, 28.

¹⁷⁵ Wells, *Ian McEwan*, 69.

¹⁷⁶ McEwan, “Appendix I,” *Enduring Love*, 237.

¹⁷⁷ Clark and Gordon, *Ian McEwan's Enduring Love*, 28.

¹⁷⁸ Wells, *Ian McEwan*, 69.

¹⁷⁹ Maxine E. Walker, “Ian McEwan's *Enduring Love* in a Secular Age” (*Journal of Religion and Popular Culture*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 2009) online publication, paragraph 1.

within the dialectical relationship between Joe and Jed where we shall find the core of this text's representation of Atheism. Again, and as Schemberg further notes: "both Joe and Parry are defenders of master narratives which give their believers a considerable confidence in the truthfulness of their judgments [...] Joe's language is shot through with the authority of science and Jed's with the authority of religious faith."¹⁸⁰

The backdrop against which the novel is set can be established as "just before 1995."¹⁸¹ While this broad placement might appear innocuous, particularly in reference to the distinct placement of the dialogues in *Black Dogs*, we can also connect a discursive thread here between Joe's represented Atheism and the identification of this time-period as the 'Decade of the Brain,' a context within which "the study of consciousness became all the rage."¹⁸² This is further defined by Green (2011) via a 'host of new developments,' such as neuroimaging, molecular biology, genetics, psychopharmacology, and cognitive science, that Richardson (2001) and Bryce, Adams, and Coyle (2000) link to certain 'hybridized disciplines,' such as cognitive neuroscience, psychobiology, behavioral neurology, and neuropsychology. This in turn clarifies this discourse as an inter-disciplinary correlation with the 'study of the mind' and the 'study of the brain,' the result of which sees a fundamentally altered 'science' of the brain.¹⁸³ This is then manifested in *Enduring Love* via the way McEwan shapes Joe's interest-based Atheism, particularly prior to his interactions with Clarissa and Jed, that equally demarcates his worldview as a uniquely lexical distinction. How this might be emulative of similar discourses on the meaning of 'Atheism' outside the context of McEwan's usage, will become more apparent through our discussion in the next Chapter.

In that it might be read as a representative discussion of these interests, *Enduring Love* is perhaps best summarized as a microcosmic philosophical discussion about a singular event, the accident at the start of the novel that brings our characters/informants together, and against which their interactions find

¹⁸⁰ Schemberg, *Coming to Terms with Crisis*, 68.

¹⁸¹ As Malcolm clarifies: "It is even quite difficult to date the novel's action. Joe's rare excursion into his own past gives no dates, and the reader gets a time of setting from a reference to Keats' upcoming two hundredth birthday, which sets the novel just before 1995." See Malcolm, *Understanding Ian McEwan*, 172.

¹⁸² Susan Green, "'Up There with Black Holes and Darwin, Almost Bigger than Dinosaurs: The Mind and McEwan's *Enduring Love*" (*Style*, Vol. 45, No. 3, 2011), 441.

¹⁸³ Alan Richardson, *British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 181; see also, Bruce H. Price, Raymond D. Adams, and Joseph T. Coyle, "Neurology and Psychology: Closing the Great Divide" (*Neurology*, Vol. 54, No.1, 2000).

reference. This incident and its aftermath formulates the philosophical perspectives throughout the text and acts as a catalyst for the dialectic interactions between Joe and the others, particularly shaped around his coming-to-terms with how his own philosophical understanding of the actions that transpire, differ according to perspective. These perspectives are clearly laid out in the opening chapters as the event is told and re-told from different points of view and with different voices: “Joe’s de-divinisation and de-mystification of the self and the world contrasts with both Clarissa’s and Jed’s teleological interpretations of the world.”¹⁸⁴ Of course, while this apparent classification of each individual into a particular identity—“Joe, Clarissa, and Jed represent the three conflicting worldviews”¹⁸⁵—might simplify the overall theme of the text into a mere representation of the “conflict between religion and science,”¹⁸⁶ for our intentions a more focused analysis of Joe’s philosophical construction of self in opposition to Clarissa and Jed—but especially the latter—will reveal within the novel’s conflicts and insight into the way the liminal Atheism in *Black Dogs* comes to be established into a defensible position above its mere ‘parasitic,’ or ‘negative,’ dependency.

Again, not to reveal too much of the method in the magic, we can briefly here locate the Atheism in *Enduring Love* as developed from that in *Black Dogs* along a philosophical axis. That is, where in *Black Dogs*, the represented Atheism is seen as founded upon a condition of political opposition toward the ‘spiritual,’ with *Enduring Love* that opposition takes up the narrative of ‘science,’ making itself less negative by promoting a positive position. In this way, the Atheism we shall examine in this fiction develops in two ways: first, as a continuation of the practical Atheism in *Black Dogs*, and second, as an Atheism-as-promotion, attached to, and in support of, certain ideals and doctrine. In order to more succinctly examine the differentiation between these two ‘types,’ we will utilize Jenkins’ distinction of ‘nominal’ and ‘virtual’ identification, the former representing the name or label given to a particular identity, of which the latter, the experience, is privy to change depending upon context: “the name can stay the same—X—while what it means in everyday life to be an X can change dramatically.”¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁴ Schemberg, “Achieving At-one-ment,” 68.

¹⁸⁵ Curtis D. Carbonell, “A Consilient Science and Humanities in Ian McEwan’s *Enduring Love*” (*Comparative Literature and Culture*, Vol. 12, No. 3, 2010), 7.

¹⁸⁶ Clark and Gordon, *Ian McEwan’s Enduring Love*, 28.

¹⁸⁷ Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 44.

One final disclaimer is necessary here before concluding this Chapter. While a keen-eyed reader might notice that the in-process ethnographic studies cited above—Engelke, Mumford, and Aston—are not focused on the same time-period as the fictions just discussed—given that there is, in fact, a two-decade differentiation between them and *Black Dogs*—this is more beneficial than detrimental to our choice in using them. That is, while we might reason that there is a *limited* amount of ethnographic data to source from in our present context, the time in which McEwan’s texts are set might be justifiably *void* of that sort of ethnographic data. This is partly true and false. Atheism had been examined to a point by this stage, as we shall see in our discussion of the term in the next Chapter. However, there still appears a complete lack of what we might call ‘proper ethnography,’ either in the shape of traditional participant observation, or of the more experimental type. For this reason, and because we will be filtering these texts through our lens of Ethnographic Criticism, our analysis will be on the Atheism specific to the context of these texts. Again, this is more of a blessing than a limitation. As we will see in our discussion of the discourse built around the definition of the term, one of the underlying themes is a consistent sense of progression. From its historical interpretations, to contemporary theoretical stipulations, and further along to the New Atheism discussed by Bradley and Tate, ‘Atheism’ is a product of progression, and the Atheism we shall find in McEwan’s two texts will demonstrate this ideally. From the positive promotion of Communism and the dialectical negation of religious ideology in *Black Dogs*, to the re-conceptualization of that Atheism as attributed through the promotion of scientific thinking in *Enduring Love*, this chosen stage offers us a fine example with which to not only interpret how Atheism is ‘identified,’ but how it might represent an internalized representation of that Atheism externally defined.

2.6—Conclusion: A Marriage of Convenience

As we pointed out in the introduction of this Chapter, the discussion above is in many ways a continuation of that made in the previous one. That is, where we located a methodological foundation of our Ethnographic Criticism in that Chapter’s discussion of the means by which a more literary focused style of *writing* ethnography led to a few examples where fiction was *read* ethnographically, this Chapter substantiated that methodology with a literary analysis focused on character development

and ‘self construction.’ In this same way, our discussion herein on how we might further support our turn toward fiction presented a number of correlations between the manner with which the writing of our chosen author has been criticized, and the style with which we will shape our own criticism.

Because of this, this Chapter did more than just introduce those fictions as our ‘data.’ Rather, it acted as a larger introduction to the ways in which our Ethnographic Criticism has developed out of established foundations in the fields of ‘Atheism and Literature’ and ‘Ethical Criticism.’ Likewise, our marrying the methodology spanning these two Chapters has equally led us to an important clarification about our own concentration on fictional representations of identity construction within Ethnographic Criticism. Thus, we can conclude here with the more nuanced notion that the methodological intent of Ethnographic Criticism is the result of an associative link between reading fiction ethnographically, and the evaluation of it as a representation of character self-making in Ethical Criticism. We might also resolve that as it is built upon these two discourses, it might be equally defined as a particular type of textual analysis, substantiated and contextualized by these two discussions, that additionally transforms the fictions we intend to analyze from constructions fictionally ‘made-up’ into constructions that might also be considered as ethnographically ‘made-from.’ For the sake of clarity, this transformation will be more fully explained in Chapter Four.

Lastly, this conclusion brings us back to our three-point justification for turning to fiction. As we specified earlier, the current discourse about the study of Atheism, particularly in regard to conducting an ‘anthropology of Atheism,’ is plagued with ambiguities about the definition of the term. With our methodology now established, we can turn to that subject itself. In the following Chapter, our discussion concerning the concept of Atheism will supply a theoretical means through which an individual conducting an Ethnographic Criticism might do that with the sort of objectivity required of an anthropological approach.

CHAPTER THREE—THEORY: DEFINING

“It is a bit of a problem, the title ‘Atheist’—no one really wants to be defined by what they do not believe in. We haven’t yet settled on a name, but you wouldn’t expect a Baptist minister to go around calling himself an ‘aDarwinist.’

—Ian McEwan, *The New Republic*, 11 January 2008¹

3.1—Introduction: Discourse Analysis and the Definition of Atheism

The previous two Chapters were predominately focused on the notion of ‘text,’ and how we might locate that term somewhere within the opposition between ‘fiction’ and ‘non-fiction.’ As well, they provided for us an insight into how we might read such texts in regard to a ‘particular concept.’ This Chapter will focus on that concept, adding a third pillar to our introduction of Ethnographic Criticism, and aimed once more at addressing our hypothetical intention of reading fictional texts for ethnographic insight. However, this Chapter will function in an entirely different manner than the previous two. That is, where those Chapters helped establish the *how* and *why* of our Ethnographic Criticism, essentially justifying our conception and use of it, as well as contextualizing it within the fields of anthropology and literary analysis, this Chapter will focus on the *what* of our analysis. In this way, while it will be about the modern Atheism upon which our Ethnographic Criticism will be focused, and thus specifically clarify what we mean when we use the term itself, this will not be its only function. In fact, its intended objective has two goals: on one end it will introduce our theoretical, rather than methodological, use of Discourse Analysis in an attempt at addressing the current ambiguity about what Atheism ‘means,’ while on the other, it will use this issue to provide for us an external comprehension about the Atheism internalized within McEwan’s two texts. In other words, it will present a style of conceptual analysis designed to remove us from the equivocality presently afflicting the study of Atheism, while at the same time introduce the concept itself so as to reinforce our examination in Part Two.

In order to accomplish this, our use here of what we refer to as ‘Discourse-as-theory,’ will be an adoption of the process involved in conducting a discursive analysis: a notional perception of that methodology that will theoretically assist us in explicating a useful perception about Atheism out of the

¹ Isaac Chotiner, “The TNR Q&A, Interview with Ian McEwan on Saul Bellow, the Internet, and Atheism” (*The New Republic*, 11 January 2008), accessed 15 August 2013 via Richard Dawkins Foundation website: <http://old.richarddawkins.net/articles/2159>.

complex discourses focused on defining it. That is, because these discourses have contributed to a myriad of definitions of Atheism, and because these definitions are built upon theoretical stipulations stemming from a rather expansive foundation, this has made our ability to merely stipulate what we might be looking for in the texts we intend to examine a rather dubious enterprise. This is, in fact, quite similar to the same issues we might face were we to replace our chosen concept with the term ‘religion.’ Because there exist different types of definitions of this term, and thus different routes to defining it, any attempt at signifying a distinct, yet equally expansive, meaning of ‘religion’ would be arduous, if not impossible. Thus, our adoption of Discourse-as-theory is an attempt at moving away from this sort of approach, replacing here where we might stipulate the sort of Atheism we intend to find in our chosen data, with a more comprehensive discursive perception of those things that contribute to an individual’s use of ‘Atheism’ as an identifying term. This will equally affect the type of discourses that we will be examining. That is, where ‘Discourse-as-method’ might be determined as an examination of ‘first-order’ discourses—individuals defining themselves using particular language—our Discourse-as-theory will instead examine how conceptions like Atheism are shaped by what we might call ‘second-order discourse:’ a discourse shaped by both ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders,’ wherein that first-order discourse is used to create a broad or useful ‘definition.’ Therefore, in order to remove ourselves from the standard approach where we would stipulate our own definition of Atheism, while at the same time present that concept so as to conceptually benefit our analysis in Part Two, our use of Discourse-as-theory will focus on how select individuals have defined the term, what influenced those definitions, and how they in turn have influenced the definitions made by others.

Additionally, using a theoretical adaptation of Discourse Analysis equally benefits our description—and use—of Ethnographic Criticism in two ways. First, in its capacity to eliminate the *need* of a standard definition, this type of discursive approach also eliminates the inherent bias that we ourselves might not be aware of in the formulation of even the most abstract ‘working definition.’ In fact, we might see this occurring in descriptions that seem entirely objective—as we shall see below—where a standardized and utilitarian definition might be built upon, and infected by, a foundation constructed on partiality and preconception. Because of this, we might even concede that the trouble with offering *any* sort of definition is that even when one is put forth with the most objective of intentions, in its acting as both a summation and contribution, it is still built upon a discourse that might not be derived from the

most impartial of origins. In this way, we might further argue that it would likewise foundationally negate those objective intentions.

Second, this sort of approach also mimics the anthropological process typically adopted while researching the ways individuals develop their cultural identities. That is, because our intention with Ethnographic Criticism is to read fictional accounts as if they are as equally useful in deciphering cultural identity construction as ethnographic ones, the inherently objective style of Discourse Analysis presents a method as equally ‘methodologically agnostic’² as the participant observation discussed in the first Chapter. That is, because this style of analysis ensures that we ‘bracket out’ any sort of pre-determined notions about Atheism, and thus further safeguards our efforts from ‘inserting’ individuals into boxes designed to categorize their identities, it also assists us in avoiding the all-too-simple procrustean method of assuming that the way ‘X’ uses a particular term is identical to the way that ‘Y’ uses it. Respectively, because this alleviates the requirement of formulating a general term or ‘umbrella’ category, what we are left with is an anthropological style that allows the subject to speak for him or herself, such as we saw with Crapanzano’s *Tuhami*. This, perhaps more than anything, seems to be the leading issue in the growing study of Atheism and ‘non-religion,’ the evidence of which is found in the existence, and use, of generalizations such as the latter term. Thus, by focusing less on defining the term, and more on the process involved in constructing its definition, we also remove ourselves from the necessity of determining the ‘right’ definitions from the ‘wrong’ ones, while at the same time alleviate the need to summarize the ‘frustrating morass of contradictions’ across the definitions examined below into a stipulation that is both generalized and essentialized.

Therefore, and because it will be presenting as equally a foundational aspect to our description of Ethnographic Criticism, the structure of this Chapter will slightly mimic the first one: a theoretical discussion followed by an analysis of specific data. To begin, we will provide a survey description of Discourse Analysis, followed by a specific example of how it has been used to deal with the myriad and convoluted definitions of ‘religion.’ Next, we will compare this example to the same issues

² First coined by Berger as ‘methodological atheism’ in 1967, this was later amended to ‘agnosticism’ by Smart in 1973. See Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Anchor Books, 1967), 100 and 108; and Ninian Smart, *The Science of Religion and the Sociology of Knowledge: Some Methodological Questions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 160.

underscoring the definitions of ‘Atheism,’ and thus establish what we mean by Discourse-as-theory. With this theoretical description then determined, we will proceed with our analysis of those definitions across two discursive categories: the historical—or what we call ‘lexical’—and the theoretical—or what we call ‘real’ or ‘essential.’ Arranging our analysis in this way will not only assist us in better understanding how the latter category emerged as a result of an attempt at combining the different historical definitions found in the former—and thus isolate an origin for the ambiguity found within that discourse—it will also provide a detailed external understanding against which to relate our examination of McEwan’s texts in Part Two.

3.2—Discourse Analysis and the Definition of Religion

In order to locate the meaning of Discourse Analysis as a method, we might initially agree with Gee (2005) that it is an “analysis of language in use.”³ Of course, this is admittedly neither a fair nor complete definition. For it also entails an analysis of the way language use impacts the communication of beliefs within interactions between individuals (van Dijk 1997), as well as demonstrates a particular type of approach (Paltridge 2006) aimed at specific patterns of language use across differing textual media: from language use in relation to social, political, and cultural formations—“[discourse] is language reflecting social order but also language shaping social order”⁴—to more ‘textual’ based analyses—“[discourse analysis]’ primary purpose [...] is to provide a deeper understanding and appreciation of texts and how they become meaningful to their users.”⁵

Because of this methodological polyfocality, the notion of ‘discourse’ itself, as van Dijk further suggests, is somewhat ‘fuzzy.’⁶ Schiffrin, Tannen, and Hamilton (2001) refer to this as the ‘curse of discourse,’ alluding to the fact that because discourse-as-language-use might represent a myriad of multi-disciplinary approaches, then “the directions in which its meanings may fan out are limitless.”⁷

³ James Paul Gee, *An Introduction To Discourse Analysis: Theory And Method*, 2nd edition (London: Routledge, 2005), 5.

⁴ Adam Jaworski and Nikolas Coupland, “Introduction: Perspectives on Discourse Analysis” in Adam Jaworski and Nikolas Coupland, eds., *The Discourse Reader*, Second Edition (New York: Routledge, 2006), 3.

⁵ Brian Paltridge, *Discourse Analysis: An Introduction* (London: Continuum, 2006), 3.

⁶ Teun A. van Dijk, “The Study of Discourse” in Teun A. van Dijk, ed. *Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction*, Volume One (London: Sage, 1997), 1.

⁷ Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen, and Heidi E. Hamilton, “Introduction” in Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen, and Heidi E. Hamilton, eds. *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 1.

In its own way, this makes the description herein of Discourse-as-method a bit tricky, particularly for issues of limited space. For our intentions then, and because our use of Discourse-as-theory will be dependent on a more specific discussion of Discourse Analysis in the study of religion, the following discussion will incorporate key points across a brief survey.



For his intentions, van Dijk demarcates three main dimensions—“(a) *language use*, (b) the *communication of beliefs* (cognition), and (c) *interaction* in social situations [emphases in original]”⁸—which then give way to three disciplinary approaches—linguistic, psychological, and social scientific—with which to differentiate an ‘order of discourse’ between ‘abstract’—language and communication—and ‘concrete’—singular or particular conversations. This formula performs a clarification of sorts, cataloguing disciplinary notions about how discourse is examined in the process of perceiving how language use influences the beliefs and interactions of those speaking.⁹ Relatedly, in their compilation of Jaworski and Coupland’s (1999) ‘ten definitions,’ and in order to address the ‘broad conglomeration’ of their ‘curse of discourse,’ Schiffrin, Tannen, and Hamilton stipulate their own three-part interpretation: “(1) anything beyond the sentence, (2) language use, and (3) a broader range of social practice that includes nonlinguistic and nonspecific instances of language.”¹⁰ Similarly, and by combining elements of comparable analysis, Fairclough (2003) clarifies the integral presence of dialecticism in the social study of language, particularly through a correlative meaning of ‘language’ that broadly encompasses a wide range of textual and dialogical elements: “written and printed texts such as shopping lists and newspaper articles are ‘texts’, but so also are transcripts of (spoken) conversations and interviews, as well as television programmes and web-pages.”¹¹ This broadening the concept ‘text’ to incorporate any ‘actual instance of language in use,’ re-conceptualizes the notion of discourse by incorporating a sense of authorial intention—integral to the concept of identity construction—into his own definition.

⁸ van Dijk, “The Study of Discourse,” 2.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Schiffrin, Tannen, and Hamilton, “Introduction,” 1.

¹¹ Norman Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research* (London: Routledge, 2003), 4.

Building on Farclough's three-level method of discursive interpretation—"the production of the text, the text itself, and the reception of the text"¹²—Gee's (2005) conception takes up the emphasis of balance: "discourse analysis [...] seeks to balance talk about the mind, talk about social interaction and activities, and talk about society and institutions."¹³ Somewhat mimetic of the typeface change we shall see in von Stuckrad's (2003, 2010, 2013) discussion below, Gee differentiates between 'Discourse,' and 'discourse,' the latter designating how language is used 'on site' to "enact activities and identities," and the former to denote when this sort of discursive 'language-in-use' is "melded integrally with non-language 'stuff' to enact specific identities and activities."¹⁴ Thus, at least for Gee, the focus of Discourse Analysis is a two-pointed affair:

- (a) illuminating and gaining evidence for our theory of the domain, a theory that helps to explain how and why language works the way it does when it is put into action; and (b) contributing, in terms of understanding and intervention, to important issues and problems in some 'applied' area (e.g. education) that interests and motivates the researcher."¹⁵

With a more direct focus on identity construction, Paltridge (2006) takes up this identifying notion of 'language-in-use' in order to decipher the relationship between language and identity, both in an individual 'display' of one's identity, as well as in how that identity is intended to be seen. In this way, his emphasis is on the particular ways in which, through the use of both 'written' and 'spoken' discourse, language plays a part in 'performing' and 'creating' certain social identities.¹⁶ Anchored to the concepts of communication and interaction, Paltridge's more social-oriented use of discourse is attached to the development of patterns across 'texts,' denoting a process by which we might decipher influential aspects of identity construction within relational interactions between participants. As he himself states: "discourse analysis considers the relationship between language and the contexts in which it is used and is concerned with the description and analysis of both spoken and written interactions."¹⁷

Lastly, Jaworski and Coupland (2006) seem to develop their notion of discourse on top on Paltridge's more social-centered conception, their perception of language-use as "relative to social, political, and

¹² Ibid., 10.

¹³ Gee, *An Introduction To Discourse Analysis*, 6.

¹⁴ Ibid., 7.

¹⁵ Ibid., 8.

¹⁶ Paltridge, *Discourse Analysis*, 1.

¹⁷ Ibid., 3.

cultural formations,”¹⁸ as thematically correlative to Paltridge’s argument that Discourse Analysis considers, “how people manage interactions with each other, how people communicate within particular groups and societies, as well as how they communicate with other groups, and with other cultures.”¹⁹ Dependent upon actions of communication, Jaworski and Coupland see discourse not just as ‘language-in-use,’ but as language that is reflecting and shaping social order. In this way, language becomes something that influences, and is influenced by, how individuals interact with that social order. This sense of social interaction, they argue, is why there appears such a multi-disciplinary interest in studying ‘discourse,’ not just linguistically, but also textually, historically, politically, philosophically, and social-scientifically: “despite important differences of emphasis, discourse is an inescapably important concept for understanding society and human responses to it, as well as for understanding language itself.”²⁰

Throughout this survey, ‘discourse’ becomes somewhat fluid and plastic, a signifier bound to ‘language’ and ‘language use,’ that is also privy to stimulations pertaining to particular disciplinary ends. For this reason Discourse-as-method is equally bound to a number of cross-disciplinary concepts: textual and conversational interactions, identity construction, social construction, and the creation, presentation, and translation of ‘texts.’ In essence then, and according to this survey, we might stipulate Discourse-as-method as the analysis of the way in which discourse—language in use that is represented via either spoken or written ‘texts’—shapes, and is shaped by, the way in which the individuals whom we are studying pragmatically use this discourse in order to construct meaning in their lives. Discourse-as-method is thus the borrowing, and practical use of, different methodological practices regulated by a focus on how individuals discursively shape the ‘selves’ they wish to be read by others. Through this stipulation, we may further concede here that our Ethnographic Criticism is a type of Discourse Analysis, an examination of a particular textual entity that is embedded with a discursively constructed concept. While this is true in consideration of the survey above, given the experimental and non-traditional method of the former, our use of the latter is a bit more specialized. For our interests, then, Discourse Analysis offers a means with which to interpret the concept at focus within the process of conducting an Ethnographic Criticism. That is, in our attempt at reading a

¹⁸ Jaworski and Coupland, “Introduction,” 3

¹⁹ Paltridge, *Discourse Analysis*, 1.

²⁰ Jaworski and Coupland, “Introduction,” 3

fictional text for a cultural insight concerning a particular concept, we need to stipulate both the context, and cursory meaning, of that concept. It is here, with a focus on ‘definitions,’ where we translate Discourse-as-method into our Discourse-as-theory. For further clarification, we turn now to a specific example, and the correlative issues between defining ‘Atheism’ and defining ‘religion.’



In his approach to the discursive study of religion, von Stuckrad (2003) cites three ‘turns’ that he argues have ‘profoundly transformed’ the process with which we study religion: the ‘linguistic turn,’ wherein the issue of religion moved from “its place in the transcendent and numinous into the realm of language and text;”²¹ the ‘pragmatic turn,’ whereby through semantic analyses of ‘written sources’ the scholar of religion focused an emphasis on the “contexts and pragmatic options that are necessary to really understand what a text is all about;”²² and the ‘writing culture debate,’ which we discussed in detail in the first Chapter. Acknowledging these turns as enacting a theoretical polyvocality in the way the term ‘religion’ has come to be defined, the result appears as a sort of nonconsensual ambiguity in what is meant by ‘religion’ in the ‘study of religion.’ A discourse in itself, this begins with a theological-based ‘sui generis’ and ‘essentialist’ approach—‘substantive’—out of which later develop a number of ‘functionalist’ methodologies. From within the latter, with its focus on ‘actions’ rather than ‘beliefs,’ there arise a myriad of perspective-based interpretations about how we might construct a definition of religion: polythetic/monothetic (Bailey 1973; Saler 1987 and 2000); dimensional (Smart 1996); phenomenological (Cox 2010); taxonomic (Smith 1978, 1988, 1996, and 2004); cognitive (Boyer 2001), and critical (Fitzgerald 2000; McCutcheon 2001). While this brief list in no way represents a concise compendium of each and every methodological approach, it does offer us a simple snapshot with which to perceive the wider implications of approaching a singular concept through disparate venues.

Von Stuckrad refers to this disparity as a double-edged issue, on one end offering a particular disciplinary horizon to one’s individualized study, while on the other creating what he refers to as a

²¹ Kocku von Stuckrad, “Discursive Study of Religion: From states of the Mind to Communication and Action” (*Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 2003), 255.

²² Ibid.

“cornucopia of methodological approaches,” a nod to Smith’s (1998) argument that where once we might have struggled to define the term itself, we are now faced with a larger issue, as predicted by Leuba (1912), in doing so “more than fifty ways.”²³ What this ‘multi-definability’ equally generates is a contentious discourse not unlike the issues we will address in our discussion of Atheism, a discordancy von Stuckrad resolves by supplanting the formulation of a ‘generic definition of religion’ with a ‘theory of discourse.’

Our object of study is the way religion is organized, discussed, and discursively materialized in cultural and social contexts. ‘Religion,’ in this approach, is an empty signifier that can be filled with many different meanings, depending on the use of the word in a given society and context. It is this use of ‘religion’—including the generic definitions of academics—that is the responsibility of scholars to explain.²⁴

Emulative of Gee’s differentiation between ‘Discourse’ and ‘discourse,’ von Stuckrad marks this grammatical shift with a change of typeface, ‘religion’ referring to “contributions to a discourse on religion,” and ‘RELIGION’ referring to the discourse itself, the “societal organization of knowledge about religion.”²⁵ Indicative of the substantive/functionalist split referenced above, this grammatical alteration shifts our attention from perceiving ‘religion’ as revealing some sort of transcendent truth, to ‘religion’ as serving a practical purpose to those who use it: “Religions are powerful [...] because they serve as instruments in the communicative formation of identity and provide people with a concrete script of action.”²⁶ Thus, by regarding religion as a system of ‘communication and shared action,’ we can turn to an analysis of how those who identify as ‘religious’ go about doing that, our focus now on the “*public* appearance of religious propositions [emphasis in original].”²⁷ It is from out of this process where we will build our own theory of discourse.

As an introductory and exemplary example, let us here pretend that the concept with which we were focusing our Ethnographic Criticism was ‘Catholicism,’ and the fiction with which we were critiquing was Greene’s (1940) *The Power and the Glory*. Rather than begin with a general definition that we might then attempt to relate to the Catholicism represented in Greene’s text, a more theoretically

²³ Jonathan Z. Smith, “Religion, Religions, Religious” in Mark C. Taylor, ed., *Critical Terms for Religious Studies* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 281-282; see also James H. Leuba, “Appendix: Definitions of Religion” in James H. Leuba, *A Psychological Study of Religion: Its Origin, Function, and Future* (New York: Macmillan, 1912).

²⁴ Kocku von Stuckrad, “Reflection on the Limits of Reflection: An Invitation to the Discursive Study of Religion” (*Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, Vol. 22, 2010), 166.

²⁵ von Stuckrad, “Discursive Study of Religion,” 12.

²⁶ von Stuckrad, “Discursive Study of Religion: From states of the Mind to Communication and Action,” 269.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 268.

discursive approach would be to interpret the elements that contribute to the societal organization of knowledge about ‘Catholicism’ in the contextualized structure of that text. This is both an external and internal process, meaning that our discursive knowledge about the empty signifier ‘Catholicism’ is influenced by different discursive fields pertaining to this particular ‘type.’ This is also an ‘in-process’ sort of discursive analysis, meaning that though we might enter into our criticism with an understanding based on external research, our conclusive stipulation of what Catholicism means in Greene’s text is equally influenced by that text’s internalized interpretation—such as we see with ethnography. In this way, ‘Catholicism’ becomes less a signifier defined across a millennial spectrum—a ‘defined thing’—and more a term discursively embodied by individuals within a particular time and place—an ‘identity.’ This provides us a more nuanced cultural understanding about how the concept-as-identity takes shape within the context of the text under examination, while at the same time removes any sort of essentialized notion that the ‘Catholicism’ within this text speaks for a universal Catholicism outside of it. In ethnographic terms, this is characteristically similar to the holistic goal of re-creating culture in words on the page: while the identities revealed to us within the text are examples of a wider type of identity, they do not comprehensively define that wider identity.

It is within this difference between definition and identity where our approach shifts from method to theory. Somewhat relatable to the notion that the use of specific discourses within specific sets of data are reflective of the ways in which those discourses demonstrate a practical usage, this process assists us by moving the examination away from macro-level discussions about what terms mean ‘in general,’ toward more germane and practical assessments about how individuals within measured contexts go about constructing these sorts of identities. Of course, we also need to accept that this must first begin with a conceptual understanding, an accumulation of knowledge about the concept we are examining. Like needing to understand where ‘Catholicism’ lies on the spectrum between ‘religion’ and ‘Christianity,’ it would be disadvantageous to approach the identities within a text without a working knowledge about where they come from. This is perhaps the locus of our Discourse-as-theory: the adoption of certain analytical language in order to provide a means by which we might more narrowly assess our chosen concept. This, then, will assist us in generating a particular ‘comprehension’ about how that concept has been shaped beyond the simplistic manner of just ‘defining’ it, a pragmatic process less concerned with the interests of Discourse Analysis as a distinct methodology in the study

of religion—the clarification and differentiation between definitions of religion that are deemed ‘real’ or ‘incorrect’—designed to cautiously alleviate the *a priori* manner of term stipulation alongside the necessity of having a finite knowledge about the concept which that stipulation might define. From here, we turn then to an introduction of our chosen concept, differentiated by the above mentioned Discourse-as-method between the discourse we shall be analyzing below—ATHEISM—and the manner with which the term has been defined—Atheism.

3.3—A Tale of Two Discourses

Because Discourse Analysis frees the analyst from more ‘traditional’ means of conceptualization, and thus warrants a sense of ‘agnostic’ freedom in sourcing the significance of certain concepts most pertinent to the examination taking place, it also affords us the opportunity to be a bit more creative in our approach. Therefore, because our chosen concept is not as directly referenced as our example of Catholicism above, and because it stems from an increasingly vague discourse, the field from within which we might initiate our wider ‘understanding’ about the concept itself is not as readily accessible. That is, because ‘Atheism’ is such an ambiguous term, and because the study of Atheism is somewhat new to the discourse on studying religion, our chosen field represents a ‘reflective’ assessment, looking inward rather than outward—second-order, rather than first-order. This choice is determined by three issues: the broadness of this discourse, the essential nature of the definitions that come out of it, and the division of these definitions between two categorical types. Before turning to an analysis of that discourse itself, briefly examining these issues will provide for us a much more distinct justification.



To begin, and to borrow once more from Leuba’s assessment about ‘religion,’ definitions of Atheism appear in just as many iterations. Much like the four cited below, these fall across a spectrum of often overlapping and relatable themes. As we shall see, these themes develop into particular categories, so that we might even inequitably conclude that the discourse on defining ‘Atheism’ is *actually* a discourse on defining ‘Atheisms.’ In fact, it is because of this polyvocality where we will find a direct correlation with the overall generalization found in many of the definitions discussed. It is also within this generalization where the term becomes ‘stretched’ beyond what might be considered its

etymological or historical boundaries. Here is where we find precarious terms like ‘ir-religion’ or ‘non-religion,’ concepts or identities generated by social scientists attempting to define anything that ‘looks like’ Atheism in order to address the myriad ways the term is defined in and out of their research.²⁸ This has additionally developed into a ‘hodge-podge’ of conceptualizations, a discursive field with players running in different directions, with no clear notion as to what might be the intended goal.

In adopting this as our chosen discourse, we are likewise attempting to resolve two problems here: first, an analysis of this discourse will hopefully resolve the general ambiguity that appears prevalent in the study of Atheism; and second, because Atheism is such a new topic of study, this discursive analysis will assist in our own interpretations in Part Two. That is, because Atheism is a new topic of interest, and because the discourse on defining it is heavily burdened with theoretical stipulations, focusing on how scholars have defined it will act to alleviate much of the confusion about what Atheism means when it shifts from a ‘defined thing’ into a contextualized identity.

Furthermore, uncovering this polyvocality raises a second issue, which is found in the inherent essentialism underscoring generalized terms. As is often the case with ‘religion,’ the meaning of Atheism is commonly considered ‘essential knowledge,’ an interpretation that is usually built upon ‘real’ definitions. Consider, for example, these four samples: “the belief that there is no God or gods;”²⁹ “a conscious or unconscious lack of commitment to God(s);”³⁰ “a negative view, characterized by the absence of belief in God;”³¹ or, simply, “the absence of theistic belief.”³² These sorts of definitions depend on generalizations, what Baird (1971) refers to as the ‘res’ or ‘essence’ of the term, which in turn is “frequently an attempt at finding an identity in the numerous applications of an

²⁸ See especially Colin Campbell, *Toward a Sociology of Irreligion* (London: Macmillan, 1971.); and Lois Lee, “Being Secular: Towards Separate Sociologies of Secularity, Nonreligion and Epistemological Culture” (PhD Dissertation, Cambridge University, 2012).

²⁹ Baggini, *Atheism: A Very Short Introduction*, 3.

³⁰ This definition is provided by the Nonreligion and Secularity Research Network’s Glossary of terms, accessible via their website at: <http://nonreligionandsecularity.files.wordpress.com/2011/11/nsrn-glossary-28-apr-2011-lois-lee1.pdf> (accessed 7 July 2014).

³¹ Michael Martin, *Atheism: A Philosophical Justification* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 463.

³² George H. Smith, *Atheism: The Case Against God* (New York: Prometheus 1989), 7.

ambiguous word.”³³ Unlike lexical definitions, which Baird labels as ‘true’ in that they assert a “certain meaning to someone sometime,”³⁴ and are thus historically demarcated by context, real definitions are further ambiguous in their reliance upon certain ‘functional’ definitions to support their truth assertions. Said otherwise, while the definitions above might be deemed ‘lexical’ in that they fit within a particular context, not knowing that context prior to reading them renders them untethered. Thus, their ambiguity can only be judged unambiguous by first applying functional definitions to their real assertions. More often than not, this appears alongside pre-determined notions about the ‘simplistic’ process of defining Atheism.

For this reason, choosing to look at the way the term has been defined further represents our attempt at moving beyond these sorts of categorizations so as to formulate a more concise understanding about how an Atheist within our context might go about defining him or herself. Thus, when we interpret the ‘type’ of Atheism being demonstrated in our Ethnographic Criticism, rather than looking for ways to anchor that Atheism to a pre-determined, functional, or real definition, we can instead assess the manner in which the individual who we are examining has defined him or herself in relation to the discursive qualities found in how the term has come to be defined. Likewise, because an analysis of second-order discourses also incorporates the analyses of the first-order discourse used to design it, by moving our focus from the context of ‘out there’ to ‘in here’ we will additionally clarify the differentiation between a definition of the word—‘in here’—and the use of the word in the construction of an individual’s identity—‘out there.’

Lastly, an analysis of this ‘in here’ discourse provides an interesting chronological assessment: a ‘wider-scale’ perspective that reveals certain patterns along the chronology in which the definitions are shaped by means of thematic focus. What this also means is that we are able, through an analysis of the ways the term has been defined, to trace how the term itself has contextually developed within both ‘in here’ and ‘out there.’ This benefits our interests here by providing for us a more comprehensive assessment about how the term might be used, as well as gives us a useful paradigm with which to proceed with our analysis. As such, the thematic elements that stand out in this discourse can be

³³ Robert D. Baird, *Category Formation and the History of Religions* (Paris: Mouton & Co., 1971), 11.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

divided between three points: two historic and one theoretic. In fact, we might better describe these patterns as designating two types of discourse: the definitions of one having been built on historical and lexical first-order discourses, and the definitions of the other having been built on essentialist and more theoretical interpretations in an attempt at manufacturing a more ‘generalized’ type of Atheism. The latter category is where we predominately find definitions that attempt to combine the two historic-based categories into a term that encompasses the essence of each. In fact, this template is perhaps best represented by one of the definitions cited above, the Nonreligion and Secularity Research Network’s conception: “a conscious or unconscious lack of commitment to God(s).”

Within the structure of this definition we find signifiers representative of each category: ‘lack’ is indicative of the etymological origins of the term—ἄθεος—where the alpha privative ‘A’ signals a type of absence, or ‘without-ness’ associated with the earliest pragmatic and political uses of the term; ‘God(s)’ is indicative of the concept’s ‘re-emergence’ as a parasitic conclusion via theological debates concerning God’s hypothetical existence; and ‘conscious’ or ‘unconscious,’ much like the pluralized ‘God(s),’ speak directly to the generalization of the term, denoting a type of Atheism that is either explicit or implicit—positive or negative—and thus removed from its modern position as dependent upon a particular type of Theism.

Because the structure of this definition so aptly represents an essentialist attempt at summarizing the history of the definition of the term, for our analysis herein we will be adopting its terminological structure as a guide. This will thus divide our examination into the two discursive types cited above: historic and theoretic. The differentiation here is crucial for one important reason: as this division is itself a result of the way the term has been defined, presenting these two discourses like this will provide our analysis in Part Two a more specific external comprehension against which to relate. That is, just as our example above about Catholicism in Greene’s *The Power and the Glory* would be dependent upon both an external and internal understanding about the societal organization of knowledge about ‘Catholicism,’ approaching our analysis in Part Two would equally be dependent upon this sort of externalized discourse in order to more clearly understand the Atheism sourced from within McEwan’s texts. Thus, our analysis below on how the term has been defined by *both* first-order and second-order influences, will elucidate a much more concise comprehension about the concept

itself. In this way, when we begin to interpret the Atheism in McEwan's two novels—such as Bernard's shift from communistic Atheism to a direct rejection of a particular Theistic belief system in *Black Dogs*, or Joe's scientific Atheism, established by his own interests, and then challenged by the unique Christianity of 'Jed' in *Enduring Love*—we will be doing so with a broader understanding about how the concept's origins, development, and theoretical expansion came about. Additionally, and as we will discuss shortly, this approach will likewise assist in eliminating some of the ambiguity concerning the 'meaning' of the term. Or, as Buckley (1990) rightly states: "The term *atheist* is not hopelessly vacuous, but unless the instance to which it is applied and the meaning in which it is used are determined, its employment is profoundly misleading [emphasis in original]."³⁵ It is to our practical examination of those discourses in which we now turn.

3.4—Historical Discourse: ἄθεος and Atheism

The lexical definitions that we will be examining in this first discourse might also be considered 'historical statements,' in that, because they are couched in history, they are also affixed to the contexts within which they exist.³⁶ In this way, we might also view them as 'restricted' or 'regulated.' While they might descriptively function as explanations or definitions by individuals within a distinct time and place, they are likewise limited to that time and place. For this reason, they should not be seen as merely describing the word 'Atheism,' but instead understood as descriptions of the historical time and place within which the usage of that word itself is being used. This recognition of the importance of context is essential to our analysis of McEwan's texts, particularly because the Atheism found within them is equally dependent upon, and reflective of, these same sorts of contextual boundaries. Furthermore, because our chosen concept is, as we shall see, currently beset by a generalized attempt at combining the different lexical descriptions within this historical discourse into the theoretical one examined after, our discussion below will take the shape of a progressive review. Beginning with an examination of the definitions of the term at its earliest genesis—which we shall refer to as 'ἄθεος'—we will then turn toward its modern equivalent—demarcated from 'general atheism' with the capitalized 'A.' While this will definitely benefit our antecedent comprehension about Atheism prior to our Ethnographic Criticism in Part Two, it is important to remember that this should not be seen as a

³⁵ Michael J. Buckley, *At the Origins of Modern Atheism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 6.

³⁶ Baird, *Category Formation and the History of Religions*, 10.

stipulation of the Atheism we might find there. Instead, the details about how the term has been defined within these two contexts will feed into our larger perception about how the signifier ‘Atheism’ might be discursively used by individuals in equally bound, though culturally different, contexts.



On a discursive level, to initially be called ‘ἄθεος’ was to be labeled an outcast or heretic. This is exhibited by definitions ranging from Drachman’s (1922) description as “severe censure and moral condemnation,”³⁷ to more recent interpretations, such as Buckley’s (1990) synonymous affiliation of the word with terms like ‘invective’ and ‘accusation.’³⁸ In fact, the manner with which this term has been described might find some correlations with contemporary notions about ‘anti-social’ behavior, a term used to admonish an individual for acting in a manner that might be deemed threatening to the harmony of the state. However, these same discursive renditions find that even in its initial usage, ἄθεος was more often bound to some sort of religious heresy or impiety, and as a label given to someone for displaying dissenting beliefs and actions, it was a critical perception of that person for standing out as directing impiety against “the prevailing civic religions or the popular polytheistic superstitions of the masses.”³⁹ In this way, it is described as a term employed in a vague manner and generally used as an ‘epithet of accusation’ against any person who “called in question the popular gods of the day.”⁴⁰ For the same reasons, it is predominately perceived as a colloquial pejorative, an accusation made from one person to another, not unlike a “brand imprinted by one’s enemies.”⁴¹

We see this evinced through a number of first-order discursive examples in which the nominal meaning of the term is transmuted within different administrative and religious contexts, from political declarations, to literary representations. Perhaps the most popular first example of this is that pertaining to the account of Socrates’ trial and conviction. Here we see a discursive classification of varying degrees, the meaning of ἄθεος ranging from an impiety that shows a general lack of respect toward the gods, to a lack of acknowledging the specific gods of the city of Athens, and/or the curious

³⁷ A.B. Drachmann, *Atheism in Pagan Antiquity* (Chicago: Ares Publishing, 1922), 5.

³⁸ Buckley, *At the Origins of Modern Atheism*, 9.

³⁹ J.P. Reid and B. Mondin, eds., “Atheism” in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 2003), 822.

⁴⁰ Aveling, *The Catholic Encyclopedia*.

⁴¹ Buckley, *At the Origins of Modern Atheism*, 9.

association of the term with poetry and philosophy. As Reid and Mondin (2003) state: “it was not uncommon for philosophers, and especially poets, to be suspected of atheism and impiety.”⁴²

Definitions of ἄθεος built from this particular discourse reveal a meaning interconnected by certain points, but that equally do not perfectly overlap. For example, and in order to substantiate his own description, Aveling (1907) cites Plato’s *Apologia*, sections 26d to 27a, wherein Socrates must defend himself against allegations that he denies the existence of the gods, as well as their function as it relates to the livelihood of Greek society. Within this sample we see an ideal example of the term’s accusative nature as the accused—Socrates—accuses another—Anaxagoras—in order to define himself as something other than ἄθεος:

Do I not even believe that the sun or yet the moon are gods, as the rest of mankind do? ‘No, by Zeus, judges, since he says that the sun is a stone and the moon earth.’ Do you think you are accusing Anaxagoras, my dear Meletus, and do you so despise these gentlemen and think they are so unversed in letters as not to know, that the books of Anaxagoras the Clazomenian are full of such utterances?⁴³

Buckley equally picks up on this in his own description, broadening the distinction of ἄθεοι to include both Socrates and Anaxagoras, as well as Diagoras and Protagoras, the former for ridiculing the ‘Eleusinian Mysteries’ by speaking openly about “what occurred within them,”⁴⁴ and the latter for skeptically declaring: “about the gods, I do not have [the capacity] to know, whether they are not, nor to know what they are like in form; for there are many things that prevent this knowledge: the obscurity [of the issue] and the shortness of human life.”⁴⁵ Adding to Aveling’s contention, Buckley concludes that Socrates’ ‘Atheism’ was nothing more than mere moral condemnation, blithely remarking, “one man’s theism proved to be his indictor’s atheism, the incarnation of impiety.”⁴⁶ We see this continued with Bremmer’s description, where by also citing Aristophanes’ *The Clouds*, wherein the accused is depicted as “something like an atheist,”⁴⁷ an additional ‘pre-Socratic’ layer is added to the accusative nature of the term seen above. By basing his definition on the crimes described by Plato as “not acknowledging the gods the city acknowledges,” as well as introducing other, new powers—such as

⁴² Reid and Mondin, “Atheism,” 822.

⁴³ Plato, *Plato in Twelve Volumes, Vol. 1*, Harold North Fowler, trans. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), section 26d, accessed online via <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=plat.+apol.+26d> (accessed 17 June 2014).

⁴⁴ Buckley, *At the Origins of Modern Atheism*, 2-3.

⁴⁵ Protagoras, as quoted by Buckley, *At the Origins of Modern Atheism*, 3.

⁴⁶ Buckley, *At the Origins of Modern Atheism*, 2-3.

⁴⁷ Jan M. Bremmer, “Atheism in Antiquity” in Michael Martin, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Atheism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 19.

daimonia—Bremmer’s stipulation shapes the discursive meaning of ἄθεος into a paradoxical association with terms of omission, such as ‘godless,’ ‘without gods,’ or ‘godforsaken,’ a condemnation seemingly reserved for “intellectuals who denied the gods of the city or any form of deity.”⁴⁸ Expanding a bit more on this, he notes two specific points: first, in that the religious discourse of Athens was increasingly influenced by poets and philosophers, their religious criticisms had efficiently “eroded the traditional beliefs in the gods;” and second, that Plato’s ‘influential theism’ ensured a predominately ‘ancient’ type of Atheism different from its modern equivalent.⁴⁹ In this way, Bremmer’s definition is shifting the accusative nature of ἄθεος from religious and/or political heresy, to an etymological rendition that more simply denotes ‘without.’

The incriminating quality of these examples is later transmuted into a descriptor of sedition, a term bestowed upon an action deemed injurious, with no allegiance to any particular political agency or religious belief. As a nominal term, validated by the accuser in relation to the actions or statements of the accused, ἄθεος becomes, in one instance, the justification for putting to death first century Christians who, as Chidester (2001) notes, “refused to pay the proper respect or share in the public sacrificial meals dedicated to the Roman Gods,”⁵⁰ and the validation of these same Christians’ monotheism against their accusers in the next. As another first-order example, we can cite Polycarp, the Bishop of Smyrna, who before being martyred in 155 CE, uses the term when reproached by the Roman Governor overseeing his execution. When asked to recant his impious ways and direct his fellow Christians to cease their dissent, he turns instead to the crowd of Pagans and yells, “Away with the Atheists!”⁵¹ Hyman (2010) refers to this as something akin to more direct ‘religious heresy,’ ἄθεος here looking more like a denial or rejection based upon a differing religious view.⁵² As he further notes, this pejorative sense of the term, where it takes up the impiety of rejection or denial by means of

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., see also Fergusson’s (2009) theological perspective on Socrates as seeking the “purification of popular Greek religion with its multiplicity of anthropomorphic gods and goddesses,” as well as in seeking a ‘divine’ that “was something higher, more transcendent and ineffable, to be approached by philosophy and virtuous living.” David Fergusson, *Faith and Its Critics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 15.

⁵⁰ David Chidester, *Christianity: A Global Perspective* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 43-44; see also, Ethan Gjerset Quillen, “Rejecting the Definitive: A Contextual Examination of Three Historical Stages of Atheism and the Legality of an American Freedom from Religion” (Master’s Thesis, Baylor University, 2011), 42-49.

⁵¹ See Bremmer, “Atheism in Antiquity,” 20-21; and Quillen, “Rejecting the Definitive,” 44-45.

⁵² Gavin Hyman, “Atheism in Modern History’ in Michael Martin, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Atheism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 29.

heretical ‘dis-belief’ becomes more and more established as a political—socio-cultural—indictment. This is especially the case as it evolves across Europe and into the modern age, representing a distinct type of accusation until its shift toward self-description. As he concludes, citing de Certeau (2000): “Atheism became the focus of not only a whole body of literature, but also of political measures, judicial sentences, and social precautions against atheists [...] ‘The ‘atheists’ who first occupy the polemic are the ‘heretics’ of every church, the nonconformist believers and such.”⁵³

These multi-layered discursive elements reveal a meaning broad in its interpretation, an etymological distinction that can mean, on one end, the rhetorical ‘doing away’ with the gods and their power, and on the other, the condemnation received for not believing in or worshipping the ‘proper’ gods according to one’s context. For this reason, it becomes easy to regard the term as encompassing an “enormous paradox,” as Buckley defines it, embodied with “vastly divergent and even contradictory meanings.”⁵⁴ To support this conclusion, we might cite Bullivant’s (2011) description, a ‘three sense’ interpretation shaped from Liddell and Scott’s conception (1940): “i) one who *denies* the gods (as with Socrates in Plato’s *Apology*), but is also used of ii) one *abandoned* by the gods or ‘godforsaken,’ as well as in the negative moral sense of iii) ‘godless’ or ‘ungodly’ [emphases in original].”⁵⁵ While his first two ‘senses’ here do a decent job summarizing the discourse we have seen thus far, his addition of a third provides yet another discursive layer, ἄθεος here signifying an ‘absence,’ which he corroborates with a citation to the term’s usage in Ephesians 2:12: “without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise, having no hope and without God (*atheoi*) in the world [emphasis in original].”⁵⁶ This sort of terminological distinction is equally found in Hartley’s (2006) own reassessment of Hebrews 11:6, and the different types, translations, and expressions of ἄθεος in both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures: from God’s absence during certain

⁵³ Ibid., see also Michel de Certeau, *The Possession at Loudon*, trans. Michael B. Smith (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000), 101.

⁵⁴ Buckley, *At the Origins of Modern Atheism*, 6.

⁵⁵ Bullivant, “Defining ‘Atheism:’ A Modest Proposal” (NSRN Glossary of Terms), accessed via: <http://nonreligionandsecularity.files.wordpress.com/2011/11/nsrn-terminology-conference-11-may-2011-stephen-bullivant-atheism-stream1.pdf> (accessed 19 October 2014), 2; see also Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), 27, accessible via the Perseus Digital Library: [http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0057%3Aentry%3Da\)%2Fqeos1](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0057%3Aentry%3Da)%2Fqeos1) (accessed 27 August 2013).

⁵⁶ Bullivant, “Defining ‘Atheism’” 2

rituals—Deuteronomy 31:17, 32:39, and 2 Kings 1:3, 6, 16—to the impiety of not accepting God by those who are knowledgeable of Him—Romans 1:19-21.⁵⁷

By means of these discursive examples, the term becomes less an empty signifier, and more a lexical distinction—made apparent by our use herein of the Greek spelling—meaning something in particular that is contextually dependent for its distinct specification. By reading these examples as interpretations of contextualized discourse—such as that of Socrates or the early Christians—we can divert our focus from concretely defining it, as it existed during this time and place, and instead interpret the process by which the concept itself came to take shape.

The process of using ἄθεος is thus bound to a type of endowment, a title given and involuntarily taken on. With Socrates it is attached to both religious and non-religious piety, as well as social obligation, the term taking up the meaning of impiety as it relates to one's socio-cultural requirements.⁵⁸ Later, it embodies a sense of heresy, a means of describing the crimes committed by individuals—such as Polycarp, Justin Martyr, or even Christ⁵⁹—who openly worship deities outside their cultural contexts. While these examples might lead to the notion that this represents a number of different types of ἄθεοι—such as Buckley's argument that they “expose the paradoxical history of a continually ambiguous term”⁶⁰—this sort of thinking is quickly rejected by our lexical interpretation. That is, though his argument is poignant, Buckley's conception is only true because his understanding of ἄθεος is imbued with his discursive understanding of modern Atheism, making the former all that more difficult to pin down. The process, however, is quite simple. Rather than stating that ἄθεος is the impious betrayal of one's cultural duties, or the heretical belief of deities beyond one's cultural pantheon, the process of *being* ἄθεος is fairly clear through its usage. The term, and thus the discursive

⁵⁷ See Donald E. Hartley, “HEB 11:6—A Reassessment of the Translation “God Exists”” (*Trinity Journal*, Vol. 27, No. 1, 2006).

⁵⁸ See also Robb's (1993) discussion of the criminal law of Athens, under which ἄθεος is a term given to an indicted individual who's ‘disrespect toward the gods’ placed him under the canopy of ‘ἀσέβεια,’ another generalized term for an act of impiety against the ‘civic cultus’ in which the impiety in question is defined as a direct assault on, or corruption of, the states’ ‘εὐσέβεια,’ a symbol of reverence required of all citizens. Kevin Robb, “*Asebeia* and *Sunousia*: The Issues behind the Indictment of Socrates,” in G.A. Press, ed., *Plato's Dialogues: New Studies and Interpretations* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, INC., 1993), 100-106.

⁵⁹ Fergusson makes the wider conclusion that Justin Martyr's impiety, as seen from the perspective of Roman rule, would be regarded as both dangerous and subversive, so that “like Socrates and Jesus before him,” he was martyred for his faith. See Fergusson, *Faith and Its Critics*, 15.

⁶⁰ Buckley, *At the Origins of Modern Atheism*, 4.

means by which to make sense of the term as an ‘identity,’ signifies the process of bestowing an indictment upon an individual who is found to be challenging the cultural norm. Thus, the discursive process by which it is defined within our field reveals less an ambiguous paradox, and more a specific means by which to classify an individual within that contextualized cultural norm. In this way, this sort of lexical distinction clarifies our ambiguous understanding of the term so that it begins to mean something more specific “to someone sometime.”⁶¹ We may proceed, then, not with a ‘definition,’ but with the stipulated understanding that it represents the processual means by which to make sense of the term within its context. With this same intention in mind, we turn now to its modern equivalent.

∇

Within the discourse analyzed below, the ‘modern’ in modern Atheism is delineated by three distinct gradations: an internalized conclusion that is ‘parasitic’ upon a certain type of Theism within the boundaries of a unique dialecticism; a critical assessment of God filtered through a lens of rational-naturalism; and the progressive differentiation between ‘ancient’ and ‘modern,’⁶² symbolized by a transition from ἄθεος-as-accusation to Atheism-as-self-identification that is inextricably linked with an “all-encompassing mastery of reality by rational and/or scientific means.”⁶³

Like its predecessor, modern Atheism is best understood from within a modern context. Yet, unlike Hyman’s contention that it emerged at the “precise moment at which philosophers and cultural historians locate the birth of modernity,”⁶⁴ it does not simply ‘appear.’ Rather, its emergence is more reflective of a culmination, the product of philosophical developments such as the ‘studia humanitatis’ of the Renaissance,⁶⁵ or the progressive rise and establishment of what Fergusson (2009) refers to as an empirical turn toward ‘natural science,’ based upon “theory and experiment rather than canonical

⁶¹ Baird, “The Nature of Category Formation,” 10.

⁶² Citing Cassiodorus, Buckley also states that ‘modern’ was meant as a segregating device, separating not just time, but stages of philosophical thought. See Buckley, *At the Origins of Modern Atheism*, 25-27.

⁶³ Hyman, “Atheism in Modern History,” 27-28.

⁶⁴ Hyman, “Atheism in Modern History,” 29.

⁶⁵ See Jim Herrick, *Against the Faith: Some Deists, Sceptics, and Atheists* (London: Glover & Blair, Ltd., 1985), 25; and Raymond W. Converse, *Atheism as a Positive Social Force* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2003), 119.

texts.”⁶⁶ These each act as ‘seeds of revival’ that, as Reid and Mondin declare, would eventually develop into a more specific “falling away from the Christian faith.”⁶⁷ While this development appears to take place—predominately—in the context of the Enlightenment, for the sake of discursive clarity it is not enough merely to imply that modern Atheism is a product *of* that context. Rather, it seems more often defined as a product of the philosophical developments of the renaissance and reformation ‘coming-of-age’ *within* the Enlightenment. For these reasons, then, the discussion herein concerning the discourse on defining modern Atheism will be pragmatically limited to this particular context.

In our first gradation, Atheism is defined by its ‘parasitic’ or ‘dependent’ nature. No longer used in a general sense—like we saw with ἄθεος—it becomes a signifier for a more specified conclusion in reference to a certain deity. As such, Atheism as ‘A-Theism,’ or rather, as ‘A(modern)Theism,’ is seen as emerging from a distinctly internalized position shaped in reaction to a particular Christian monotheism. This ‘internalization’ is expressed by a number of dependent terms, beginning with some of the earlier definitions such as those offered by Flint (1877) or Aveling, the latter of which adopts the notion of ‘opposition:’ “Atheism is that system of thought which is formally opposed to theism”⁶⁸ In later definitions, such as that suggested by Fergusson, the reactive quality of modern Atheism is associated directly with the notion of ‘rejection.’ As he states: “in the west, atheism has come to be associated with the rejection of the God of the Christian faith, or the God of Judeo-Christian theism, or perhaps still more broadly the God of the three Abrahamic faiths.”⁶⁹ He likewise sees this dependency as based upon a critical or judgmental perspective, the Atheist position “taking as its starting point the basic beliefs of a religion or society,” upon which a “revisionist or skeptical judgment” is raised.⁷⁰ He substantiates this sort of reactionary stance with first-order examples such as Diderot and D’Holbach, whose almost outright denials of God’s existence began to shift the idea “beyond the limits of a reactive skepticism,” toward a more definitive ‘intellectual movement.’⁷¹

⁶⁶ Fergusson, *Faith and Its Critics*, 17.

⁶⁷ Reid and Mondin, “Atheism,” 823.

⁶⁸ Francis Aveling, “Atheism” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia, Volume 2* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907).

⁶⁹ Fergusson, *Faith and Its Critics*, 17.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

Hyman characterizes this same response as ‘relational,’ supporting his own definition by amending a quote by Huyssen (1984) so as to argue that modern Atheism’s dependency on Theism works in the same way that ‘postmodernism’ is dependent on ‘modernism.’ “[Theism] as that from which [atheism] is breaking away remains inscribed into the very word with which [atheists] describe [their] distance from [theism].”⁷² Thus, as a ‘relational concept,’ Hyman’s conception perceives modern Atheism as something bound to a “peculiarly *modern* and innovative form of theism [emphasis in original],” in the same way in which that Theism is separate from the ‘pre-modern’ theism relational to ἄθεος.⁷³ Based on an interaction with this modern Theism, Hyman’s conception also exhibits an internalized ‘negation,’ arising not from any independent ‘modes of thought,’ but rather as the result of “certain intellectual moves within theology.”⁷⁴ This idea of ‘negation’ is likewise found in earlier definitions such as that offered by Cohen (1921), who characterizes it as both historically and etymologically assured, with the ‘justification’ of Atheism located in the “untenability of the theistic position.”⁷⁵ This sort of language is then equally taken up by Fabro (1968)—“it implies the negation of god, not as an end in itself, but as a means to an end”⁷⁶—Cliteur (2009)—“atheism is nothing more than the denial of the claims of theism”⁷⁷—and Smart (2012)—“‘Atheism’ means the negation of theism, the denial of the existence of God.”⁷⁸ In that these discursive samples present an Atheism that is expressly defined “in terms of that which it takes to be denying,” the very meaning of the term itself is thus dictated by that upon which it is dependent.

Buckley condenses this language into a particular dialectic, concluding that Atheism’s internal construction—its meaning—is both contradictory and contingent:

The central meaning of atheism is not to be sought immediately in atheism; it is to be sought in those gods or that god affirmed, which atheism has either engaged or chosen to ignore as beneath serious challenge. The history of the term indicates this contrast, and the analysis of its meaning suggests that it is inescapable: atheism is essentially parasitic.⁷⁹

⁷² Hyman has replaced ‘modernism’ and ‘postmodernism’ in Huyssen’s quote with ‘Theism’ and ‘Atheism,’ respectively. Hyman, “Atheism in Modern History,” 28.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁷⁵ Chapman Cohen, *Theism or Atheism: The Great Alternative* (London: Pioneer Press, 1921), 140.

⁷⁶ Cornelio Fabro, *God in Exile: Modern Atheism* (New York: Newman Press, 1968), 7.

⁷⁷ Paul Cliteur, “The Definition of Atheism” (*Journal of Religion and Society*, Vol. 11, 2009), 12.

⁷⁸ J.J.C. Smart, “Atheism and Agnosticism” in Edward N. Zalta, Principal Editor, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Stanford: The Metaphysics Research Lab, 2012), accessed via: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/atheism-agnosticism/> (accessed 23 June 2014).

⁷⁹ Buckley, *At the Origins of Modern Atheism*, 14-15.

While the use of ‘parasitic’ here might conjure the image of something that latches on to and feeds off a host until it dies, Buckley’s use is more akin to the idea that Atheism is, in fact, a transitional *product* of Theism, generated from within, and exemplified by the “intellectual process from god affirmed to god denied.”⁸⁰ As such, not only does this demonstrate a uniquely specific type of dialecticism, it also depicts a ‘dipolarity,’ the notion wherein a pair of electric charges, attached to two poles of equal magnitude, are opposite in polarity. As internally constructed, Atheism is no longer an autonomous abstraction—a trait unique to the use of ἄθεος—but is instead issued forth, borne of internal conflict and conclusion, and produced from a particular type of thinking that associates God as a ‘substance’ accorded a “specific place and function in the natural world.”⁸¹

The association here of God as ‘substance’ speaks to this internalized rejection’s transmutation of the concept ‘God,’ not just in regard to its oppositional or relational stance, but to its sense of ‘domestication’ as well. This brings us to modern Atheism’s second gradation, the nominal transference from God-as-subject to God as an object of inquiry, a condition that we can discursively trace to the use of the rational-naturalism underscoring certain examples of ἄθεος, ‘re-emerged’ in our modern context. Baggini (2003) identifies this as a translational constant between ἄθεος and Atheism—“the replacement of myth by rational explanation in general”⁸²—that when filtered through a modern lens, takes up the nominal distinction of ‘science:’ a methodological term denoting an attempt at giving an “account of the workings of the world based on evidence and arguments that are available to and accessible by all.”⁸³ In his own assessment, Fabro refers to this as an Atheism of ‘illumination,’ an affirmation that argues for an “appeal to human reason alone to discover the ‘why’ of things and of our knowledge of them,”⁸⁴ or what Hyman determines as a “desire for an all-encompassing mastery of reality by rational and/or scientific means.”⁸⁵ As Baggini further clarifies:

The emergence of atheism at this time fits in with the progressive story of atheism that sees its roots in the birth of Western rationality in Ancient Greece. Just as naturalism and rationalism [...] were the fruits of the progression from myth to reason, so atheism as an avowed doctrine is the fruit of the progression to Enlightenment values.⁸⁶

⁸⁰ Ibid., 16-17.

⁸¹ Hyman, “Atheism in Modern History,” 40.

⁸² Baggini, *Atheism*, 75.

⁸³ Ibid., 76.

⁸⁴ Fabro, *God in Exile*, 5.

⁸⁵ Hyman, “Atheism in Modern History,” 28.

⁸⁶ Baggini, *Atheism*, 74.

As it relates to our first gradation, this sort of ‘scientific thinking’ arises out of an internalized harmony between science and theology. LeDrew (2012), citing Buckley, notes that modern Atheism arose not out of an external antagonism toward theistic belief, but out of an internal search for theological answers via rational means:

Scientists [...] thought it natural to ground apologetic arguments through empirical evidence, and were encouraged to do so by theologians and clerics alike. Most prominent thinkers of the Scientific Revolution were passionate believers and many developed theological positions to accompany their naturalistic theories.⁸⁷

At the same time, these same theologians often believed that science “could and should do the foundational thinking for Christianity,”⁸⁸ which in turn began to suggest a conception of God as an empirical ‘thing,’ an object embodied with a “definable ‘substance’ and identifiable ‘location.’”⁸⁹ As LeDrew further concludes: “When theologians decided that God was a thing of definite location and substance, it by definition became an object of scientific inquiry.”⁹⁰

However, and though their early conclusions only hinted at God’s ‘lack of necessity’ for explaining the functionality of the universe,⁹¹ this slowly transitions from a relationship of internal consistency to a dichotomous contradiction, localized and clarified by LeDrew in the nineteenth-century with Darwin’s theory of evolution:

This simple but astonishingly successful theory provided an answer to the riddle of the existence of life, which for thousands of years was answered with ‘God’, and thus provided atheism with an answer to the lacuna that had plagued it for centuries. Darwin’s theory not only challenged the argument from design but nullified it by providing a rational, evidence-based alternative explanation of the appearance of design in life.⁹²

Thus, what originated as a correlative position, is now transformed into an “atheistic scientific humanism,” a ‘coming of age’ that Masterson (1965) describes as a position built upon the idea that the scientific method is the “only norm of truth.”⁹³ Once matured, this position takes on a more central and subjective place in the relationship between ‘man’ and ‘God.’ To explain this better, Hyman compares this nominal transference to the relationship between master and slave: as the ‘human-as-subject’ becomes the master of his world through the disciplinary exercise of applied reason and science, that

⁸⁷ Stephen LeDrew, “The Evolution of Atheism: Scientific and Humanistic Approaches” (*History of the Human Sciences*, Vol. 25, No. 3, 2012), 73.

⁸⁸ Hyman, *A Short History of Atheism*, 32.

⁸⁹ Hyman, “Atheism in Modern History,” 39.

⁹⁰ LeDrew, “The Evolution of Atheism,” 73.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*, 75.

⁹³ Patrick Masterson, “Contemporary Atheism” (*Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 45, No. 214/215, 1965), 133-134.

world becomes an object amenable to manipulation, understanding, and control.⁹⁴ No longer governed by its master, the ‘subjective self’ is free to rightfully challenge the nominal position of God as the “creator and ‘author’ of all known reality.”⁹⁵ As he further concludes, echoing Feuerbach’s (1841) first-order notion of religion’s anthropomorphic origins—“religion is human nature reflected, mirrored in itself”—when ‘God’ becomes understood as an object of thought, conceived in human terms, the essence of modern Atheism becomes that of a transition out of the Theism in which it originated.

This sense of ‘transition’ characterizes our third gradation. For Masterson, Atheism-as-transition stems from the growth and development inherent in the industrial revolution, an “enthusiastic commitment to the notion of change,”⁹⁶ that arises out of the cultural shift from agricultural to industrial, and takes the shape of productive control:

[man] has, so to speak, turned the classical universe over on its side, and the future signifies, not a heavenly paradise forever up above him, but rather something stretching out in front of him to be created and attained by his own effort. His relationship to nature is no longer one of direct and total dependence. It is indirect and transcendent in that by machines and technology he is gradually harnessing and controlling the universe to his own ends and purpose.⁹⁷

Representing an early discursive example that would eventually help shape Hyman’s modern description of the rise of the subjective self, Masterson’s notion here depicts what he refers to as the ‘distinctive character of contemporary Atheism’ as inspired by the cultural climate within which it ‘drew its inspiration:’ “The transition from a primarily agricultural society to our own industrial milieu has been accompanied by a profound transformation of our image of the world—a transformation involving serious repercussions on all dimensions of human existence, including religious belief.”⁹⁸

In a similar distinction, LeDrew’s own notion of modern Atheism’s sense of transition is divided between two types: ‘humanistic,’ which is focused on the religious byproducts of alienation, oppression, and human suffering, and ‘scientific,’ which he defines via its engagement with religion as ‘ignorance.’ Characterized as ‘two streams of thought,’ he describes this split as based on epistemology, which is then ‘inaugurated’ by the “rise of the social sciences and a human-and social-

⁹⁴ Hyman, *A Short History of Atheism*, xvii.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Masterson, “Contemporary Atheism,” 131.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 132.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 131.

centred view of religion.”⁹⁹ In a further elucidation, based on Ruse’s (2010) argument that modern Atheism is defined by the ‘science’ between ‘methodological naturalism’ and ‘metaphysical naturalism,’¹⁰⁰ he equally concludes that modern Atheism is more clearly defined in natural terms, rather than by “humanist philosophy or a sociological position.”¹⁰¹ This difference is essential to his discursive conception, as the separation between an Atheism that is ‘humanistic’ or ‘scientific’ might also be seen as the difference between ‘modern’ and ‘contemporary,’ the latter betraying a long tradition established by the former in its obsessive focus on what he calls ‘scientism:’

Popular Atheism today is becoming more and more indistinguishable from scientism and a drive to secure the cognitive, moral and ultimately political authority of the natural sciences, and thus betrays a long tradition of humanistic atheism derived from Enlightenment moral and socio-political critiques and later socialist projects.¹⁰²

This attempt at distinguishing the ‘humanistic’ from the ‘scientific’ brings us to a discursive stopping point, demonstrated by the differentiation within LeDrew’s conception of a categorical breakdown that sees the ‘modern’ in modern Atheism as signified by both internal and harmonious change.¹⁰³

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We might also conclude here that this differentiation signifies a distinct difference between ἄθεος and Atheism, particularly concerning the latter’s shift away from the abstract nature of the former, toward a more determined and clear self-constructed identity. In fact, this is nicely abridged by Buckley, who states: “there were men who judged themselves atheists, who called themselves atheists [...] in the ancient world, and even more in the medieval world, this was unheard of [...] ‘Atheist’ had been vituperative and polemic; now it became a signature and a boast.”¹⁰⁴ Or, as Hyman likewise concludes:

As a term of self-identification, a declaration of one’s own belief (or lack thereof), it does not really appear until the mid-eighteenth century when it is found among Parisian intellectuals, particularly Denis Diderot, who is widely recognized as being the first explicit and self-confessedly atheist philosopher.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁹ LeDrew, “The Evolution of Atheism,” 71.

¹⁰⁰ Michael Ruse, “Atheism, Naturalism, and Science: Three in One?” in Peter Harrison, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Science and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 229.

¹⁰¹ LeDrew, “The Evolution of Atheism,” 71.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 72-73.

¹⁰⁴ Buckley, *At the Origins of Modern Atheism*, 27.

¹⁰⁵ Hyman, “Atheism is Modern History,” 30.

These differences convey two very unique lexical discourses, as well as demonstrate the means with which scholars have determined the ‘meaning of Atheism’ from within their precise historical contexts. In our analysis in Part Two, many of the thematic influences that shape these discourses—such as modern Atheism’s dependency on certain ‘Theisms,’ as well as the transitional nature of that dependency—will become central to our interpretation of the Atheism represented in McEwan’s work. However, this only tells half of the term’s discursive story, the historic portion of the NSRN’s definition concerning the ‘lack’ of commitment to ‘God(s).’ In order to more comprehensively approach the Atheism in our Ethnographic Criticism to follow, we equally need to understand the discursive elements that make up the explicit or implicit—‘conscious’ or ‘unconscious’—ways in which scholars have begun to divide the term. It is to this discussion in which we now turn.

3.5—Theoretical Discourse: The Positive vs. Negative Paradigm

The positive vs. negative paradigm is in many ways a fourth—possibly post-modernist—gradation of modern Atheism. Differentiated between two experiential types concerning an individual’s knowledge and acceptance about God’s existence, this gradation is predominately defined by means of the difference between knowing and not-knowing, and/or having and not-having. In other words, ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ depict a dichotomous reflection of every aspect concerning the ability to define an individual—either externally or internally—as ‘Atheist,’ the former encompassing a ‘conscious,’ or ‘explicit’ rejection or denial of the Theist’s belief in the existence of God, and the latter consisting of an ‘unconscious’ or ‘implicit’ lack of belief in the existence of that Theist’s God.

This ‘fourth gradation’ presents a number of issues for how we might more precisely approach the Atheism in Part Two, most notably concerning the way it begins to generalize the concept in order to encompass a much wider perception. Because of this, we might say that the ‘positive vs. negative’ paradigm reflects a step backward: a post-modern rejection of the binary between Atheism and Theism, that leans on the thematic use of imputation and generalization that we find in the discourse on defining ἄθεος. The following discussion will address this ‘step backward’ so as to further support our external comprehension of the elements that contribute to the societal organization of knowledge about the Atheism internalized in *Black Dogs* and *Enduring Love*. Beginning with the theological-based origins of the paradigm itself, this discussion will touch on select influences in order to clarify how the term

has come to inspire a discourse not unlike that which complicates the definition of ‘religion;’ a discourse imbedded with categorical language about the existence of levels or types of Atheism,¹⁰⁶ which further encourage new and ever-more tortuous concepts such as ‘non-religion.’



The earliest description of a ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ Atheism comes from Aveling’s short definition in the second volume of the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, published in 1907. He divides the term into two types under the broader category of ‘theoretic’ Atheism: positive as a dogmatic denial of “any spiritual and extra-mundane First Cause,” and negative as based “either upon the lack of physical data for theism,” or upon the “limited nature of the intelligence of man.”¹⁰⁷ More specifically, his conception of the latter is theoretically bound to empiricism and reason, the ‘negative Atheist’ defined as a person for whom the “paucity of actual data available for the arguments proving the existence of a super-sensible and spiritual God” proves evidential of that deity’s non-existence.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, his conception of the ‘negative Atheist’ is underlined by two positions of neglect: agnosticism or materialism. While both positions hold to the etymological condition of being ‘without’ God, he argues that the former takes the leading role in defining negative Atheism by “professing a state of nescience,”¹⁰⁹ so that by a special kind of ignorant neglect—rather than materialist explanation—the negative Atheist separates God from the natural world.

This first use of ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ seems in many ways an echo of our previous discussion on the differentiation between ἄθεος and Atheism writ small, and this would not be an incorrect assessment. After all, for Aveling, the ‘dogmatic denial’ innate in the ‘positivity’ of his positive Atheism aligns with the internalization and direct Theological rejection in modern Atheism’s first gradation. Likewise, his negative Atheism is reminiscent of the general usage of ἄθεος in relation to the myriad ways one might be labeled as such. This is not the case, however, with the discursive samples that follow. For instance, Maritain’s (1949) conception takes up the paradigm to define

¹⁰⁶ For example, see the “Non-Belief in America” research conducted by Christopher F. Silver that stipulates ‘six types of Atheism.’ Available at: <http://www.atheismresearch.com> (accessed 27 September 2013).

¹⁰⁷ Aveling, “Atheism” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

Atheism as wholly negative, not just by means of ‘negation,’ but also as a destructive or deconstructive ‘abandonment’ of God:

By *negative atheism* I mean a merely negative or destructive process of casting aside the idea of God, which is replaced only by a void. Such a negative atheism can be only shallow and empirical, like the atheism of the *libertins* of the seventeenth century: it hollows out a vacuum at the center of the universe of thought which has taken shape for centuries around the idea of God, but it does not bother about altering that universe [emphases in original].¹¹⁰

As demonstrated here, Maritain’s conception is quite polemical, his notion of negative Atheism leading toward an inevitable ‘freedom,’ an autonomy inexorably resolved with “suicide and self-destruction.”¹¹¹ This polemical assessment infects his conception of positive Atheism as well, as its depiction is based on notions of internal confrontation or war: “an active struggle against everything that reminds us of God.”¹¹² As first-order discursive examples of this, he cites the suicidal engineer, Kirilov, of Dostoevsky’s *Demons*, Nietzsche’s ‘solitary atheism,’ the “academic, even fashionable” Atheism of existentialism, and the Scientific Atheism of Marxist dialectical materialism.¹¹³ Overtly negative in both forms, he concludes that Atheism, in either type, represents a ‘bursting forth,’ a “three-century-old progressive degradation” of the ‘idea of God,’ founded upon, and nurtured by, the rationalism we see coming of age within the Enlightenment.¹¹⁴

In a similar fashion to Aveling, Fabro’s (1968) conception is slightly more restrictive, defined in exclusive terms of ‘elimination’ or ‘exile,’ a radical negation of God in order to produce a “full life in the temporal dimension.”¹¹⁵ Though not as detailed in demarcating a distinct positive and negative binary, Fabro describes the “old kinds of atheism”¹¹⁶ as specifically negative, exclusively in reflection of the positive attributes associated with their modern counterparts, which he then describes as an amalgamation of both ancient and modern: “we shall directly see the most salient features of those forms of atheism that could be called constructive [positive] atheism, as opposed to the destructive atheism of the materialism of antiquity and of the illuministic currents.”¹¹⁷ This ‘positive’ type is

¹¹⁰ Jacques Maritain, “On the Meaning of Contemporary Atheism” (*The Review of Politics*, Vol. 11, No. 3, 1949), 268.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 269.

¹¹⁵ Fabro, *God in Exile*, 7.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

typified by an epistemology that, unlike its older equivalents, focuses on interpersonal salvation: “man must be edified and saved via man.”¹¹⁸ This again, and like Aveling’s, echoes our discussion above.

Lastly, much like Fabro’s conception of positive Atheism as the promotion of a particular creed, Robertson’s (1970) terse definition constructs a type that expresses itself through structural rejection or denial. Encompassing no more than four sentences in the epilogue to his *Sociological Interpretation of Religion*, Robertson states:

By positive atheism we mean a cultural circumstance in which the constructive virtues for the human and socio-cultural condition of an anti-religious stance are upheld. The adjective ‘positive’ is appropriate here also because it highlights the secularization theme. Positive atheism shares many of the concrete concerns of orthodox religious belief systems. Its major manifestations are in humanist movements and organizations and the academic intelligentsia.¹¹⁹

Arguing that positive Atheism stems from a comparison of ideals, in that the notion of such a classified type stems from an organized, or rather ‘focused Atheism,’ his conception furthers the point that to deem this sort of Atheism ‘positive’ means to show that it has a particular agenda, and is thus more organized than just the mere denial of the Theist’s belief in the existence of a conceptualized ‘God.’ In this way, his positive Atheism is designed in reflection of an unmentioned, though comparative, negative Atheism, absent of this sort of direct organization.

Where these chronological examples reveal a somewhat disorganized use of conceptualized terminology—from Aveling’s designation of different cultural and historical ways of being Atheist, to Robertson’s use of ‘positive’ to denote a type of organized Atheism—by the 1970s, and with the influential conception made by Flew (1976), this theoretical disjointedness finds a commonality. In fact, the influence of Flew’s contribution is so instrumental in shaping the positive vs. negative paradigm from this point on that we might better identify the discursive examples just examined as representing a ‘pre-Flew discourse.’ More specifically, out of his predisposed theory about the inherent nature of Atheism, this discourse picks up an axial re-conceptualization, a subjective modification of positive/negative into explicit/implicit, which we shall see imbedded in even the most objective definitions to follow.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Roland Robertson, “Epilogue: Secularization” in Roland Robertson, *The Sociological Interpretation of Religion* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970), 238.

The main thesis of Flew's *Presumption of Atheism* is that Atheism is our default, implicit position concerning the existence of God, a thesis that shifts the meaning of the 'positive vs. negative' paradigm into "an entirely fresh perspective."¹²⁰ By 'presumption' here Flew does not mean a sense of presumptuousness, of bold insolence or arrogance, but of 'presuming,' a premise that is analogous to "the presumption of innocence in the English law."¹²¹ Moreover, in presuming that humans initially begin as implicit Atheists, in that they are born without the knowledge of God's existence, it is Flew's contention that the "debate about the existence of God should properly begin from the presumption of atheism," so that the 'onus of proof' in arguing about the existence of God "must lie upon the theist."¹²² This in turn re-translates the etymological make-up of the term itself, so that the alpha privative 'A' in Atheism becomes synonymous with similar terms such as 'amoral,' 'atypical,' or 'asymmetrical.' In this way, and given his notion of humankind's natal origins *without* God, he identifies the negative Atheist as "someone who is simply not a theist,"¹²³ because he or she "entirely lack[s] the relevant concept of God."¹²⁴

As a 'defeasible presumption,' and under Flew's influence, Atheism becomes an inherent negation, a trait shared by all individuals who, by nature of our complete ignorance at birth, begin life with an implicit *absence* of belief.¹²⁵ This becomes, in mutated forms, the essence of the 'positive vs. negative' paradigm from this point on. In fact, perhaps the key aspect of the paradigm, post-Flew, is the way in which the 'negative' characteristic is stretched beyond the limitations set forth by both the modern discourse, as well as the initial paradigmatic constructions by Aveling, Maritain, Fabro, and Robertson. While etymologically correct, the conception of an 'implicit Atheism,' of a universal absence of belief, not only removes Atheism from its relational dependency on modern Theism, it also converts it into a much broader category, a term once again applied to any unbounded conception of 'religious' doubt, rejection, or denial. This manifests a return of sorts toward the discourse on defining ἄθεος, generating

¹²⁰ Antony Flew, *The Presumption of Atheism* (London: Elek Books, Ltd., 1976), 15.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹²⁴ Antony Flew, *Atheistic Humanism* (New York: Prometheus, 1993), 23.

¹²⁵ See Flew, *The Presumption of Atheism*, 20; and Flew, *Atheistic Humanism*, 23.

a discursive equivocality that not only interacts with theistic ideologies, but now non-Theistic ones as well.

∇

Within the following discourse we find a predominant reliance upon the conflation of ‘negative’ with Flew’s sense of ‘negation’—without or absence—taking the shape of an innate implicitness.

Chronologically, this begins slowly and then develops more broadly as the subject itself becomes more and more scholastically attractive. To begin, like Masterson, Stein (1980) avoids the strict usage of the positive vs. negative paradigm, but his delineation between two types of Atheism, designated by ‘having’ and ‘not having,’ still echoes Flew’s conception:

The prefix ‘a-’ can mean ‘not’ (or ‘no’) or ‘without.’ If it means ‘not,’ then we have as an atheist someone who is not a theist (i.e., someone who does not have a belief in a God or gods). If it means ‘without,’ then an atheist is someone without theism, or without a belief in God.¹²⁶

Furthermore, in dividing these two types between ‘Theological’ and ‘Atheistic’ he also re-translates the alpha privative ‘A’ as ‘denial’ for the former, and ‘without’ for the latter. This pairing pits the theological definition against the Atheistic one, as if they stem from two opposing sides. In what appears as his own depiction of Flew’s ‘onus of proof’ argument, Stein takes the theological definition—the ‘denial’ of the existence of God—as rhetorically designed to assist the theologian in arguing that there “are no atheists,” that the ‘Atheist’ would need to make a ‘leap of faith’ in order to come to this conclusion, which then eliminates the requirement of the Theist to “prove his position.”¹²⁷ Therefore, and in order to distinguish a practical differentiation between Theological and Atheological Atheism, he states: “If the atheist is simply without God, then he is not asserting anything [...] on the other hand, the theist is asserting the existence of something (God), so the burden of proof is on him.”¹²⁸ Additionally, Stein’s stipulation expresses a dependency on knowledge:

Denying something means that you have knowledge of what it is that you are being asked to affirm, but that you have rejected that particular concept. To be without a belief in God merely means that the term ‘God’ has no importance or possibly no meaning to you. Belief in God is not a factor in your life. Surely this is quite different from denying the existence of God.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Gordon Stein, “The Meaning of Atheism and Agnosticism” in Gordon Stein, ed. *An Anthology of Atheism and Rationalism* (New York: Prometheus, 1980), 3.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

While Flew and Stein share a number of similarities, the greatest of these is perhaps their mutual assertion that Atheism is a default position—inherent negation—encroached upon by a Theism that has yet to acknowledge its onus of responsibility.

With Smith's first publication in 1989 and second in 1991, this concept of negation begins to solidify a normative place within the discourse. Defined as "essentially negative in character," Smith's two-part conception of what he calls 'critical Atheism' is constructed in relation to either side's "respect to their different causes of nonbelief," on one end displaying an implicit 'absence of belief' by way of unfamiliarity, and on the other, an explicit 'critical deliberation.'¹³⁰ In both cases, though, he argues that at the "core of Atheism" there is an all-encompassing "lack of theistic belief."¹³¹ In this way, in its most basic form, Smith's Atheism reflects a specialized absence of belief, as an Atheist is not "primarily a person who *believes* that a god does *not* exist," but rather is a person who "does not *believe* in the existence of god [emphases in original]."¹³²

Like Stein's before him, Smith's distinction between 'believing not' and 'not believing' is aligned with the privative nature of the term's etymological roots. In clarifying the process of 'belief' that characterizes both Theism and Atheism, and thus abridging the former as "belief-in-god' and the latter as "no-belief-in-god,"¹³³ Smith places an emphasis on the innate negativity of the latter, so that, even when read as "no belief in a god or gods,"¹³⁴ his conception is still understood as either explicitly or implicitly, 'without God.' Likewise, as his notions are dependent upon a strict binary system that is itself dependent upon belief, as a 'descriptive term,' his Atheism might thus be contradictorily defined as a "particular kind of belief," divided between two broad categories.¹³⁵ Simply put, his explicit Atheism is defined as "the absence of theistic belief due to a conscious rejection of it," while his implicit Atheism reflects "the absence of theistic belief without a conscious rejection of it."¹³⁶

¹³⁰ George H. Smith, *Atheism: The Case Against God* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1989), 18.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹³⁴ George H. Smith, *Atheism, Ayn Rand, and Other Heresies* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1991), 58.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ Smith, *Atheism: The Case Against God*, 14.

The division between these two types is specific and complex, structured by means of criticism and ignorance. Explicit Atheism, positive in its assertion that the Theist's claim is false due to insufficient evidence, 'absurd or contradictory' claims, or an 'unintelligibility' concerning the concept of God, is defined as a deliberate *rejection*, clearly presupposing a "familiarity with theistic beliefs."¹³⁷ Echoing the parasitic nature of modern Atheism's first gradation, as a 'philosophical type,' Smith also localizes this explicit Atheism as being both critical and anti-theistic.¹³⁸ Conversely, his notion of implicit Atheism develops in direct opposition to the specific 'rejection' or 'denial' of explicit Atheism. That is, because he sees an individual who is "unacquainted with theism," such as those born without an "innate knowledge of the supernatural," including "the child with the conceptual capacity to grasp the issues involved, but who is still unaware of those issues," as being 'unconscious' of the belief that God exists, he easily defines this sort of individual as implicitly Atheist.¹³⁹ Until they are introduced to the existence of the Theist's God, they are "unable to affirm or deny its truth,"¹⁴⁰ and are thus defined simply by their absence of belief. Extending this absence even further, he applies this same logic to an individual who becomes consciously aware of the belief that God exists, but who then 'refuses to commit' to it, and thus remains either 'undecided' or 'indifferent.'¹⁴¹

While Smith's is the first discursive sample to appropriate the argument that children, because of their congenital ignorance about God's existence, are negative Atheists, his incorporation of 'negative' as relatable to a conscious awareness of, and then refusal to accept, the Theist's belief in the existence of God, stretches the limits of negative Atheism toward a much broader category that is forced to incorporate both ignorance and neutrality under the purview of implicitness. As we shall see, while the positive-explicit category remains roughly the same, this negative-implicit one continues to develop. This is especially the case with Martin's four publications (1990, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c) wherein the augmentation of negative Atheism begins to further divide the positive/negative paradigm between types such as narrow and broad, or strong and weak.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 17.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 14.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 15.

By adopting Buckley's and Hyman's arguments that Atheism derives out of the context of Western monotheism, Martin states that it is within this boundary that the term makes its "clearest application."¹⁴² Then, in adopting Smith's conception that an Atheist is "someone without a belief in God, not necessarily someone who believes that God does not exist,"¹⁴³ he defines positive Atheism as a 'special case' of negative Atheism, the two differentiated on one end by the belief that "there is no god or gods," and on the other as that "derived from the Greek root."¹⁴⁴ In this same way, he further supports Smith's contention that explicit denial is the leading characteristic that separates the positive from the negative. This is perhaps most apparent in his association of agnosticism as 'entailing' negative Atheism because they both consist of an absence of belief that is not explicitly denied: "Since agnostics do not believe in God, they are by definition negative atheists."¹⁴⁵

Though his conception seems repetitive of the discourse discussed thus far, Martin's differentiation between broad/narrow and strong/weak contributes a somewhat new perspective. Put simply, his broad positive Atheism consists of a "disbelief in all gods,"¹⁴⁶ while his narrow positive Atheism consists of "disbelief in a theistic God."¹⁴⁷ Conversely, his broad negative Atheism consists of "the absence of belief in any god or Gods," while his narrow negative Atheism consists of "the absence of belief in a theistic God."¹⁴⁸ This latter category receives further treatment in his *Atheism: A Philosophical Justification* wherein his conception of the broad and narrow forms of negative Atheism reflect a distinct post-Flew formula.

A negative atheist, if we understand theism in the way it has been understood in modern times, would simply be a person without a belief in a personal god. Atheism, so understood, would be compatible with deism, polytheism, and pantheism. However, this construction of atheism seems to conflict not only with the original Greek meaning, but also with what past and present professed Atheists have meant. Consequently, I use 'negative atheism' in its most fundamental sense to mean an absence of belief in any god or gods, not just the absence of belief in a personal god. Let us call this *the broad sense of negative atheism* [emphasis in original].¹⁴⁹

¹⁴² Michael Martin, "General Introduction" in Michael Martin, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Atheism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1.

¹⁴³ Michael Martin, *Atheism: A Philosophical Justification* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 463.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 464.

¹⁴⁵ Martin, "General Introduction," 2.

¹⁴⁶ Martin, "General Introduction," 2; He provides a similar definition in his *Atheism: A Philosophical Justification*, 465.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ Martin, *Atheism: A Philosophical Justification*, 465.

Divided further by degrees of resiliency or conviction, negative Atheism appears ‘weak’ because it does not share the strong explicit denial required of the positive Atheist. That is, merely being ‘without’ God is not necessarily to “deny the existence of any deity;” it could simply mean not having a belief in general.¹⁵⁰ By this we can infer that Martin’s positive Atheism, explicit in its strong and narrow denial of the Theist’s belief in the existence of God, is formed in contrast to the weak, narrow, and negative sense of Atheism that merely means any person who does not, implicitly, have a belief in the existence of a narrowly defined Theistic God.

With Martin we come again to a point of discursive transition, marked exclusively by his expanding the definition of negative Atheism as a general ‘absence’ of belief in any god or gods, which he defines narrowly—the foundation of positive Atheism—and broadly—an absence either by choice, or by ignorance. Out of this broadening scope we begin to see an amplification of the term far beyond the internalized border established by its modern genesis, making way for a re-emergence of the sort of expansive and generalized language we saw shaping the meaning of ἄθεος, exemplified by Martin with an appropriation of ‘Atheism’ into the arduous discourse on defining religion.

As an example, and by means of their comparatively ‘non-theistic’ nature, Buddhism, Jainism, and Confucianism each fall into Martin’s conception of Atheism due to their ‘lack’ of the Western monotheist’s belief in the existence of a singular omniscient deity. These non-theistic religions are thus negative Atheist religions, both narrow and broad. We see this quite clearly with his assessment of Buddhism:

To be sure, it is not disputed that belief in a god or gods is a part of Mahayana Buddhism. The numerous bodhisattvas, the Buddha Amitabha, and the cosmic Buddha nature seem to be like the gods or god of Western religion. What is disputed is whether original Buddhism was atheistic; or, what amounts to the same thing, whether Theravada Buddhism, which is generally recognized to be close to the original Buddhism, is atheistic.¹⁵¹

Basing these conclusions on previous discursive perspectives—Stroup (1968), Pike (1948), and Smart (1967)—his interpretations are noticeably filtered through the positive/negative discourse thus far discussed. As such, his classification of Jainism under the category of positive Atheism, and Confucianism—or at least Confucius—as negative Atheism, is further based upon an assessment that

¹⁵⁰ Michael Martin, “Atheism” in Tom Flynn, ed., *The New Encyclopedia of Unbelief* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2007), 88.

¹⁵¹ Michael Martin, “Atheism and Religion” in Michael Martin, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Atheism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 224.

sees the former as actively disbelieving that an “all-good, all-knowing, and all-powerful being who created the universe exists,”¹⁵² while he contends that the latter, Confucius, “did not hold the view that an all-good, all-knowing, and all-powerful God exists.”¹⁵³ Where we might criticize these conceptions for being overtly theological in their substantive views on the definition of ‘religion,’ and though we might concede that his argumentation is valid given his broad conception of ‘religion,’ they equally provide for our interests here evidence of a shift that seems to permeate the discourse to follow.

This ‘widening-the-scope’ of Atheism’s negative category seems in many ways like an accumulation of our analysis on ἄθεος and Atheism, a means by which both processes in defining these terms is applied to the larger definition of the concept itself. It also dictates a re-conceptualization wherein ‘Atheism’ is transmuted into an umbrella category under which a number of differing aspects of ‘being Atheist’ reside. For example, in Hiorth’s two leading publications (1995 and 2003) we see this discursive shift embodied not just by a differentiation between positive/negative, but between the moral interest concerning pure/impure types, of which there are three varieties of the former—Theoretical Atheism, Non-Theism, and General Atheism—and two of the latter—Positive Atheism and Practical Atheism.¹⁵⁴ Additionally, given this theoretical augmentation, he also refers to an indeterminate type of Atheism, the term used in relation to his five concepts, or in an unspecified manner, which he aptly calls ‘indefinite’ or ‘unspecified’ Atheism.¹⁵⁵ Once again, where Hiorth’s conceptions offer intriguing theoretical re-interpretations, it is perhaps more pertinent to acknowledge the way in which these sorts of broadening amplifications seem to warrant un-fettered and creative freedom, such as we find in the biased discourses of Baggini (2003) and Eller (2004 and 2010).

Where Hiorth’s Atheism is dependent upon the ability to speak and understand words in order to determine an individual an Atheist, thus dismissing any sense of implicit nature in defining negative Atheism,¹⁵⁶ Baggini and Eller re-establish the term’s implicit nature in order to set right what they perceive as an imbalance generated by the modernist perception of Atheism’s dependency on Theism. Baggini’s conception begins with a critical rejection of the idea that Atheism is, in any way, in need of

¹⁵² Ibid., 223.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 229.

¹⁵⁴ Finngjør Hiorth, *Introduction to Atheism* (Pune: Indian Secular Society, 1995), 21-22 and 34-35; see also Finngjør Hiorth, *Atheism in the World* (Oslo: Human-Etisk Forbund, 2003).

¹⁵⁵ Hiorth, *Introduction*, 35.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 23.

Theism, dismissing in particular the idea that it is a ‘negative’ position due to a flawed translational misperception, which he calls an ‘etymological fallacy.’¹⁵⁷ While his initial critique rightly points out the inherent necessity in understanding the discursive process essential in defining certain terms, his argument as a whole is heavily reliant upon a pre-conceived notion of Atheism as an innate position. This is demonstrated quite distinctly by his use of an illustrative hypothetical engagement with the process of belief. He hypothesizes a world that is utterly void of the belief that there exists a Loch Ness Monster, into which he inserts an individual who suddenly begins to believe that it does. Though this person provides no evidence, and is wholly unable to support their claim, others begin to believe the Monster exists as well, until these ‘Nessies’ soon make up the majority opinion. Now, those individuals who do not, nor never believed, in the existence of the Monster are given the title ‘Anessies,’ defined as such because their belief is seen as ‘parasitic’ on the normative or majority belief system held by their counterparts, the Nessies. Though both the Nessies and Anessies began as equals in a shared implicit *absence* of belief in the existence of the Monster, the latter is found to be dependent upon the former, an exchange Baggini finds to be unfairly balanced.¹⁵⁸

Beyond his argument about the natural origins of mankind without certain beliefs, this example is also illustrative of the positive/negative discourse being appropriated by an a priori bias, Flew’s ‘onus of proof’ comingling with Smith’s conception of Atheism-as-inherent. As well, Baggini’s attempt at rationalizing an Atheism without the ‘negative’ category, but that is still considered inherent, demonstrates a fascinating terminological shift. For him, Atheism is positive in that it is the initial position, encroached upon by a growing belief system that then defines it as parasitic upon its reified position. His Atheism, then, is not ‘negative’ in the sense that it is constructed via a negation of a belief, but is still ‘negative’ by means of Smith’s and Martin’s conceptions as signifying an implicit position—‘without,’ or simply the ‘absence,’ of a belief in God. This same sort of conclusion is taken up by Eller, but in a more specific manner pertaining to the ‘natural’ stage of Atheism out of which Theists convert.

Eller’s conception of ‘natural Atheism’ is constructed as a critical response to what he perceives as a ‘false dichotomy,’ such as Martin’s definition, that sees ‘believing not’ and ‘not believing’ as

¹⁵⁷ Baggini, *Atheism: A Very Short Introduction*, 7.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 8-10.

incorrectly considering two opposing positions: “indisputably, someone who maintains that there is no such thing as god(s) does not believe in them; to maintain otherwise is to be incoherent [...] someone who believes in god(s) maintains that there is such a thing; to maintain otherwise is equally incoherent.”¹⁵⁹ Adding to this, he argues that the proper dichotomy is that between Theism and Atheism, an opposition shaped by the fact that all individuals begin as ‘natural Atheists,’ without God, and then convert out of Atheism when they come to learn of, and take up, the belief that God exists. Seemingly heavily influenced by Flew’s ‘presumption of Atheism,’ Eller’s conception is a re-evaluation of the positive/negative paradigm, specifically in relation to the nature of Atheism after it begins to be defined along a dyadic axis.

Furthermore, this re-evaluation offers an interesting discursive interpretation, revealing a glimpse onto the influence these previous definitions have on one’s later conceptions. As such, his definition of negative Atheism as a ‘negative case,’ the process of “highlighting the flaws of theism” or pointing out the “reasons not to accept a belief in god(s),”¹⁶⁰ seems both counter to, yet also infected by, the concepts posed by Flew, Martin, and Smith. Likewise, his definition of positive Atheism, as demonstrating both “what is wrong with theism” as well as “what is right with atheism,”¹⁶¹ seems a continuation of the arguments made by most post-Flew scholars. More specifically, his argument that there is one, singular Atheism, and that it is naturally inborn in all people, seems heavily influenced by Smith’s conception of a negative Atheism defined merely by its complete lack of knowledge of the Theist’s belief in the existence of God. While appearing discordant with his own conceptions, Eller’s contribution is nevertheless discursively nuanced: an influenced critique about the paradigm he himself is using to defend his own conception of a default, inborn Atheism.¹⁶²

The discursive influences of Flew, Stein, Smith, Martin, and even Baggini and Eller, are markedly reified in our last four examples. For instance, Palmer’s (2010) is heavily motivated by Flew’s, Martin’s, and Smith’s explicit/implicit dichotomy, making the distinction that those individuals who

¹⁵⁹ Jack David Eller, “Chapter 1: What is Atheism?” in Phil Zuckerman, ed. *Atheism and Secularity—Volume 1: Issues, Concepts and Definitions* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2010), 6.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 7-8.

¹⁶² Jack David Eller, *Natural Atheism* (Austin: American Atheist Press, 2004), 161; as well, as a substitution for positive/negative he additionally offers an obscure dichotomy of ‘complete/incomplete.’

are simply “devoid of any god-belief,”¹⁶³ such as infants, are ‘negative Atheists’ in their unfamiliarity with the idea that God exists, and are thus ‘un-concerned’ with God’s existence:

In other words, perhaps we should agree that an atheist is not someone who, having tested the appropriate theological argument, concludes that these arguments are spurious and that no such being exists; but rather, that an atheist is someone marked by *the absence of belief*: he or she *simply has no belief in God*. On these terms, the atheist is, properly speaking, not concerned with the matter of God at all. For how can one repudiate something when one has no conception of what one is denying [emphases in original]?¹⁶⁴

Moreover, Palmer also borrows from Smith’s ‘core of Atheism,’ that the concept is defined simply by a lack of Theistic belief, by shaping his definition around the idea that both negative and positive Atheists—the latter becoming a catch-all term that defines both Christians and Hindus alike for denying each other’s beliefs¹⁶⁵—are negative Atheists in so far that both imply a lack of Theistic belief. In establishing his ‘Atheist’s Creed,’ he further reveals these influences in order to declare that negative Atheism is merely positive Atheism “without the arguments.”¹⁶⁶

Likewise, we see these ideas permeate texts meant for a wide and otherwise non-professional readership, such as Walters’ (2010) *Atheism: A Guide for the Perplexed*, and the wikipedia.org article on the concept, both of which divide it along the lines of positive/negative, explicit/implicit, and strong/weak. Walters simplistically defines this distinction under ‘overt disbelief,’ as well as between, “(a) positive atheism, an active disbelief in God,” and “(b) negative atheism, the absence of belief in God.”¹⁶⁷ Additionally, and by following Palmer, he declares that all positive Atheists are “necessarily negative atheists,” but that the “converse doesn’t hold,” adding a further subdivision between ‘militant’—the direct rejection of Theism in a specifically polemical way—and ‘moderate’—an Atheism that does not proselytize.¹⁶⁸ The Wikipideia.org article is a bit more detailed, briefly covering the geneses of the term, as well as offering a number of statistical and philosophical sources pertaining to the range of Atheism. However, the section on the ‘definition’ of Atheism is specifically directed

¹⁶³ Michael Palmer, *The Atheist’s Creed* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2010), 16.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Palmer states: For when a Christian rejects, say, the gods of Hinduism, he or she presumably has reasons for this rejection, and so acts, towards the Hindu at least, as a positive atheist. In this respect, all theists act like positive atheists when they provide grounds for denying the existence of all other gods except their own.” Palmer, *The Atheist’s Creed*, 18.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 19.

¹⁶⁷ Kerry Walters, *Atheism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Continuum, 2010), 12.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

toward the differentiation between positive/negative and implicit/explicit, including two independent articles on each.¹⁶⁹

While Walters,' Baggini's, and the Wikipedia.org article are meant for a readership beyond the limits of 'academia,' Bullivant's introductory definition in his and Ruse's co-edited *Oxford Handbook of Atheism* seems slanted more toward a consensual discussion for scholars inside the academy. However, in that it appears as a protraction of his own previous publications, the language he uses is also clearly influenced by the discourse discussed above. For example, in his 2011 response to the NSRN glossary, he puts forth a definition more focused on 'belief' than 'commitment,' which he argues is far less controversial: "a lack of belief in the existence of a god or gods."¹⁷⁰ Then, in his *The Salvation of Atheists* (2012) he expands this definition so that it is more reflective of the discourse pertaining to the positive/negative dichotomy:

For the purposes of this study, then, the word 'atheist' will signify the following: *a person who is without a belief in God (or gods)*. This encompasses both those who believe that God does not exist, and those who, while not necessarily disbelieving, do not possess a belief in God's existence either. Among others who follow this broad, neutral definition of 'atheist,' these two categories are often designated 'positive atheism' (believing-not) and 'negative atheism' (not-believing) respectively (e.g. Robertson 1970: 238; Flew 1976: 14; Martin 2007a: 1) [emphasis in original].¹⁷¹

For utilitarian reasons, Bullivant fully adopts this positive/negative paradigm for his introductory definition in *The Oxford Handbook* as well. After specifying that his definition is built upon two decisions based on the meaning and scope of the alpha privative 'A,' as well as its relationship to Theism, his 'Atheism' becomes a broad absence, thus permitting it to function "as an umbrella concept, comprising a range of significantly related positions and phenomena."¹⁷² In this way, his negative Atheism is defined as being "consonant with our basic definition of *absence* [emphasis in original]," which encompasses differing types of 'agnosticism,' a concept itself based on both evidence and indecisiveness, that further incorporates "any person who does not, at present, have a belief in the

¹⁶⁹ Granted, while Wikipedia.org should not be regarded as a trustworthy or academic source, as a source for the public's perception on certain concepts, it does offer an insight into how individuals outside the academy come across definitions and discourse. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atheism> (accessed 7 July 2014).

¹⁷⁰ <http://nonreligionandsecularity.files.wordpress.com/2011/11/nsrn-terminology-conference-11-may-2011-stephen-bullivant-atheism-stream1.pdf> (accessed 7 July 2014).

¹⁷¹ Stephen Bullivant, *The Salvation of Atheists and Catholic Dogmatic Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 16.

¹⁷² Stephen Bullivant, "Introduction" in Stephen Bullivant and Michael Ruse, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Atheism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 14.

existence of a God or gods.”¹⁷³ His positive Atheist is then defined as “someone who is not only without such a belief, but [who] holds a specific belief,” so that “positive atheism implies negative atheism, but not vice versa,”¹⁷⁴ an almost direct reference to Palmer’s ‘Atheist Creed,’ and Walter’s *Guide for the Perplexed*.

Lastly, and in order to make clearer sense of his definition, he offers a ‘taxonomic’ comparison:

To adopt a zoological metaphor, it might be helpful to think of atheism as a ‘family’, divisible into two ‘genera’ (negative and positive), each made up of various ‘species’ (agnosticism, Promethean antitheism, etc.). This taxonomic approach to atheism permits exploration of a diverse range of stances and worldviews, united by their shared absence of theism.¹⁷⁵

While his use of positive/negative is here made in order to provide his edited volume a ‘standard’ definition upon which each contributing voice might relate, it is also heavily influenced by a discursive genealogy that, one might argue, is less about offering a meaning of Atheism that might best support a wide-ranging discussion, and more about the influences of that discourse on how a concept comes to mean what it means to certain people at a certain time. This is perhaps best illustrated by his direct correlation with the implicitness of Atheism-as-absence that he locates between ‘Atheism’ and other alpha privative terms: “hence anaerobic respiration occurs in the absence of oxygen, but it is not, in itself, necessarily *opposed* to oxygen [emphasis in original].”¹⁷⁶



With this final example, our survey of the positive/negative paradigm and its influence on the discourse on defining Atheism comes to a point of termination. From here, we turn to this Chapter’s conclusion with a brief summary of the examinations made herein, as well as a further substantiation about how a discursive analysis such as this might prove beneficial to our Ethnographic Criticism in Part Two.

3.6—Conclusion: The Process, Not a ‘Standard’ Definition

Bullivant’s definition in *The Oxford Handbook* is designed for the explicit purpose of supplying a stipulation that might express the intent of each of the various subject areas and genres within his

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 15.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 14.

edited volume. For this reason, he makes the case that supplying a “generally agreed-upon, serviceable (if not perfect), scholarly definition,” offers a great deal of ‘utility’ to the process.¹⁷⁷ This is not, however, a simple task. As he rightly points out:

A too-narrow definition may inadvertently airbrush out all kinds of interesting potential data, while a too-broad one may capture a large number of ‘atheisms’ with few meaningful connections between them. Alternatively, a definition that is too idiosyncratic, or culturally bound, may obviate comparisons with other work ostensibly on the same subject. Furthermore, and quite obviously, the sheer lack of agreement creates a great deal of, at best, time-consuming effort, and at worst, hopeless confusion, for all concerned.¹⁷⁸

As he fittingly articulates here, stipulating a definition is difficult work. It requires an intimate knowledge of the definitions that have come before, and in order to be both a summation and a fresh contribution, it must subsequently be built upon some sort of pre-existing discourse. Bullivant does not fail in this endeavor. However, where we might suggest a failure on his part, based on our discursive analysis herein, is in the offering of a definition at all. That is, where he makes the argument that a ‘standard’ definition is necessary when “drawing together dozens of scholars, from widely diverse disciplines, and several continents,” so that his assemblage becomes a “microcosm of the scholarly study of atheism,”¹⁷⁹ his mistake is in attempting to create a definition that might broadly address each of these discourses, yet be narrow enough to stay true to the subject under examination. This is further demonstrated by his reasoning: “with different authors defining the term in different ways, like-for-like comparisons between chapters would become next to impossible.”¹⁸⁰ He refers to this conglomerate of voices as a ‘Babel Handbook of Atheism,’ conceding that while it might offer some value in that “each individual chapter could well constitute an exemplary and illuminating piece of scholarship,” in the end it would inevitably become what he calls a “frustrating morass of contradictions and cross-purposes.”¹⁸¹ He thus laments: “such, writ large, is the state of the scholarly study of atheism today.”¹⁸² Again, this is not incorrect. Nor is it that absurd of a methodology, especially in consideration of the differences we have seen here on how the term has been defined. However, for our intentions, and since we are focused here less on defining the term itself, and more on how individuals—such as the characters we will examine in Part Two—go about using, as well as contributing to, this discourse, it is rather impractical.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 20.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 13.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

As we stated in the introduction, our use of Discourse-as-theory, and thus our analysis of the different ways in which this term has been defined, has given us the opportunity to replace the necessity of summarizing this ‘frustrating morass of contradictions’ into a generalized and essential stipulation, with a focus on identity construction. That is, by examining this discourse, and in that way gaining a comprehensive understanding about the influences that shaped it, we find ourselves here less in need of a ‘stipulation’ going forward, as we now have a larger perception of the ways in which an individual might use this discourse—or, if nothing else, be emulative of it—in their process of identification. We might even argue that this is the precise point in which we could stipulate a ‘lack of utility’ in Bullivant’s pragmatic definition for the *Oxford Handbook*: rather than create a stipulation that might encompass every voice within the Handbook, describing each of those Chapters as contributing voices to a discourse on the broader ‘meaning’ of Atheism not only alleviates the need to begin the text with a ‘definition,’ it also provides a more open and accessible comprehension of the various ways in which the term has come to be identified. For this reason, and for our intentions herein, rather than state here what Atheism ‘is,’ or ‘might be,’ for the benefit of our analysis of McEwan’s novels in Part Two, our discursive understanding drawn out above likewise appears far more useful than a definition.

This brings us once again to our earlier example of Greene’s representation of Catholicism in *The Power and the Glory*. As we previously stated, in order to approach the novel with the intent of using it as a source for interpreting a particular type of Catholicism, we would need to have already established an external understanding about the concept ‘Catholicism’ that might be internalized within its pages. This would demand a comprehension of both the historical—lexical—and theoretical—essentialist—influences that might shape it. As we have seen, this would normally be resolved via a stipulated definition. Yet, our analysis here has equally provided for us the same sort of broad and external comprehension. In this way, when we begin analyzing the Atheism within McEwan’s two novels, such as that represented by Bernard and Joe teased above, we can link that internalized representation with this external perception. Then, as we begin to further assess how it is that they shape these identities, such as through the use of a particular rational thinking, or in dependent reference to an established ‘Theistic’ position, we will be doing so with a more distinct assurance about the ‘meaning’ of that Atheism in that specific context. Lastly, and in a more ‘anthropological’ fashion,

we will equally be free of any sort of bias or pre-determined ideas about whether that Atheism is ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ as it pertains to a ‘stipulation,’ either broadly or narrowly defined. This has been, in simplistic terms, the purpose of this Chapter.



With the pragmatic use of Discourse Analysis established here we can likewise conclude with our larger introduction of Ethnographic Criticism. Beginning with our discussion on how it grew out of the Literary Turn’s influence on both ethnographic construction and the reading of fiction as ethnography, as well as on similar influences of the Ethical Criticism that predominates the scholarship of McEwan’s fiction, this addition rounds out this introduction by providing a sense of clarity about the concept on which we intend to focus our examination. However, as we enter this Thesis’ second Part, and before we begin that analysis, we must first turn to a short, yet essential, discussion that will, on one end, present a brief description of the experimental style and structure of our examination, while on the other offer a critical assessment about the possible consequences that might arise from treating fictions as if they are ethnographies. This will additionally consider how our doing this might alter the place of the author within that sort of consolidation, and thus further our discussion about the dangers of confusing ‘fact’ with ‘fiction’ in reflection of the ‘ownership’ that coincides with textual description.

Part Two: Experiment

CHAPTER FOUR—ETHNOGRAPHIC CRITICISM: STYLE AND STRUCTURE

“Joy: I hear the “Kiriwina” [another name for the Trobriands; more strictly the northern province of Boyowa]. I get ready; little gray, pinkish huts. Photos. Feeling of ownership: It is I who will describe them or create them. Ashore; comical fences; miserable houses on pilings; [...]. The women ran away. Under each house implements for making pots. Yellow ochre pots lie under each house. –I try to talk to them; they run away or tell lies.”

—Bronislaw Malinowski, *Diary Entry*, 1 December 1917¹

4.1—Introduction: Ethnographic Criticism Described

Throughout the three Chapters of Part One, our description of Ethnographic Criticism performed two duties. First, through three distinct reviews of established methodological and theoretical discourse, we situated the *meaning* of Ethnographic Criticism within a solid foundation. In this way, rather than claim that it arose ex nihilo, linking it to notions of literary anthropology, literary criticism, and discourse analysis, provided for us a base upon which to depend, as well as build. Second, by citing these influences, we equally revealed how we might *conduct* an Ethnographic Criticism for our chosen concept.

In the first Chapter, our examination about the theoretical shift in defining the ‘doing’ of anthropology as the construction of a text—rather than as just observations made in the field—led us to a discussion about how *writing* ethnography like a novel, might lead to *reading* a novel for ethnographic insight. This in turn provided for us our own justification, a permission of sorts to do the same, albeit somewhat imprecisely defined. In the second Chapter this was then substantiated by our examination of Ethical Criticism, and the manner with which this type of textual analysis is similar to, but not identical of, reading fiction ‘ethnographically.’ In order to combine these two methodological approaches so that we might better define our own, we then ‘ethnocritically’ married them in an effort to focus more on identity construction within the context of our chosen sources. In this way, not only did this better clarify the uniqueness of our approach, it also christened it as the offspring of this union, revealing particular hereditary traits alongside its own individuality.

¹ Bronislaw Malinowski, *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term*, Norbert Guterman, trans. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967), 140.

Likewise, this ‘uniqueness’ was further established by our examination of Atheism in the third Chapter, and the means with which we ‘defined’ that concept. By locating our need to construct Ethnographic Criticism as a result of the ambiguity currently afflicting the meaning of the term itself, our choice to examine the discursive elements that have contributed to its definition, rather than ‘define’ it, offered for us a unique opportunity to both remove ourselves from this equivocality, while at the same time construct an ‘external’ comprehension about how the concept might be ‘internalized’ in McEwan’s novels. Said differently, our examination of the term’s ‘second-order’ discourse—how it has been defined—likewise offered us a broad insight about its ‘first-order’ discourse—how individuals have either defined themselves, or been defined by others. While the intent of that Chapter was not directly focused on providing our Ethnographic Criticism another methodological component—especially as our use of Discourse Analysis was designed as a ‘Discourse-as-theory’—our use of it has nevertheless given our approach another layer of methodological nuance. In this way, while McEwan’s novels will be treated here as ‘ethnographic texts,’ they will also be considered as ‘discursive samples:’ the Atheism presented within exemplifying both a holistic representation, as well as a discursive example, of a concept bound within the context of its creation.

Where at this point we might ‘traditionally’ move from here to our actual use of Ethnographic Criticism, because of the experimental nature of this analysis we must first pause to consider two fundamental issues. We provide these here, rather than in the conclusion, not only because of their influence on the style and structure of that analysis, but because they also offer a particular ‘justification’ for our not merely presenting it in a manner more expected of a case-study examination. Our reasoning for this is partly due to our marriage between the methodologies of the first and second Chapters, and how that in turn influenced our shift from reading fiction ‘*ethnographically*’ to reading fiction ‘*as ethnography*.’ This is also due to the fact that our reading McEwan’s novels like this is the result of a fascinating marital defect, a blurring of the distinction between ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’ that likewise might lead us toward the notion that *everything is fiction*, and thus entirely ‘made-up.’ Therefore, while with our analysis of the identity construction within *Black Dogs* and *Enduring Love* we might identify these texts as fictional representations without the requisite need of an ancillary ethnographic account—Eriksen’s ‘description,’ rather than ‘source’—our use will move beyond this type of demarcation by reading them instead as uniquely ‘fictionalized’ auto-ethnographies. While this

will indeed benefit our argument that the novel might offer as authentic or authoritative a source for cultural insight as the ethnography, this transmutation likewise alters the differentiation between writing that is designed and writing that is invented. Explicating these issues will not only assist the reader in understanding the reasoning behind the style and structure of the ‘text’ that follows, it will also act as a theoretical reinforcement for our argument concerning the dangers and repercussions of using such an unorthodox approach. For the sake of pragmatic clarity, and to borrow from our earlier structural format in the first Chapter, we might delineate this discussion as guided by ‘discourse’ and ‘signature.’

4.2—Discourse, Signature, and the Role of the Author

As we saw in the first Chapter, within the context of the Literary Turn *discourse* essentially means ‘form’ and ‘format.’ Stylistically, it also means that a ‘text’ needs to be able to represent or recreate a specific concept—such as Atheism—in such a way that it becomes mimetic of ethnographic style. That is, it needs to look, and read, like ethnography. For this reason, the language that it uses to do this tells its story with a particular voice. This is eventually defined by a type of ‘realism,’ a style of writing ‘borrowed’ from fiction, and employed in order to give one’s text the ability to evocatively present a complete representation of a total culture by means of selective parts. Affirmed throughout our review by examples ranging from Malinowski’s *Argonauts*, to the auto-ethnographies of Jackson, Knab, and the Prices, this realism also foundationally encouraged the self-reflective style of the latter, as well as the experimental justification for examining the novel as a ‘case-study,’ ‘source,’ or ‘description’ of a particular social reality.

However, there appears here a worrying oversight, the origins of which we might locate within our discussion of the ethnographic novel and the novel as ethnography at the end of the first Chapter. This derives exclusively from an issue concerning narrative style, and how the character of the voice telling us the story has radical consequences on how we might perceive the insight from within. For reasons of practicality, a short outline of the narrative styles thus far examined might assist here. To begin, if an ethnography is written from a third-person perspective and omnisciently provides details about a culture, we might classify it as a ‘traditional,’ ‘realist,’ or ‘functionalist’ ethnography, exemplified by Malinowski’s *Argonauts*. If it is written from a third-person omniscience, but focuses, like a novel, on

a particular individual or individuals, as if they are characters, then it becomes something akin to a ‘life-history’ or ‘case-history,’ such as we saw with *Tuhami* or *Moroccan Dialogues*. Then, if the narrative style shifts from third to first-person, wherein the author—ethnographer—transforms him or herself into a ‘quasi-insider’ in order to become a character within the text itself, it becomes an auto-ethnography, such as those cited above. In these ways, we might rightly conclude that just as the writing style alters the type of ethnography being constructed, so it also changes the type of ethnographic insight we might derive from it. We should also note that this does not change when we shift our attention from writing texts to reading them, such as our use of the novel ‘as ethnography.’

This brings us to the issue of *signature*. Signature refers to the author’s role in constructing how the culture is revealed within the text, and thus represents a conscious decision about how he or she intends to literarily ‘recreate’ that culture. However, this is also a stylistic decision, which, after the Literary Turn, leads to a number of creative illustrations, such as auto-ethnography. With these examples, signature equally addresses the ‘existence’ or ‘presence’ of the author in the text. That is, where ethnographies were once exclusively written from a strict omniscience—the ‘X’ do this—a more creative means of construction begins to ‘reveal’ the author in the text: I saw the ‘X’ do this. This revelation, the exposure of the method in the magic, equally alerts us to the fact that the ethnographic text, though factually scientific in its intent, is just as equally ‘fictional’ because it is an artifice formed by conscious choices and shaped by literary and stylistic influences.

While this further assists our discussion above about the different classifications of ethnographic writing, when we transition from writing to reading, this quite subtly influences how we might determine a novel as either an ethnographic source or description. As we recall, Eriksen defined the former as ‘substantiating evidence,’ the novel-as-source acting as a secondary text to an ethnographic one that, while offering cultural insight, is still dependent upon that ethnography in order for the reader to truly appreciate or understand how the culture is being fictionally revealed. As an example, he cited Mittleholzer’s *A Morning at the Office*. Conversely, the novel-as-description is able to stand on its own: the culture revealed within is so nuanced and specific that it appears like an ethnography. As an example, Eriksen cited Naipaul’s, *A House for Mr. Biswas*. With the latter, and based on the narrative style of *A House for Mr. Biswas*, we can agree that his citation is correct. After all, it reads like an

ethnography, but more specifically, like an example of our second classification above: a biographical third-person account like *Tuhami* or *Moroccan Dialogues*. However, when we consider the way an auto-ethnography stylistically presents its data via a self-reflective, and thus first-person narrative, and then equally consider that after the Literary Turn this style of writing is not only accepted, but arguably appears more accurate than a ‘traditional’ ethnography, then our perception of the author’s signature takes on an entirely different meaning. This brings us to our ‘fascinating defect.’

While *A House for Mr. Biswas* might act as an exemplary ‘ethnographic description,’ and thus provide for us a theoretical rationale for reading fiction as ethnography—or, if nothing else, ‘ethnographically’—it also inspires a rather specific critique. As an ethnographic description, we can read this novel like an ethnography, justified in large part by its looking like a third-person omniscient case-history. This is, as we have seen, a progressive conclusion made in part by the creative writing style of texts like *Tuhami* and *Moroccan Dialogues*. Because these ethnographies employed a style more literarily similar to a novel, so this novel might be accepted as something applicable to our interests in researching an individual’s culture. However, even with this legitimized via our discussion of the Literary Turn’s influence on writing and reading ethnographic ‘texts,’ there appears here an oversight concerning this same method of experimentation with a novel that presents its data via a narrative style similar to a self-reflective auto-ethnography. In other words, because the textualized culture found within any sort of ethnographic text is dependent upon an author for its very existence, and because acknowledging that author’s role in shaping the ‘voice’ of that text is integral to our perception of the culture revealed within, when reading a novel that reads like a first-person auto-ethnography, we need to consider how this might drastically modify the character of the novelist in that process.

As an example of our meaning here, let us consider Jackson’s curious self-reflective self-inclusion in *Barawa*. Within his text he has fictionalized himself so that he might become a ‘character’ alongside the ‘fictionalized’ forms of his informants. In this way he is just as equally ‘manufactured’ and ‘invented’ as they are. Yet, he still exists in the ‘real world.’ We can locate him using the sort of modern technology applicable to us in proving his ‘realness,’ such as his profile on Wikipedia.org,² or

² [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Jackson_\(anthropologist\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Jackson_(anthropologist)) (accessed 4 August 2014).

his faculty description at Harvard University's website.³ He exists, alongside us, as a fully formed and living individual. We might also do the same with his manufactured informants by locating them 'in the field' or, if nothing else, by locating evidence of their existence that could corroborate their 'real world' existence. This is not too unlike our earlier discussion in the Introduction about the 'realness' of Henry VIII, Ann Boleyn, and Thomas Cromwell in Mantel's *Wolf Hall* and *Bring up the Bodies*. However, this does not work for the novelist, for two reasons. First, the novelist does not 'create' him or herself as a character in the same way as Jackson does in *Barawa*. If they did, their text would cease being a 'novel' in the sense that the story they are telling is merely a 'fictionalized' version of their lives, and would thus be classified as a type of self-reflective auto-ethnography. Second, because the novelist is not fictionalizing him or herself, the narrator of their text is a wholly different and entirely separate individual. While we might be able to isolate traits or references that might link these two individuals, they are, for reasons of literary style, completely different individuals. In this way, when we read a first-person fictional narrative as ethnography, the author of that novel ceases to exist. This is a stylistic consequence, just as much as it is a pragmatic one. On one end, even though we know that the novelist has created the text, and though we understand that they are the sole author, when we filter our perception via an ethnographic lens, we must also accept that the 'author' whose signature we find throughout is not the author who actually wrote it. On the other, acknowledging that a first-person narration has both an 'external' and an 'internal' author would mean that we would be required to assess these sorts of texts from a 'hybridized' or 'two-author' perspective. This would not only drastically alter how we might interpret this sort of text 'ethnographically,' it would likewise require a multi-layered discursive approach on a number of external and internal levels. While this is not an otherwise impractical style of analysis, it is not the same as using fiction 'as ethnography.'

To further explain the distinction here, let us turn from Jackson to our chosen texts. While we might acknowledge that McEwan is the author of these novels, and in that way also acknowledge that they were shaped and formed from his imagination, Jeremy and Joe are the ones who are speaking to us. They are the ones shaping their respective narratives, sharing their experiences, and providing us with first-person details about Atheism, either as it is perceived, or self-defined. For these reasons, when we empathetically enter their world by reading their accounts, such as we might do when reading an

³ <http://hds.harvard.edu/people/michael-d-jackson> (accessed 4 August 2014).

ethnography, we are entering *their* world, not McEwan's. Thus, because they are first-person narratives, and because we will be examining them as ethnographic descriptions, their transition from novels-as-description to novels-as-ethnography dictates an entirely different sort of analytical approach. Therefore, in order to examine them as ethnographic descriptions, such as Eriksen did with *A House for Mr. Biswas*, we would need to assess them as 'amateur insider accounts,' rather than 'novels.'

To be a bit more specific, in order to read them as ethnographic descriptions our examination will need to treat them as certain types of auto-ethnography: *Black Dogs* as 'auto-ethnographic' in that Jeremy is an outsider, writing from an insider's perspective; and *Enduring Love* as 'auto-ethnographic' in that Joe is an insider, writing from within an insider's perspective. By shaping our analysis in this way, McEwan can play no part in our examination. Rather, we will need to transition him into a realm neither like, nor unlike, Barthe's post-structuralist conception of the 'death of the author.' However, where Barthe's removal was made in order to eliminate the limitations we might find in recognizing the author's influence on the text itself,⁴ ours is made for us by mere methodological consequence. That is, while this sort of experimentation might seem like our own creation, it should more accurately be perceived as a continual point along the progression that started with the Literary Turn, which is perhaps best exemplified by the blurring of fact/fiction in the ethnographic novel. Only here, we might argue that it is a bit more theoretically realized. By classifying a novel as a 'description,' which then defines its cultural insight as independent of any existing ethnography, and then in considering how the style of that novel might dictate the type of insight it provides us, when it comes to declaring who it is who 'authors' a first-person ethnographic description, our inevitable conclusion would argue in favor of the individual *actually* telling the story. In the case of *Black Dogs* and *Enduring Love*, the 'authors' of these texts are Jeremy and Joe. This is, perhaps, the central inspiration for the style and structure of our analysis to follow, and it equally inspires a slight emendation of our hypothesis from the Introduction: if we were to read a novel as an auto-ethnography, defined as such because it appears to have been written by the character telling us the story, rather than the novelist who authored it, what would our analysis of that novel look like? The 'text' that follows is our answer.

⁴ Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author" in Roland Barthes, *Image / Music / Text*, Stephen Heath, trans. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 142-7.

4.3—Conclusion: A Text Meant to Shock

The following case-study will be presented as an independent ‘text:’ a fictionalized first-person analysis of two primary source accounts focused on Atheist identity construction. These accounts will likewise be described as having been written by two individuals—identified as ‘Jeremy’ and ‘Joe’—who exist wholly separate from Ian McEwan’s imagination. In a similar way, the author of this ‘text’ will be a fictionalized version of the author of this Thesis, a modified literary formulation reflective of the fictional inclusion of the author within an auto-ethnography: where an auto-ethnography fictionalizes the ethnographer’s data in order to achieve a more literary accent, this text will fictionalize a textual analysis in order to achieve a more ethnographic one. Additionally, because it is the result of the marriage we have spoken of throughout this Thesis, it should also be understood as an amalgamation of the literary experimentation we saw with Jackson, Knab, and the Prices, and the close thematic literary criticism we saw in texts like Schemberg’s “Achieving At-one-ment.” For these reasons, it will take on the appearance of a unique type of consolidation, a cross between a short analytical monograph and a specialized journal article. Likewise, this correlation is not only reflective of the length, format, and aesthetic design of the text, but of the content as well. In regard to the latter, and because it is the result of the discourses described in the first, second, and third Chapters, in some instances there will appear echoes of the theoretical discussions found within this Thesis’ Part One, such as the permission of experimental approaches in researching difficult cultural categories—like Atheism—as well as substantiating arguments about the influence of discourse on identity construction. These echoes are by all means intentional, and are used in order to not only link the text’s theoretical base to the arguments made herein, but to add a more literarily ‘real’ feel to the narrative itself so that it can ‘stand alone.’

Furthermore, while it might ‘go without saying’ that this experimentation, like Crapanzano’s *Tuhami* or Dwyer’s *Moroccan Dialogues*, is meant to ‘shock,’ it is also meant as a continuation of the theoretical disturbances initiated and inspired by those texts. As such, its genesis derives from within that discursive sphere of influence, not only as another point along the progression begun with the Literary Turn, but as a step forward that equally challenges the same normative ideologies contested by those experimentations. In other words, just as *Tuhami* and *Moroccan Dialogues* led to the ethnographic novel and the fictionalization of ethnographic data in the name of literary adaptation, so

this analysis will represent a measured response: a reflection of the co-existence of the novel *and* the ethnography as correlative siblings, that also speaks to the reality that any textual representation is, as Malinowski claimed, ‘described’ and ‘created’ by the author’s intentions.

To conclude, then, while this text is the result of a certain ‘defect,’ the familial offspring of the experimentation inspired by these preceding examples, and since it is reminiscent of Geertz’s metaphorical description of the ethnographer as a ‘mule’ unsure of his or her identity after the Literary Turn—though less a ‘bastard-type’ than a ‘bi-racial’ amalgamation—the way that we have chosen to design this analysis should also be recognized as a critical reminder of the marriage that methodologically inspired its creation. More specifically, our choice of adopting this stylistic ‘fictionalization’ is not only meant to assist our analysis of McEwan’s writing by making his characters ‘real,’ it is also designed to remind the reader that doing this, and in essence, by re-evaluating the difference between ‘fiction’ and ‘ethnography,’ we are precariously moving into a theoretical discourse where *everything is fiction*. In this way, not only will this be an example of the ‘merits’ in using such a ‘non-traditional’ approach—such as Ethnographic Criticism—as a means of achieving a certain type of cultural comprehension, it will equally provide a cautionary criticism about the risks of doing that to a certain extreme. In other words, while the discussions in Part One have worked to establish this Thesis’ ‘plot’—the description of Ethnographic Criticism—the following ‘text’ will be a physical example of its ‘sub-plot:’ the repercussions of reading fiction as ethnography. After this analysis, and for the benefit of our argument that this might determine that all texts are ‘fictional,’ we will present a more specific elucidation of this differentiation in Part Three.

Ethan G. Quillen

The Merits of Non-Tradition

Amateur Textual Sources, and the Establishment of an 'Ethnographic Understanding' of Late Twentieth-Century British Atheism



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THE MERITS OF NON-TRADITION

Amateur Textual Sources, and the Establishment of an 'Ethnographic Understanding' of Late Twentieth-Century British Atheism.

As a concept of inquiry, Atheism is—at present—a very disorganized ideology. That is, while Atheists are not shy in their critiques of organized religion, they themselves are not necessarily organized into what might be considered a 'tribe' or easily accessible cultural unit. Likewise, there persists an equally disorganized ambiguity in defining the term itself. For these reasons, as well as in light of a lack of established ethnography on British Atheism, this study will attempt to mitigate the equally difficult task of conducting a 'traditional' participant-observation of Atheism by using a non-traditional approach. That is, this examination will offer an alternative means with which to formulate an 'ethnographic understanding' about how Atheists construct their identities by analytically relying on non-traditional sources written by two 'ethnographic insiders.' By utilizing these sources as different types of 'auto-ethnography,' the intent of this approach will be to formulate a cultural comprehension about Atheist identity construction, as it is expressed through dialogical and interactional validation, along a spectrum of nominal and virtual differentiation. As discursive sources, these texts will function as substitutions, and thus make the argument that in situations where it might be difficult to conduct a traditional ethnographic interpretation, a more experimental reliance upon the non-traditional can present something akin to an equally authentic, if not also authoritative, cultural insight.

To Ian

For without whom this would not be possible

“Storytellers know that people enjoy tales that explain to them the origin of things, the way things come to be the way they are. This story is no different. Every story has an author, some teller of lies. Do not imagine that a storyteller is unaware of the effect of every word they choose. Do not suppose for a moment that an impartial observer exists.”

—Naomi Alderman, *The Liars Gospel*, 259-260

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INTRODUCTION: CONTRIBUTION AND STRUCTURE

The purpose of this analysis is to defend the use of seemingly non-traditional—amateur—sources for their ethnographic insight on British Atheism between the years 1985 and 2000. I have chosen to use these sources for three reasons. First, there is currently a lack of more traditional types of ethnography on the subject of Atheism within this context (see the in-process works of Engelke,¹ Mumford,² Catto and Eccles,³ and Aston⁴). As well, current definitions of Atheism have been increasingly established upon otherwise ambiguous origins (Quillen 2015), making it difficult to clearly specify what it is we mean when we use the term beyond a very broad and general stipulation. Lastly, Atheists are—at present—not very well organized,⁵ so that a direct and specific focus on Atheism-as-identity suffers drastically from a lack of organization analogous to a ‘tribe’ or ‘cultural unit.’

My non-traditional sources represent two distinctly ‘ethnographic’ points-of-view. They were written by individuals within the context of my inquiry, and are both auto-ethnographic (Marcus and Fischer 1986, Fernea 1989, Reed-Danahay 1997, and Sikes 2006) in nature. Moreover, they are in many ways indicative of pre-functionalist sources, such as those that came before Malinowski’s (1922) *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. As well, while they were written by two individuals who show no relation to, nor familiarity with, one another, their insights are rather interestingly correlative. These insights, which I hope to elucidate more clearly below, offer an ideal source for how Atheism is progressively defined within a particular context. It should also be noted that though neither of these authors admit formal training in participant-observation, nor in ethnographic construction, their texts mimic many ethnographic themes and styles, which I believe is quite advantageous. Lastly, because they do not function as ‘true’ ethnography, and nor should they be defined as such—due in large part to the amateur nature of their construction—I will be using them as discursive sources (Gee 2005, Fairclough 2003, von Stuckrad 2003, 2010, 2013, and Taira 2013), textual representations of particular language usage, with which I will attempt to form a sort of ‘ethnographic understanding.’

Structurally, this analysis will be divided into three parts. In the first, I will briefly *stipulate* the precarious nature of ‘defining’ Atheism, and how that issue leads to a discursive-based focus on ‘identification.’ In the second, I will *describe* both the texts, and the authors, as well as how they might mimic, and thus serve, as ethnographic sources. In the third, I will *analyze* the Atheism described by these individuals using Jenkins’ (2004) two-part binary paradigm of nominal/virtual and similarity/difference, which are in turn dependent upon notions of interactional validation. To *conclude*, I will reiterate my reasons for turning to non-traditional ethnographic sources, as well as defend my use of amateur texts in relation to the more experimental aspects of modern—or perhaps, post-modern—theories of anthropology.

¹ Matthew Engelke, “In spite of Christianity: Humanism and its Others in Contemporary Britain” (*Non-Religion and Secularity Research Network Annual Lecture*: London School of Economics, 28 November 2012), 10-11. (Available to download via the Economic and Social Research

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Council website at: <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-000-22-4157/outputs/read/933e529e-a881-4ac2-9b7b-324f94acb06a>. Accessed 12 January 2014)

² Lorna Mumford, "Atheism and Anthropology: Researching Atheism and Self-Searching

³ See their research profiles, and an overview of the project, on the University of Lancaster webpage via: [http://www.research.lancs.ac.uk/portal/en/projects/the-young-atheists-investigating-secularism-today-amongst-britons-ages-1325\(f2d5bc15-a31a-485e-b3b7-35beff92aaa6\).html](http://www.research.lancs.ac.uk/portal/en/projects/the-young-atheists-investigating-secularism-today-amongst-britons-ages-1325(f2d5bc15-a31a-485e-b3b7-35beff92aaa6).html) (accessed 15 February 2014).

⁴ See Aston's research profile at the Goldsmith's webpage via: <http://www.gold.ac.uk/anthropology/current-students/katieaston/> (accessed 15 February 2014).

⁵ This lack of organization is slowing becoming less of an issue as the growth of groups like the British Humanist Association, the Humanist Society of Scotland, and American Atheists, are matched by the advent of Sunday Assemblies around the globe. However, even though these groups are beginning to look something like a tribe or cultural unit, the terminology their members ascribe to, as well as the language they use (see the first two issues) are in no way—as yet—crystalized enough to justify my argument here as unsound.

STIPULATION: ATHEISM AND IDENTITY

Based on a discursive analysis of the academic definitions of Atheism, I previously made the theoretical conclusion that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to stipulate a concise ‘definition’ of that term (see Quillen 2015, Chapter Three). I formed this conclusion from two issues. First, within this discursive field we find two specific categories (Baird 1970): lexical (ancient—‘ἄθεος’—and modern—‘Atheism’), and real (‘positive vs. negative’ or ‘explicit vs. implicit’). The first category is built upon first-order discursive sources, and is thus historical in nature. Within this first category we can further locate the term’s etymological origins within two ‘geneses,’ points along the chronology where it became an identifier and was thus used to define either an other, or oneself. As such, ἄθεος is defined as a political imputation, a term bestowed upon an individual whose beliefs and actions appear threatening to the state’s status quo.¹ Here, it is mimetic of a type of censure, similar to how ‘anti-social’ takes on a certain meaning when applied to disruptive or disorderly behavior. Used generally and without specific conceptual boundaries, it became quite universal, so that geographically and religiously disparate individuals such as Socrates (d. 399 BCE) and Polycarp (d. 155 CE) were both condemned and executed for being ἄθεοι. With the second genesis, the emergence of Atheism appeared as a product of the re-emergence of rational-naturalistic philosophies between the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, where from within Theological discourse there arose a self-imposed identity built upon a dialectic dependency concerning the existence of ‘God.’² Parasitic (Buckley 1990) to a particular type of Christianity, this modern Atheism was defined by individuals who through a nominative shift between themselves—once God’s subjects—and God—now an object of their empirical examination—found themselves as specifically ‘A-Theistic.’ While these two categories offer an insightful look at how the term, as well as the conceptual meaning underscoring the use of the term, has evolved and progressed across differing contexts, it also led to an issue of consensus. In an attempt at defining the term generally, and in order to ensure that one’s stipulation of ‘Atheism’ embodied both geneses, the scholarship under analysis began to create its own discursive field. This became my second issue.

As the result of theoretical stipulations, fostered by theological and anti-theological discourse, the second category—real, or essential definitions—inevitably led to the idea that within the concept of ‘Atheism’ there existed different ‘types.’ As such, there arose a new categorical method of defining the term within a dubiously demarcated positive and negative paradigm.³ Built upon certain theological origins⁴ and differentiated by notions of ‘explicitness’ and ‘implicitness,’ this theoretical category is heavily influenced by a method of generalization wherein the myriad ‘pragmatic’ re-conceptualizations equally spawned a number of problematic associations. For instance, the term is now used freely to define what some (such as Martin 2007b) normatively refer to as ‘Atheist religions,’ those religious beliefs and practices that were once deemed ‘non-Theistic’ in their differentiation from Christianity. Likewise, when applied in an overtly general style, the term has become indicative of any sort of skepticism, doubt, rejection, or indifference to any sort of supernatural or mystical belief,

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practice, or ideology. From here, we find even broader conceptions emerging, such as social theoretical categories like ‘ir-religion,’(Campbell 1971) ‘un-belief,’(Marty 1966, Bellah 1971, Budd 1977, Habgood 2000) and ‘non-religion’ (Lee 2011, 2012a, 2012b). As I argued previously, this theoretical discourse is symptomatic of a scholarship that is either ignorant of the lexical geneses in my first category, or pragmatically dismissive of these origins in favor of more useful—and easier—general interpretations.

Because of these two issues, and in order to remove my contribution from this discussion, I elected to offer neither a stipulation, nor a definition. Rather, I promoted the benefits of a discursive analysis of these definitions, as this method allows us to instead concentrate on how the term has been shaped, which in turn reveals the process involved in identifying, or in being identified as, an ‘Atheist.’ This further eliminates the need to ‘define’ the term at all. That is, rather than stipulate an external, and thus general meaning that might encompass each and every ‘type of Atheism’ that might be displayed, allowing individuals to speak for themselves offered a more nuanced and specific internal perception. In many ways mimetic of anthropological observation, this method pragmatically removed my discussion from within the theoretical ambiguity currently afflicting the ‘study of Atheism,’ allowing my assessment the freedom to perceive the term as an expressed and embodied type of identity.

Moving from the process of defining the term to examining the manner with which the term is discursively used in the construction of an identity, my focus herein will be on the formation of ‘Atheism-as-identity,’ the methodology of which I will elucidate here. Signifying an action that is ‘done’ rather than simply ‘had,’ Jenkins classifies this process as a multi-dimensional reflexive activity: the human capacity of charting ‘who we are’ along a map of discovering ‘who others are,’ both as individuals, as well as members of collectivities (Jenkins, 5). In this way, identity construction is interactional, and is thus incapable of being formed within a void. Along similar lines, Berger and Luckmann (1966) classify identity as something that is shaped by ‘social processes’—like Jenkins’ notion of collectivities—that is then “maintained, modified, or even reshaped by social relations,” which are themselves “determined by the social structure” within which they exist (Berger and Luckmann, 194). As they contend, these social structures engender ‘identity types,’ which they isolate as verifiable examples of identity “observed in everyday life” (Ibid. 195). A nod to Weber’s (1949, 90-114) notion of the ‘ideal type,’ the process of identifying relatable characteristics within particular phenomena, these appear as assertions that might be confirmed or refuted by means of ‘pre-theoretical,’ and thus, ‘pre-scientific’ experience. In this way, identity construction stems from a progression determined by a relational construct: the “phenomenon that emerges from the dialectic between individual and society” (Berger and Luckmann, 195). Formed by a type of ‘routinization’ wherein the meanings behind actions become ‘embedded’ within a “general stock of knowledge,” these dialectical movements signify a narrowing of choices that eventually become institutionalized as ‘patterns of activity’ when individuals acknowledge their doing them through communication with other individuals who are themselves doing them as well (Ibid. 71). This process thus further alleviates

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the need to perpetually define each and every situation, while at the same time develops a sense of ‘the way things are’ within a now “substantial, and secure, environment” (Jenkins, 158).

This collective environment involves both inclusion and exclusion: “our similarity is their difference and *vice versa* [emphasis in original]” (Ibid. 102-103). According to Jenkins, a group or ‘human collectivity’ comes to exist when members of that group both recognize the existence of the group itself, as well as their membership within it (Ibid. 9). In this way, a group cannot exist without the cohesion of individual identities, nor can they behave or act independently or have a “definite, bounded material existence in time and space” (Ibid. 10.) This equally speaks to a categorization of the ‘Other:’ “defining ‘us’ involves defining a range of ‘thems’ also” (Ibid. 102). It is here, within this notion of similarity and difference, as well as within the inclusivity of excluding others, where we discover “what we are in what we are not” (Ibid. 103). Jenkins delineates this via three ‘orders,’ the second of which I will apply herein: the ‘interaction’ order, or “the human world as constituted in relationships between individuals, in what-goes-on-between-people” (Ibid. 39).⁵

The dialectic quality of this sort of inclusivity derives from an “*internal-external dialectic of identification* [emphasis in original]” (Ibid. 40). By this is equally meant the “simultaneous synthesis of (internal) self-definition and the (external) definitions of oneself offered by others,” what might better be defined as a concept of ‘selfhood’ (Ibid.). With an emphasis on the equality between ‘similarity’ and ‘difference’ in the inherent dialectic within the collective differentiation seen above, selfhood is defined by Jenkins as “a way of talking about the similarity or consistency over time of particular embodied humans” (Ibid. 102). This ‘embodiment,’ though an essential aspect of the differentiation made between the self and others—“individuals identify themselves and are identified by others, in terms that distinguish them from other individuals” (Ibid.)—is also dependent on similarity. This is perhaps the overall crux of Jenkins’ argument: dialectic is not merely about the difference between two opposing ideas, it is also about the internalized similarities as well. When applied to the process of identification, this paradoxical notion of ‘attachment with’ and ‘differentiation from,’ signifies a “game of playing the vis-à-vis” (Ibid. 18)⁶ between seeing oneself as similar to those who see themselves as different from others. This is itself signified by an amendment from ‘similarity *or* difference,’ to ‘similarity *and* difference.’

Lastly, as a social construction, the process of identification requires ‘validation.’ That is, it requires an acknowledgement by others in order to exist, a process described by Goffman (1959) as the ‘presentation of the self’ (Goffman, 6-24). Applying a ‘dramaturgical analysis’ to the study of interaction, and citing within the face-to-face—vis-à-vis—confrontation between individuals a sense of choice not unlike the way in which an actor might ‘switch’ or ‘change’ their persona in order to become someone wholly different from themselves, Goffman’s conception offers a ‘presentational’ aspect to an individual’s process of meaning-making. As it necessitates not just a choice on the part of the individual in how he or she desires to be seen through the eyes of another, but also requires the interaction with an individual against whom he or she defines him or herself as different, this

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‘presentation’ both entails and dramatizes the “interface between *self-image* and *public image* [emphases in original]” (Jenkins, 42). This additional paradigmatic distinction between insider/outsider applies one final layer to the process of identity construction: “not only do we identify ourselves in the internal-external dialectic between self-image and public image, but we identify others and are identified by them in turn” (Ibid.).

My use of this methodological understanding herein will focus on the merits of both ‘similarity’ and ‘difference,’ within the context of interactional validation, so as to translate the Atheist identities presented below as singular examples from within a larger group: Atheists defining themselves through dialogical validation who equally represent individual identifications within the larger group ‘Atheism.’ This being the case, and in light of Jenkins’ statement that “identification makes no sense” without the context within which face-to-face relationships exist (Jenkins, 6), I turn now to an introduction of my sources themselves.

¹ See Muller 1888, Aveling 1907 [1913], Drachmann 1922, Buckley 1987 [1990], Smith 1991, Kahn 1997, Gordon 2002, Baggini 2003, Reid and Mondin 2003, Hartley 2006, McGrath 2006, Bremner 2009, Fergusson 2009, Hyman 2009, and Palmer 2010.

² See Masterson 1965, Fabro 1968, Herrick 1985, Buckley 1990, Smith 1991, Pasquini 2000, Gordon 2002, Baggini 2003, Converse 2003, Reid and Mondin 2003, McGrath 2005, Fergusson 2009, Hyman 2009 and 2010, and Ledrew 2012.

³ See Flew 1976, Stein 1980, Smith 1989 and 1991, Martin 1990, 2007a, 2007b, Hiorth 1995 and 2003, Baggini 2003, Eller 2004, 2010, Cliteur 2009, Hyman 2009, Palmer 2010, Walters 2010, Bullivant 2011, 2012a, 2012b, 2013, Hartley 2006, and Quack 2012.

⁴ See Aveling 1907 [1913], Maritain 1949, Masterson 1965, Edwards 1967, Fabro 1968, Robertson 1970,

⁵ The other two orders: the ‘individual’ order—“the human world as made up of embodied individuals and what-goes-on-in-their-heads;” and the ‘institutional’ order—“the human world of pattern and organizations, of established-ways-of-doing-things.” Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 39.

⁶ See also James A. Boon, *Other Tribes, Other Scribes: Symbolic Anthropology in the Comparative Study of Cultures, Histories, Religions and Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, 26.

DESCRIPTION: TEXT ONE ('JEREMY')

My first text was written by a man named 'Jeremy.' Of the few details he provides about his family and early life, we know that he was born in 1947, and that he lost his parents in a 'road accident' in 1956 (Jer. 9).¹ His father served in the infantry during World War Two, survived the evacuation of Dunkirk in May of 1940, fought in North Africa, and received a bullet wound to his right hand during the Normandy invasion on 6 June 1944 (Ibid. 136). During the war his mother worked in a munitions factory near Colchester. After his father was released from military service—'demobbed,' as Jeremy calls it—his parents married and purchased the house in Notting Hill in which he and his older sister, 'Jean,' were born.

After their parent's death, Jeremy and his sister lived with an aunt until around 1958 when they were 'ejected' on account of Jean's promiscuous behavior (Ibid. 15). Returning to their deceased parents home, they lived together until he left to begin a degree in history at Oxford University in 1965. Jean gave birth to her daughter, 'Sally,' in 1961, and married into an abusive relationship with a man named 'Harper' in 1963. Jean and Harper separated shortly after Jeremy's departure (Ibid. 16). In a short side-note, he briefly mentions that Sally gave birth to a son in 1982, but was restricted custody two years later for abusive behavior (Ibid. 68). Her present location—in 1989—is given as a 'hostel in Manchester.'

Jeremy left University without completion in his fourth term (Ibid. 18), and held a number of different jobs throughout the late 1970s and 1980s: in 1978 he was a 'television researcher' (Ibid. 108); in 1981 he was an administrator of a "moderately successful provincial theatre company" (Ibid. 105); and in 1989 he was the head of a "small publishing company specializing in textbooks" (Ibid. 74). He met his wife, 'Jenny,' in Poland in October 1981, when they were both acting as British cultural representatives to an international delegation held in Warsaw on the Solidarity Movement (Ibid. 107). They married in August 1982 (Ibid. 113), and—at the time of his writing—had four children (Ibid. 10), the youngest, 'Alexander,' who was born in 1983 (Ibid. 30).

Jeremy's text itself is divided into Four Parts, each devoted to a specific topic, and demarcated by style. In Part One he describes the final interview he conducted with his mother-in-law, 'June,' before her death at the age of 67 from a rare form of leukaemia in 1987 (Ibid. 29). In Part Two he describes a similar conversation that he shared with his father-in-law, 'Bernard,' in Berlin on 10 November 1989. Part Three is a heavily self-reflective description of Jeremy's state of mind directly after his trip with Bernard. Part Four is his mostly objective re-telling of an event that marked the definitive genesis of June and Bernard's 40-year marital estrangement. Stylistically, Jeremy admits that his original intention with the text was to chronicle June's life before her death, though states that this plan began to digress, what he calls a 'divagation,' after his conversation with Bernard. Instead, the text appears more akin to a 'case-history,' which I will discuss in more detail below. It is in this focal re-direction

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where he also acknowledges his own personal philosophical interests in recording the nuances of June and Bernard's disaffection. Admitting that the death of his own had engendered a life-long obsession with 'other people's parents' (Ibid. 9), as well as inspired a sense of philosophical 'emptiness,' he is admittedly drawn to their four-decade separation predominately because it is one based on religious ideology. That is, because he introduces himself as something analogous to an individual wholly apathetic to religious belief, a product perhaps of late twentieth-century secularization,² their obsession and use of 'religion' becomes for him a sort of mystery needing to be solved.

For him, Bernard and June's religious views are 'extremities.' On one end, he depicts Bernard's 'invincible Atheism,' which originated with his devotion to Communism, as an 'arrogant' closing off and denial of supernatural beliefs (Ibid.). On the other, he finds himself defending Bernard's position against June, describing her expressions of faith and belief as stifling and asphyxiating (Jer. 20). In this way, Jeremy's curiosity in stationing himself between their opposition generates his overall sense of interest, so that his text becomes indicative of his efforts in discovering some objective equilibrium between the two: "[Bernard] and [June] are the extremities, the twin poles along whose slippery axis my own unbelief slithers and never comes to rest" (Ibid. 19).

That is, unlike June and Bernard, whom he describes as 'beginning together as communists,' and whose appetite and capacity for 'belief' never quite diminished (Ibid. 18), Jeremy's 'un-belief' seems to be the result of a developed implicitness. Namely, where he confesses that his worldview is not based on a particular sense of rational skepticism or an empathetic acceptance, his is an 'unbelief' that appears like a self-employed and practical liminality. This in turn develops into a pragmatic disinterest, a useful inability to define himself through either of their beliefs:

In conversations with them over several years, I discovered that the emotional void, the feeling of belonging nowhere and to no one that had afflicted me between the ages of eight and thirty-seven had an important intellectual consequence: I had no attachments, I believed in nothing. It was not that I was a doubter, or that I had armed myself with the useful skepticism of a rational curiosity, or that I saw all arguments from all sides; there was simply no good cause, no enduring principle, no fundamental idea with which I could identify, no transcendent entity whose existence I could truthfully, passionately or quietly assert (Ibid.).

As I will explain below, Jeremy's disassociation, particularly as the narrator and auto-ethnographer here, becomes quite methodologically useful. His sense of 'disinterest,' of separation and indifference to their positions, allows him the ability to describe, classify, and compare June and Bernard so that they become representations. This resembles a type of 'vivid empathy,' which Smart (1973a: 72) labels as the action of suspending one's disbelief in the immersion of the observer into a particular social world. Jeremy's innate skepticism—which I argue is not the same as being void of an opinion—affords him the ability to 'bracket-out' their positions in order to achieve a methodological and practical state of 'agnosticism.' Practical in the sense that it is built upon an impartial responsibility, this agnosticism reflects a duty to uphold a 'value-free' point-of-view, so that, as Cox (2003) asserts, the "tasks of describing, classifying, and comparing" (Cox, 2) the subjects at hand are not reduced to a devalued and biased critique.

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Taken at its etymological face value and applied methodologically, this procedural ‘lack-of-knowledge’ becomes the means by which an observer asserts neither positive nor negative affirmations about what Berger (1990)³ calls the “ultimate ontological status” (Berger, 100). That is, the observer is meant to maintain an objective position, so that his or her own beliefs are “kept strictly apart from the theoretical analysis” (Ibid. 180).

Though seemingly ‘un-trained’ in the art of ethnographic construction, Jeremy’s agnosticism, whether shaped by his early loss, or the discursive influence of secularization, provides for him a beneficial methodological perspective. That is, his worldview affords him the position with which to descriptively represent the dialogical and dialectical aspects of June and Bernard’s identity constructions. Likewise, and though it reads as an amateur cultural account, when paired with this methodology I believe the structure of his text takes on certain stylistic notions suggestive of more professional ethnography, such as the ‘sharp separation’ (Bruner 1993, 5) made between the ‘personal narratives’ of Parts One through Three, and the discursive elements found within the ‘interpersonal confrontations’ (Clifford 1986, 14) throughout.

Moreover, because of his methodological perspective, as well as the style with which he has designed his text, I am additionally comfortable in categorizing Jeremy’s narrative as ‘auto-ethnographic’ via one half of Reed-Danahay’s two-part definition: a ‘biographical type’ wherein the author/ethnographer focuses his or her writing on a particular individual through a first-person narrative representation (Reed-Danahay 1997, 5). As a fusion of the ethnography and the biography, this type of auto-ethnography tells what is referred to as a ‘case history,’ what Brandes (1982) calls ‘ethnographic autobiography,’ a first-person narrative “recorded and edited by a professional anthropologist” that focuses heavily on the “psychosocial and developmental stages of an individual’s life” (Brandes, cited by Reed-Danahay 2001, 409). Inherently self-reflective in that the author of such a text becomes both a voice within the narrative, as well as is openly acknowledged as the artificer responsible for the construction of that text itself, this type of auto-ethnography provides a highly nuanced illustration of a singular representative, isolated within a particular milieu. A good comparative example of this type of text would be Crapanzano’s (1980) *Tuhami*, a case-history that, like Jeremy’s, focuses on the interactional dialogue between the author and his subject(s), wherein the culture revealed is filtered through a biographical lens. This type might also be stylistically defined as a first-person ethnographic narrative focused on an ‘other,’ such as the auto-ethnographic novels written by Jackson (1986), Knab (1995), and Richard and Sally Price (1995). Where with these texts the authors have ‘fictionalized’ themselves so as to become ‘insiders’ within the culture they mean to represent—providing their narratives with a sense of inclusivity, and thus narrative authenticity—Jeremy’s text equally offers a perspective that deftly balances the difference between insider/outsider, affording his own textual representation a sense of authority that might not be apparent in a more objective or empirical source. For this reason especially, I believe his text becomes something more than just a mere amateur account. It becomes, which I will argue in my summation, something far more anthropologically valuable.

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¹ For practical reasons, I have chosen to shorten my citations to name and page number. However, as both of these texts exist as monographs, their original titles and publication information can be found in in the Bibliography.

² While secularization, and the thesis that bears its name, is indeed a contestable and widely-discussed concept, for my intentions herein the focus of my analysis will be on June and Bernard's discursive Atheism. Therefore, though a discussion of the influence of secularization on Jeremy's position between them would likely offer an interesting discussion, it will not be examined herein. For those readers interested in the discourse on the secularization thesis, see Berger (1967: 107, 1990: 106); Martin (1978: 2-9); Casanova (1994, 20); Davie (1994: 4); Bruce (2002: 3); Brown (2009: 9-10); Woodhead (2008: 189); Zuckerman (2007: 49); and Smith (2010: 2-7).

³ Originally coined by Berger as 'methodological atheism' in 1967, it was later amended to 'agnosticism' by Smart in 1973. See Berger (1967), 100 and 108; and Smart (1973a), 160. See also Cox (2003), 2-4; Fitzgerald (2000), 56; Porpora (2006), 57; and McCutcheon (1999), 6-8 and 367-368.

DESCRIPTION: TEXT TWO ('JOE')

My second text was written by a man named 'Joe.' Though equally a first-person narrative, Joe's text differs thematically from Jeremy's by appearing in certain ways formally similar to a novel. For example, 'characters' are gathered at the beginning in respect to an event that ultimately directs their progressions toward conflict and resolution. They are then placed within a narrative world wherein their conflicts become dialogical interactions, which serve to validate Joe's philosophical perceptions of that world. It reads very much as artifice, as something structured in such a way so as to offer the ideal backdrop for Joe's ideologies to 'take shape' and find representation. In this way, where Jeremy's text appears ideally reflective of the progressively objective method in 'properly' constructing ethnographic accounts, Joe's here seems do to the same, but with the artificial nature of constructing an engaging fiction. This does not, however, denote the text as 'false' or 'made-up.' Even when we read segments of his story that seem humorously unreal, such as his acquiring a handgun for protection from a 'family' of ex-hippie drug dealers (Joe. 192-202), we are assured by a number of secondary references and descriptions—such as letters inserted into his text—as well as an added appendix—an academic paper re-printed from the *British Review of Psychiatry* (Wenn and Camia, 1997)—that Joe's artifice is based in fact.

Like Jeremy's, Joe's text is heavily dependent upon dialogue, so that the cultural insight we might gather from reading it appears within interactional conflicts and communication. What he refers to as "threading single perceptions into narrative" (Joe. 30), this gathering of dissimilar voices coincides with a catalytic event at the start of his account that, though described through his own interpretation, becomes something told, re-told, and re-evaluated throughout. The event is an accident, the result of which ends with the death of a man named 'John.' Joe describes his involvement in this event as marking a moment of significant change in his life, a 'pinprick' on his life's map, and a moment that serves as both a beginning, and an end: "at that moment a chapter, no, a whole stage of my life closed" (Ibid. 8). As well, because Joe has chosen to begin his text at this point, it serves to separate the antecedent moments that precede it from the philosophical arguments and interactions that follow. In this same way, because it is his creation, he is at center, so that the transition marked by the accident equally demarcates the manner with which he might define himself against the other individuals involved.

The accident takes place in the Chiltern Hills on a Sunday¹ afternoon in early summer 1995.² At the time of the accident, Joe is forty-eight³ years old, and is accompanied by 'Clarissa,' who Wenn and Camia describe as his 'common-law wife' (Wenn and Camia, Appendix 1, 237). Likewise, where Joe is described as a 'well-known science writer,' Clarissa is identified as an English Professor who specializes in Romantic literature (Ibid.). This polarity of academic interests marks the dialecticism inherent in Joe's pre-accident stage of life. It will also return later in my discussion of his Atheism below. Because Clarissa has just returned from a research trip to Boston, Joe describes the moments

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leading up to the event as a romantic reconciliation: “for this was a reunion after a separation of six weeks, the longest Clarissa and I had spent apart in our seven years” (Joe. 3).

In his initial description, Joe focuses on certain elements, shifts attention and returns, a ‘slowing down’ that he, as the creator of this particular perspective, utilizes for a specific type of effect. For my own purposes, I will briefly here touch on how the accident tests Joe’s established sense of identity, as well as how it brings into his life a secondary interactional perspective. As he describes it, the cry that interrupts his and Clarissa’s reunion comes from a man named ‘James,’ who is struggling to control a large grey balloon, inside the basket of which is James’ grandson, ‘Harry.’ The wind has picked up and the balloon is lifting away, carrying Harry with it. Joe describes his reaction as sub-consciously instantaneous and made without hesitation. Along with four others, he joins into a collective that, as he depicts it, is chaotically flawed by a “fatal lack of cooperation” (Ibid. 2). Each of the men involved attempt to take control of the situation by grabbing onto individual ropes, and their brief pause to argue is suddenly interrupted by a gust of wind that lifts the balloon, as well as four of their party—including Joe—into the air. Just as they are lifted off the ground, one man lets go, prompting an immediate moral dilemma, and eventual justification, for Joe’s own decision to follow. This choice becomes a major discussion point throughout his text, summarized at this early stage as a choice made by means of a deeper ‘mammalian conflict’ to survive: “Hanging a few feet above the Chilterns escarpment, our crew enacted morality’s ancient, irresolvable dilemma: us, or me” (Joe. 14-15). Merely bruised by his fall, Joe is joined by ‘Toby,’ a fifty-eight year old unmarried farm laborer (Ibid. 12), whose ankle is broken (Ibid. 15); ‘Joseph,’ Toby’s sixty-three year old associate (Ibid. 12) who is unharmed (Ibid. 15); and ‘Jed,’ a twenty-eight year old unemployed resident of Hampstead (Ibid. 12), who is equally uninjured. These four men—James runs after the balloon—watch from the ground as it rises higher and higher, carrying with it John who, as Joe describes him, is a father and doctor within whom the “flame of altruism must have burned a little stronger” (Ibid. 15). They all watch helplessly as John slides to the end of his rope, remains there for a moment, and then lets go, falling to his death. In the immediate aftermath, Joe, who reflects on his mood as being ‘wild’ and ‘excited,’ descends alone toward the field to confirm John’s death. He is eventually followed by Jed, which sets up the interactional relationship toward which my examination of his text will be directed.

Jed becomes Joe’s dialectical opposite, but he offers a much more nuanced reason for this. Described by Wenn and Camia as suffering from a “pure (primary) form of de Clerembault’s syndrome” (Wenn and Camia, ‘Appendix 1,’ 237), Jed is afflicted with a unique delusional and neurological disorder focused on a maniacal type of ‘love,’ which is diagnostically defined by Enoch and Trethowan (1979) as:

A delusional conviction of being in amorous communication with another person, this person is of much higher rank, has been the first to fall in love, and the first to make advances, the onset is sudden, the object of the amorous delusion remains unchanged, the patient gives an explanation for the object’s paradoxical behavior, the course is chronic, hallucinations are absent and there are no cognitive defects (Enoch and Trethowan, 42).

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Jed becomes emotionally obsessed with Joe, and these obsessions take on a very unique characteristic. He intertwines his illness with his religious convictions, so that the focus of his fixation on Joe is a dual obsession. As Wenn and Camia point out, because Joe is a ‘well-known science writer’ who writes from an ‘Atheistic’ point-of-view, Jed’s focus on him transforms into a neurological type of evangelism: “[Jed] realized that the task set him by God was to return [Joe]’s love and to ‘bring him to God’” (Wenn and Camia, ‘Appendix 1,’ 237). It is for this reason that Wenn and Camia chose to use his interactions with Joe for their case study, and also why I have chosen it for my own.

Though clearly biased by Joe’s point-of-view, I believe their exchanges offer an ideal and accessible insight into the interactional degree by which identities, such as Joe’s Atheism, are constructed and validated within dialogical confrontations. Like Jeremy’s text, I will be using Joe’s as a particular discursive source, a microcosmic example—or case study—with which to anthropologically understand the way in which Joe’s Atheism is structured, first through the interests he uses to justify the moral and philosophical dilemma of John’s death, and then through conversations with Clarissa and Jed wherein it takes on a more ‘positive’ promotion of certain ideals, rather than merely the negation of another’s.

As a final introductory note, I might concede that Joe’s purpose for writing this text stems from nothing more complex than a cathartic attempt to reduce the dissonant guilt felt in letting go and allowing John’s death. As he himself admits: “I had helped kill [John]” (Joe. 32). This, we might argue, would seemingly mar his text with subjective traits such as opinion, prejudice, and vindication, thus removing it from any sense of the objectivity required of a formal or professional ethnographic account. I do not disagree with this. However, I also do not believe it presents a strong enough argument to justify my *not* using it. It is because Joe has written this text to justify his beliefs and actions, and especially because he does this in reflection of others—but particularly to Jed—that I argue this text’s value and accessibility. The Atheism we shall find expressed within Joe’s description is not just biased and endorsed by his own voice, it is also pure and unadulterated for the same reasons. For my use herein, Joe is not just a fellow author, placing together statements to formulate an argument, he is an informant as well, and his story, whether or not it is entirely fabricated through the editorial lens of his convictions, speaks to us as a holistic representation. It is, quite metaphorically, similar to his own description of the accident itself: “a kind of furnace in whose heat identities and fates would buckle into new shapes” (Joe. 3).

Thus, were I to define Joe’s text as a type of auto-ethnography, it quite ideally fits within the category not only of Reed-Danahay’s second description—an ethnographic text wherein the author’s own culture is at focus—it also matches the more literary definition of auto-ethnography made by Ellis (2004): “research, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political” (Ellis 2004, xix). In a more direct manner, Joe’s text is auto-ethnographic in that it represents an overlap between the science of ethnography and the art of fictional writing, a link that Ellis made previously with Bochner (2000) between forms of the latter—short

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stories, poetry, fiction, novels, photographic essays, personal essays, journals, fragmented and layered writing, and social science prose—and how the former becomes an amalgamated text wherein the notions of “concrete action, dialogue, emotion, embodiment, spirituality, and self-consciousness” appear as “relational and institutional stories affected by history, social structure, and culture, which themselves are dialectically revealed through action, feeling, thought, and language” (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 739). However, where we might locate in Joe’s ‘fictionalized’ narrative a correlation between his text and the literary qualities described here and found within the auto-ethnographies cited above by Jackson, Knab, and the Prices, this would be a somewhat inaccurate association as he has not, necessarily, fictionalized himself in order to become an insider within his ethnographic narrative. Rather, his placement in the text is far more reflexively autobiographical, as the culture on which his text is focused is his own: a ‘life-history,’ rather than ‘case-history.’ In this way, his narrative is less an ersatz native representation—the fictionalized placement of one’s self into a narrative in order to appear from an authoritative native position—and more a uniquely nuanced revelation about how his own identity is shaped via the interactional and dialogical relationships he shares with others. Therefore, I might concede here that his text is auto-ethnographic in two ways: first as a personal reflection of his own culture, textualized via a very specific type of ethnographic formula, differentiated from Jeremy’s text as a first-person narrative focused on self, rather than other; and second, as an ethnographic example of that culture made available to an audience for the express purposes of an anthropological criticism. Consequently, and as I argued above concerning Jeremy’s text, Joe’s ‘novel’ therefore becomes something more than just an amateur account. As mentioned above, I will discuss this a bit more thoroughly in the summation following my analysis.

¹ Joe tells us on pages 36 and 81: “Tomorrow was Monday...” and “upset by Sunday.”

² We can infer from a reference to Keats’ upcoming two hundredth birthday—“[...] but with his two hundredth birthday coming up” (8)—that the event occurs 200 years after 1795, and thus just before 1995.

³ Though Joe never provides it, through his description of Jed—“he was twenty-eight” (12-13)—and in self-reflection—“he was twenty years younger” (65)—we can deduce he is age.

ANALYSIS: THE ATHEISM FROM BOTH TEXTS

Because the Atheism within these two accounts represents a progressive shift, signified by their chronological differentiation—and thus discursive influences and inspirations—I shall analyze them separately. This does not mean that they do not overlap in many instances. Rather, I simply believe my examination would appear more concise and detailed were I to present them individually. Likewise, this will on occasion demand that I adopt certain experimental methodologies, allowing the subjects within this analysis to ‘speak for themselves’—such as we see with Dwyer’s (1982) *Moroccan Dialogues*—which will require certain citations to be made in full.

THE ATHEISM IN JEREMY’S TEXT

In telling June and Bernard’s story, Jeremy is dependent upon a culmination; first in compiling his notes on the interviews he conducted with them, then in seamlessly blending those different voices into a coherent narrative. This process is inherent in the format of his account, the ethnographic merits and similarities of which I will discuss in more detail below. Because of this ‘culmination,’ his text is as equal of an artifice as Joe’s, built upon decisions that he has made in the process of telling someone else’s story. For this reason, the Atheism that I will be locating within will appear in many ways like a copy of a copy, one of the intrinsic issues of using sources such as this, or any source not built upon one’s own artifice. Said differently, the cultural representation I will be discussing will be seen through a filter. I never met June, and I am not sure whether Bernard is still alive. Nor have I met Jeremy, and my efforts in contacting him have proven regrettably fruitless. Nevertheless, given the distressing lack of ethnographic sources about this significant stage in the development of British Atheism, particularly that pertaining to the downfall of Communism, I believe the identity construction from within Jeremy’s artifice is too essential to dismiss.

That being said, Jeremy’s focus does not appear to be specifically about religious identity construction. Though this plays an intimate role in inspiring his reason for initially composing June’s memoir, his is not meant, at least as I perceive it, to be read as a cultural source. In fact, I might even argue that it does not fulfill the requirements necessary of this distinction until after one reads his self-reflective Part Three. That is, it is only after he has offered us a comparative glimpse of June and Bernard’s opposition, and then an acknowledgement of his own role as intermediary, that his text begins to afford us the opportunity to transform them from discursively historical ‘characters’ into cultural ‘informants.’ Isolated, their stories are excellent discursive snapshots of their individual, or even collective, identities within a particular context validated by similar and like-minded interactions—such as Communism. However, it is only after they are placed into a face-to-face confliction with each other that these individual identities become fully formed cultural representations created through interactional dissimilarity. It is in the transformation from similarity and difference where I argue we

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might utilize them as holistic representatives that, thanks to Jeremy's Four Part artifice, is readily accessible. For these reasons, my analysis will be made in three parts: first, I shall begin with their beginning, with a brief introduction to their lives, marriage, and separation; second, I will turn to their collective and analogous Communism; and third, I will turn to their disaffection and difference. Across the latter two points, the Atheism from within Jeremy's text will reveal itself as progressive in nature, moving from an organized and established positive position to a negation in oppositional reflection.

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June was born in 1920.¹ Just prior to her eighteenth birthday, she lived for a summer in France with a family 'just outside Dijon,' where she learned to cook. She later reflected that it was because of this experience that a 'youthful conviction' implanted in her mind that there was "no better place on the planet than France" (June quoted, Jer. 38-39). That same year she joined the Socialist Cycling Club of Amersham. Jeremy recalls that this marked the moment where she first informally learned about communism, first through casual conversations with fellow members, and then with members of similar clubs that, according to her, "had affiliations with the Communist Party" (Ibid. 39). When questioned, she describes these as benign discussions, filled with gossip: "what was wrong with England, the injustices and the suffering, how could it be put right, and how these things were set to rights in the Soviet Union" (Ibid.) She did not officially join the Communist Party until 1946, two years after meeting Bernard, while working as a French linguist in liaison with the Free French. More specifically, she acted as a translator on a project "involving the adaptation of treadle sewing machines to power generation" (Jer. 135).

Though Jeremy does not provide us with the year of his birth, I am comfortable with the assumption that based on certain references Bernard was born around the same time as June. He attended a public school as a child and graduated from Cambridge with a degree in science. His early education seems to have affected a life-long interest in what he refers to as the "elation and limited certainties of science" (Bernard quoted, Jer. 19). When he met June in 1944, he was working a job in Senate House that he describes as 'peripherally connected' with the intelligent services, dealing with the "supply of special items," or 'problems,' which Jeremy translates as the manufacturing of "silent power generation for the operation of wireless transmitters in remote French farmhouses where there was no electricity supply" (Jer. 135). He spent the war as a civilian.

As mentioned above, Bernard and June did not officially become members of the Communist Party of Great Britain until 1946 when they joined together at the headquarters in Gratten Street, a 'day or two' after their wedding, and a week before they departed for their honeymoon in Italy and France (Ibid. 26-27). As befitting two young communists, this initial trip was a conservative and practical one. Yet, the events that they experienced would have dire effects on both their notions of self, as well as on their

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marriage. For these reasons, Jeremy's individual discussions with them orbit around these early days, and the précis that I present herein is based upon all three interpretations.

From Calais, they crossed the channel and entered Europe through the Mediterranean Spring, arriving in Lerici, in northern Italy, in mid-June (Ibid. 137). In Italy they volunteered at a Red Cross packing station for six weeks. It was at this time that June became pregnant with their first child, Jenny (Ibid. 138). They left Italy in early August, and made their way to France, through Genoa. From there they traveled south through Provence where, not expected back in England for another two weeks, they set off on a 'short walking tour' (Ibid.) They made their way through the Languedoc, a region of Southern France, and across the Causse de Larzac, where they stopped to rest at an ancient burial site known as the Dolmen de la Prunarede, above the village of St. Maurice de Navacelles.² A few days later they continued their journey toward Le Vigan, in the Arre Valley, following a path atop the Gorge de Vis. It was at this point where June experienced a profound emotional transformation.

Distracted by a herd of caterpillars, Bernard allowed June to walk ahead. Alone, and moving beyond a 'hairpin bend in the track,' she came across two black dogs, which she later describes to Jeremy as 'mythical' looking and 'unnatural' in size (Ibid. 144). The dogs approached her and, after she failed to frighten them off, one attacked. Defending herself with a penknife, she wounded the dog repeatedly in the stomach, until they retreated back down the trail. After finding her a few minutes later, though frightened and reasonably unharmed, Bernard conceded to return to the village of St. Maurice de Navacelles.

After a night at the Hotel del Tilleuls,³ they began their journey home to England, returning to their luggage in Lodeve, via the Causse de Larzac, and through the villages of Les Salces and St. Privat. By means of an accidental turn, they found themselves walking in the wrong direction. What June would later deem providence, they encountered a shepherd who guided them back toward their destination and the bergerie that would become June's home for the next forty years (Ibid. 170).

On their return to England, June renounced her membership in the Communist Party, as well as her beliefs in communism in general. Though never officially divorced, she and Bernard separated in 1951 after the birth of their third child. June settled permanently in France, and in her time there she engaged in isolated reflection, dabbling in Christian mysticism, and writing a number of texts pertaining to an indistinct collection of supernatural and metaphysical ideologies, eastern philosophy, and esoteric practices. In a letter cited by Jeremy to her daughter, Jenny, she referred to these interests as "short-term, practical, realizable goals" (June cited, Jer. 171). She wrote and published three books over the course of twelve years between the 1950s and 1960s: *Mystical Grace: Selected Writings of St. Teresa of Avila*, *Wild Flowers of the Languedoc*, and a 'short practical pamphlet,' simply called *Ten Meditations* (Ibid. 172).

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After their separation, Bernard lived alone in a flat on Addison Road in West London, near Shepherd's Bush (Jer. 71). In 1953 he traveled to Berlin as part of an 'unofficial delegation of British communists,' that he claimed were sent to "express reverent concern to the East German party about the way they put down the Uprising" (Bernard quoted, Jer. 82-83). He remained a member of the Communist Party until 1956. In conversation with Jeremy he claims to have considered leaving in 1953, that he should have "gone in forty-eight," and that it was the eighteen-day defeat of the Hungarian Uprising against The People's Republic of Hungary that proved "the last thing" (Ibid. 89). He joined the Labour Party, and was a self-proclaimed 'voice of reason' during the Suez Crisis in 1956. He wrote a well-received biography on Gamal Abdel Nasser Hussein, the second President of Egypt; became an 'acceptable radical' on a number of BBC discussion programs; was elected a Labour MP in 1964 after failing 'honorably' in 1961 (Jer. 171); sat on committees on broadcasting, the environment, and pornography (Ibid. 38); and returned to Berlin in 1966 to attend a "conference on the Wall on its fifth anniversary" (Ibid. 82-83).

June returned to England in 1982 due to illness, where she remained for the last five years of her life at the Chestnut Reach Nursing Home in Wiltshire. After her death in 1987, she was buried with an Anglican service in a Norman churchyard (Ibid. 62). Bernard maintained his public profile, though not as actively as before his wife's death. He joined the private Garrick Club in London in 1985 (Ibid. 70), and continued writing. He returned once more to Berlin in 1989, accompanied by Jeremy, to witness the initial destruction of the Berlin Wall (Ibid. 81-105).

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For June and Bernard, communism served a metaphorical and practical purpose in their early lives. As an ideology it bound them together both as individuals, as well as within a collective group; a foundational entity not only defined by the incorporation of 'sameness' within their marriage, but also by the opposition that would later separate them. Likewise, it contextualizes their story. It places them within a milieu defined by real people in real places in real time. It provides an utterly simplistic correlation with a 'Communitic Atheism' that I might source from within an established discourse, such as that shaped by Beemans (1967), Blakely (1964), Hiorth (2003), Husband (2000), Marsh (2011), and Thrower (1983), to name but a few. Yet, I do not intend this to be a précis or summation of what it discursively meant for them to be 'Communists.' Jeremy's text, as well as even a cursory review of the literature just cited, does that for us. Rather, my interest in their communitic marital origins stems from the way their later disaffection from similarity to difference might offer an insight into how their assertions of 'Atheism' are indicative of a particular progression.

In Jeremy's introduction, he naturally asserts that their early membership was inextricably linked to romantic and youthful notions about the 'way forward:' "Beyond all their hopes for a sane, just world free of war and class oppression, they feel belonging to the Party associates them with all that is youthful, lively, intelligent, and daring"(Jer. 27). In her own description, June makes use of this shift

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from individual self into an organized group—such as the Social Cycling Club of Amersham—in order to establish a more defined sense of ‘self.’ As she herself states, when complemented with quasi-*puerile* notions about friendship or sexual progression, this sort of interactional validation amongst like-minded individuals engenders a certain type of nostalgia:

Right from the start, the Party and all it stood for, all that mumbo-jumbo about the common ownership of the means of production, the historically and scientifically ordained inheritance of the proletariat, the withering away of the whatever, all that fandangle, was associated in my mind with beech woods, cornfields, sunlight, and barreling down those hills, down those lanes that were tunnels in summer. Communism, and my passion for the country side, as well as my interest in one or two nice looking boys in shorts—they were all mixed in, and yes, I was very excited (June quoted, Jer. 40).

As she later concedes, there is an ‘inseparableness’ from her youth and her first dealings with Communism: “The point about the cycling club was that Communism and my love of the countryside were inseparable—I suppose they were all part of those romantic, idealistic feelings you have at that age” (Ibid. 41). Moreover, and seemingly correlated with her sexual progression, June’s early reflection seems intrinsically concomitant with her marriage to Bernard, so that the ideologies of one appear to co-exist with the unionization of the other:

Whenever we talked about the world beyond ourselves, we talked about communism. It was our other obsession. We decided to forgive the Party its stupidity at the beginning of the war, and to join as soon as there was peace and we had left our jobs. Marx, Lenin, Stalin, the way forward, we agreed on everything. A fine union of bodies and minds! We’d founded a private utopia, and it was only a matter of time before the nations of the world followed our example. These were the months that shaped us. Behind all our frustration over all these years has been the wish to get back to those happy days (Ibid. 58).

Even in own his objective description, Jeremy equally adopts this correlation:

[Bernard] and [June] were members of the Communist Party, and they were talking of the way ahead. For hours, intricate domestic details, distances between villages, choices of footpaths, the routing of fascism, class struggle, and the great engine of history whose direction was now known to science and which had granted to the Party its unalienable right to govern, all merged to one spectacular view, a beckoning avenue unrolling from the starting point of their love (Jer. 139).

These embedded ‘selfhoods’ are here intertwined and entangled, validated by their similarity with one another—and thus differentiation from others—and institutionalized via their marriage vows and Party membership. As an ‘institutional base,’⁴ the inter-related combination of their marriage—which fails—with their membership in the Party—which they both eventually leave—serves as a point-of-origin or genesis. Communism represents their coming together, as well as their separation. It is a metaphor for their union and disunion, and equally shapes the way in which their opposed identity constructions take shape. However, as an example of ‘Atheism,’ it serves a more typographical purpose that I intend to avoid.

At this point, I might state rather simplistically that as communists, Bernard and June began their lives together as certain types of Atheists, a statement which is true, yet also rather indolent. That is, if I were looking for definitive examples of Atheism within Jeremy’s text, I could conclude here that this matches a certain definition of Atheism pertaining to Marxist reductionism, or Soviet State Atheism, or Scientific Atheism.⁵ Which, I acknowledge, would not be an incorrect conclusion. However, as my

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interests are more discursively oriented, I shall instead focus here on how their disaffection came to notably define Bernard's progressive sense of Atheism from establishment to dis-establishment, so as to better understand the dialectical procedure inherent in my wider understanding of Atheism as dependent upon interaction and opposition, rather than on definitive 'types.'

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As 'representations,' June and Bernard beginning as Communists also means that they begin as equals. From here Jeremy describes their constructions as based upon descriptions of each other, validations made by imputation and critique, so that June, according to Bernard's pained acknowledgment of her 'certainties,' becomes a sort of 'catch-all' vessel for a wide-range of supernatural and mystical beliefs: "unicorns, wood spirits, angels, mediums, self-healing, the collective unconscious, the 'Christ within us'" (Bernard cited, Jer. 46). In contrast, according to June, Bernard's maintained skepticism and scientific rationality beyond Communism places him in equal opposition: "[Bernard] thinks I'm a silly occultist, and I think he's a fish-eyed commissar who'd turn in the lot of us if it would buy a material heaven on earth" (June quoted, Jer. 52). Jeremy establishes this oppositional tension in the prologue, so as to mark June and Bernard as stereotypical extremes: "rationalist and mystic, commissar and yogi, joiner and abstainer, scientist and institutionist, [Bernard] and [June] are the extremities" (Jer. 19). This 'stereotyping' shapes them into a structure, a two-sided entity that, as Jenkins specifies, embodies the 'simultaneous synthesis' of "(internal) self-definition and the (external) definitions of oneself offered by others" (Jenkins, 40). In this way, my focus on Bernard is really a focus on his external and internal formation of 'selfhood,' based on his opposition to June, as well as on her position as his reflective opposite. To make sense, then, of his Atheism post-communism, it is essential to understand against what he is defining himself, and being defined by. This process is mimetic of the way in which certain scholars, notably Hyman (2009, 27-29) and Buckley (1990, 15), have defined modern Atheism as being 'parasitic' or dependent on a particular type of 'Theism.'⁶ My analysis and interpretation of Bernard's Atheism is in essence a continuation of their conceptualizations, only writ small, and isolated to a particular case. Therefore, as they conclude about the means by which we understand 'modern Atheism'—"the central meaning of atheism is to be found, not in atheism, but in the theism of which it is the denial" (Ibid. 338)—so shall my interpretation of Bernard's Atheism be shaped by first understanding June's 'Theism.'

The locus of June and Bernard's separation originates with the event on their honeymoon when June is attacked by the two dogs. More directly, it stems from the combination of her perceived manner of survival and her later discovery of the local village's myth about them; both of which profoundly impact her political and religious beliefs. In later discussion with Jeremy, she admits to a symbolic use of the two dogs, both in reflection of Bernard's understanding of their meaning in her life, as well as how her interaction with them came to shape her perception of the world:

I'm not saying these animals were anything other than what they appeared to be. Despite what [Bernard] says, I don't actually believe they were Satan's familiars, Hell Hounds or omens from God, or whatever he tells people I believe. But there is a side of the story he

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doesn't care to emphasize. Next time you see him, get him to tell you what the Maire of St. Maurice told us about those dogs. He'll remember. It was a long afternoon on the terrace of the Hotel des Tilleuls. I haven't mythologized these animals. I've made use of them. They set me free. I discovered something (June quoted, Jer. 59).

That the 'side of the story' Bernard seems to be ignoring—according to June's own assumption about his opinion—is later revealed to be an insinuation that they were used by German soldiers as tools of fearful pacification such as rape, does indeed shape June's use of them into a much wider metaphor. They come to embody the evil of the War, of the inherent evil in mankind, and her interaction with them marks for her a point of re-orientation. As well, and like her interactions with Bernard and Jeremy, it also acts as a momentary validation for her individualized concept of 'religion:' "I met evil and discovered God" (Ibid. 60).

That is, her conception of religion arises out of this singular experience, made all the more important to my analysis as it is the only description provided by Jeremy of what I shall herein refer to as her 'Theism.' This does not, however, denote a type of 'Theism' that one might associate with a particular 'monotheism,' such as Christianity or Islam. Rather, I shall use the term here as she herself does, a lexical stipulation based upon a number of examples when she defines her religious outlook. These examples are centered on her 'meeting evil,' and built upon a lifetime's reflection. For instance, in defending her use of the dogs as symbolic of her 'awakening,' and counter to the assumption that the event was nothing more than the imaginative workings of a "young girl frightened by a couple of dogs on a country path" (Ibid. 59), June proclaims:

I suppose all the great world religions began with individuals making inspired contact with a spiritual reality and then trying to keep that knowledge alive. Most of it gets lost in rules and practices and addiction to power. That's how religions are. In the end though it hardly matters how you describe it once the essential truth has been grasped—that we have within us an infinite resource, a potential for a higher state of being, a goodness (Ibid. 60).

Then, in describing the process by which an individual might make use of this 'resource' by fully entering the present, and thus locating 'infinite space' and 'infinite time,' what she refers to as 'God' (Ibid. 42), her description veers into an adoptive accumulation of different metaphysical and spiritual ideologies:

Call it God, or the spirit of love, or the Atman, or the Christ or the laws of nature. What I saw that day, and on many days since, was a halo of coloured light around my body. But the appearance is irrelevant. What matters is to make the connection with this centre, this inner being, and then extend and deepen it. Then carry it outwards, to others. The healing power of love (Ibid. 60).

Jeremy's objective description of this event, of her finding the center within herself, and thus 'God,' takes the shape of a hierophany, in that the 'sacred' is revealed to her:

[June] whispered, 'Please go away. Please, Oh God!' The expletive brought her to the conventional thought of her last and best chance. She tried to find the space within her for the presence of God and thought she discerned the faintest of outline, a significant emptiness she had never noticed before, at the back of her skull. It seemed to lift and flow upwards and outwards, streaming suddenly into an oval penumbra many feet high, an envelope of rippling energy, or, as she tried to explain it later, of 'coloured invisible light' that surrounded her and contained her. If this was God, it was also, incontestably, herself. Could it help her? Would this Presence be moved by a sudden, self-interested conversion? An appeal, a whimpering prayer to something that was so clearly, so luminously, an extension of her own being, seemed

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irrelevant. Even in this moment of extremity she knew she had discovered something extraordinary, and she was determined to survive and investigate it (Jer. 149-151).

Again, we are left to take this description at face-value. It is based on information revealed to us through Jeremy's description of his last interview with June, as well as on details told to him over the years not represented. Additionally, we must also consciously acknowledge the act of creative artifice involved in Jeremy's textual re-creation. Nevertheless, as a definitive contribution to her 'Theism,' this conversion plays a major role in how June comes to define Bernard's Atheism after their shared rejection of communism, as well as how he defines himself in reflection of it. In this way, I might also conclude that referring to her belief structure as a unique type of 'Theism' is based heavily on her establishing it through a dependent rejection of the Atheism that she and Bernard share prior to her interaction with the dogs.

This is equally mimetic of Jenkins' concept of the 'interaction order'—"it is not enough simply to assert an identity; that assertion must also be validated, or not, by those with whom we have dealings" (Jenkins, 42)—which is in itself equally mimetic of Jeremy's description of Bernard: "[Bernard]'s habits of private conversation had been formed by many years of public debate [...] a fair bout of adversarial discussion was what would bring us to the truth" (Jer. 72). From June's perspective this aspect of Bernard's personality is indicative of his communistic focus on the 'way ahead,' a manifestation of his oppositional inability to, as she says, reflect: "He's never known a single moment's awe for the beauty of creation" (June quoted, Jer. 43). June refers to this as a myopic sense of 'stagnation' (Jer. 38), which Jeremy editorializes as her larger critique of Bernard's rationalism, explained by her comparison of the two men as sharing a 'dryness' and 'distance' (June quoted, Jer. 53).

In that the ideas "by which [June] lived her life were also the ones by which she measured the distance between Bernard and herself" (Jer. 43), so too does Bernard's defense of himself in reflection of her statements, as well as his own descriptions of her beliefs, reveal his own identity. Early in his discussion with Jeremy, he makes the argument that, in fact, June was the better Communist, citing her early political passion and positing the assumption that, like her obsessive focus on finding her 'Theist center,' she was always in search of something to fill the void within herself (Bernard cited, Jer. 74 and 81). As such, he asserts that unlike his own experience, her separation by conversion did not afford her the proper 'crack' under the collapse of Communism to warrant her views a proper perspective:

And that's the difference between [June] and me. She left the Party years before me, but she never cracked, she never sorted the fantasy from the reality. She swapped one utopia for another. Politico or priestess, it didn't matter, in essence she was a hardliner (Bernard quoted, Jer. 90).

Later in the same conversation he details a story about where he first witnessed the early hints of both her disaffection from Communism—and thus their marriage—as well as of the "hocus-pocus that filled her life from then on" (Ibid. 81). Claiming the story itself as evidence that her conversion was not a momentary revelation about the power and glory from within, this interactive description offers Jeremy—and thus us—a glimpse of his own 'dry' and 'distant' rationalism. The story is about their

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first fight, on a railway platform in Provence, a week prior to June's interaction with the dogs. While waiting for a train, Bernard recalls catching a dragonfly, a *Sympetrum Sanguinem*. When he turns to June for help in gathering the insect for his collection, carefully handing it to her to retrieve his 'killing jar,' he recalls a sense of 'cold logic' coming over her. When answering her inquiry whether his intention is to kill the insect with an impassive response, he notes that she hesitates, only relenting after warning her that letting it go would be an unforgiveable act. To this, and after her reluctant obedience, he describes her as suddenly breaking into an 'almighty rage,' an emotional outburst that provides us with Bernard's perception of her perception of him:

I was cold, theoretical, arrogant. I never showed any emotion, and I prevented her from showing it. She felt watched, analysed, she felt she was part of my insect collection. All I was interested in was abstraction. I claimed to love 'creation', as she called it, but in fact I wanted to control it, choke the life out of it, label it, arrange it in rows. And my politics were another case in point. It wasn't injustice that bothered me so much as untidiness. It wasn't the brotherhood of man that appealed to me so much as the efficient organization of man. What I wanted was a society as neat as barracks, justified by scientific theories (Ibid.)

This description, told through Bernard's memory and then narrated by Jeremy, is not merely a description, it's a validation as well, provided by Bernard's defense. He recalls arguing for the merits of entomology, claiming that entomologists, in their collection, classification, and study of the insect world reflect a special kind of affection: "If you learned to name a part of the world, you learned to love it" (Ibid. 77-78). Furthermore, he continues by arguing that his interest in 'ideas' is merely indicative of his hope for a better, more organized, and less violent future. Then, with June's response to his justification, he learns that she is pregnant, a revelation that, for him, equates her sudden emotional defense of the life of an insect with fears of retribution, which he describes as such:

Holding a little insect in her hands made her feel responsible not only for the life that was growing inside her, but for all life, and that letting me kill that beautiful dragonfly was an awful mistake and she was sure that nature would take its revenge and something terrible was going to happen to the baby (Ibid. 78).

To this notion, Bernard recalls his 'idiotic' attempt at pacifying her misguided emotions with explanations of 'Darwin,' stating: "there was simply no place in the scheme of things for the kind of revenge she was talking about" (Ibid. 79). This latter response, his use of 'Darwin' to assuage June's 'nonsensical' thoughts, manifests itself later when, alone at a café and remembering June's fears, he 'comes to himself' through personal—internalized—introspection:

I tried hard to imagine what it would be like to believe, really to believe, that nature could take revenge on a foetus for the death of an insect. She'd been deadly serious about it, to the point of tears. And honestly I couldn't. It was magical thinking, completely alien to me (Ibid. 79-80).

When pressed by Jeremy if, in fact, Bernard had never felt some sense of 'superstition,' or 'tempting fate,' he responds:

That's just a game, a manner of speaking. This belief that life really does have rewards and punishments, that underneath it all there's a deeper pattern of meaning beyond what we give it ourselves—that's all so much consoling magic. [...] Perhaps all I'm saying is that sitting there with my drink in that hot little square I was beginning to understand something about women and men (Ibid).

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Not only does this anecdote about their fight reveal a gender-specific association in Bernard's mind about the inherent 'spirituality' of women over men, it also reveals to us a glimpse into the process by which his 'Atheism' is shaped in reflection of June's beliefs after he leaves the "established-ways-of-doing-things" (Jenkins, 39) of the Communist Party in 1956. In fact, without the structural influence of communism, Bernard's belief system would be amorphous without June's conversion. While his political concerns are eventually replaced by what Jeremy refers to as a "thirty years' devoted advocacy of numerous causes for social and political reform" (Jer. 19), and though he maintains a philosophical devotion to the "elation and limited certainties of science" (Ibid.), his 'Atheism' is not entirely distinct without June's 'self-protecting fatalism' and 'unbounded credulousness' (Ibid. 45).

Perhaps, then, a more accurate assessment of Bernard's Atheism, given the limitation of our data, would be to describe it as a 'shift in focus,' where its dependency upon certain political ideologies evolves toward a more direct dialecticism. It is this 'shift' that I believe best describes it, a sort of 'liminoid' position defined as the phase "between leaving one post and taking up another" (Turner, 1974, 55). This is a position privy to amendment, incorporating the essence of a 'tabula rasa' (Turner, 1967, 99), which due to its position as neither established, not dis-established, is ultimately dependent upon a type of validation. Because his Atheism beyond communism shifts from offering an established argument about the non-existence of God to a negation of June's established belief system in reflection of the communism she herself has disaffected from, his liminal Atheism is thus shifted from a type of positive to negative, defined here as differentiated by presentation and refutation, such as that described by Martin (2007a): "Negative atheists attempt to establish their position by showing that the standard arguments for the existence of god are unsound [...] Positive atheists attempt to show that there are good grounds for disbelieving in God" (Martin, 89).

Problematically, the dialectical means by which Bernard's post-communist Atheism is validated by June's conversion is most apparent in Jeremy's Third Part, wherein his depiction of his attempt at trying to combine their conversations is akin to a self-reflective description. This brings us to a brief theoretical stopping point. That is, as this section reflects Jeremy's personal narrative about his subjects, and thus depicts their interactions via his assumptions about what they might have said, rather than what they are actually saying, the information that we receive is filtered through a secondary perspective. This is perhaps where our use of these sorts of 'non-traditional' sources is most challenging. Because this section is built upon Jeremy's interpretations, rather than the person-to-person observation or experience we find in Parts One and Two, we are incapable of deciphering the difference between his opinion and what might be accurate data. However, I am perfectly comfortable using the following descriptions for that very reason, as part of my utilizing these types of non-traditional sources is critical in nature. Though the following data is derived from Jeremy's personal reflection, I fail to see the difference between his manufactured interactions, and the manner with which a traditional ethnographer does the same with his or her subjects. This is, I suppose, more indicative of the difference between a functionalist ethnography, and a diary or fieldwork account, such as those by Leiris (1934), Bohannon (1954), Levi-Strauss (1955), or even Malinowski (1967).

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Furthermore, like any sort of textual re-creation, I believe this section is representative of the manner with which any sort of author translates individuals into ‘characters,’ a translation that is itself indicative of the author’s own liminal stage between observer and writer. For these reasons, the data discussed below, though sourced from a different sort of perception, will be examined as equally valuable, offering yet another nuanced addition to the manner with which Bernard’s Atheism takes shape.

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Jeremy’s constructed dialogue arises out of his using June and Bernard in reflection of his own reaction to an implicit feeling of fear or apprehension while standing alone—and in the dark—in June’s empty home in France. After arriving to prepare the house for his family’s later arrival, and directly after his conversations with Bernard in Berlin, Jeremy encounters what he describes as June’s ‘ghostly remnant.’ What’s more, feeling as if being watched and groping through the kitchen in search of a light switch, he describes himself as responding to some sort of unseen danger: “I was trapped between my reason, which urged me to move quickly, turn on the power and see by bright artificial light how ordinariness simply continued, as it always did; and my superstitious dread, whose simplicity was even greater than the everyday” (Jer. 115). Eventually lighting a candle and discovering a scorpion poised on the light switch—thus justifying his apprehension—his initial confusion between rationalism and superstition takes the shape of an internalized dialogue between his own mental incarnations of Bernard and June. This then transforms into a validation—*his* validation—between their positions. He records this conversation for pragmatic reasons, both in order to bring together his observations of Parts One and Two, as well as to create a basis with which to shape his objective interpretation of Part Four. He begins with June:

[June] was impatient. ‘How can you pretend to doubt what’s staring you in the face? How can you be so perverse, [Jeremy]? You sensed my presence as soon as you stepped into the house. You had a premonition of danger and then confirmation that you would have been badly stung if you had ignored your feelings. I warned you, protected you, it was as simple as that, and if you’re prepared to go to such lengths to keep your skepticism intact, then you’re an ingrate and I should never have put myself out for you. Rationalism is a blind faith. [Jeremy], how can you ever hope to see (June depicted by Jer., 117)?

In response, Bernard’s apparition argues the merits of reason and rationalism:

[Bernard] was excited. ‘This really is a useful illustration! Of course, you can’t rule out the possibility that a form of consciousness survives death and acted here in your best interests. You should always keep an open mind. Beware of dismissing phenomena that don’t accord with current theories. On the other hand, in the absence of certain proof either way, why leap straight to such a radical conclusion without considering other simpler possibilities (Bernard depicted by Jer. 117-118).

Moreover, Bernard’s position continues with his sense of rationalism, providing Jeremy a point-by-point empirical explanation, beginning with the origin of his perception of her ‘presence:’

You’ve frequently ‘sensed [June]’s presence’ in the house—simply another way of saying that it was once her place, is still full of her things and that being here, especially after an absence and before your own family has filled up the rooms, is bound to prompt thoughts of her. In

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other words this ‘presence’ was in your mind, and projected by you on the surroundings (Ibid. 118).

Next, he offers a psychological explanation for Jeremy’s feeling of foreboding or unease in the dark house, based on discursive cultural sources, as well as on Jeremy’s own memories:

Given our fear of the dead, it’s understandable that you were wary as you stumbled through the house in darkness. And given your state of mind, the electricity cupboard on the wall was bound to seem a frightening object—a patch of extra blackness in the dark, wasn’t it? You had the buried memory of finding a nest of scorpions there. And you ought to consider the possibility that in poor light you discerned the scorpion’s shape subliminally (Ibid.)

Lastly, Bernard’s apparition addresses the sense of justification Jeremy finds in discovering the scorpion, dismissed here as merely an aspect to be expected of this type of house, in this part of the world. As well, he concludes this first defense with a philosophical argument akin to the idea of the Problem of Evil:

And then the fact that your presentiments were justified. Well, dear boy! Scorpions are common enough in this part of France.’ Why should a spirit from beyond the grave put itself out to save you from a minor injury? If this is the level of the dead’s concern, why aren’t they interceding to prevent the millions of human tragedies that happen every day (Ibid.)?

This first bout of ‘statements’ and ‘counterstatements,’ as Jeremy calls them, soon divulge into a much larger validation between June’s Theism and Bernard’s Atheism, a dialogical interaction shaped by Jeremy’s literary position as intermediary:

‘You wouldn’t believe it anyway. I looked after [Bernard] in Berlin, and you last night because I wanted to show you something, I wanted to show you how little you know about the God-made, God-filled universe. But there’s no evidence a sceptic can’t bend to fit his own drab tiny scheme...’ ‘Nonsense,’ [Bernard] murmured into my other ear. ‘The world that science is revealing is a scintillating, wondrous place. We don’t have to invent a god just because we don’t understand it all. Our investigations have hardly begun’ (June and Bernard, depicted by Jer. 118-119)!

From here, this dialogue shortens to somewhat petty rejoinders:

‘There’s God,’ said [June,] ‘and there’s the Devil.’
‘If I’m the Devil,’ said [Bernard,] ‘then the world’s no bad place at all.’
‘It’s [Bernard]’s innocence that’s precisely the measure of his evil. You were in Berlin, [Jeremy]. Look at the damage he and his kind have done in the name of progress.’
‘These pious monotheists! The pettiness, the intolerance, the ignorance, the cruelty they’ve unleashed in their certainty...’
‘It’s a loving God and he’ll forgive [Bernard]...’
‘We can love without a god, thank you very much. I detest the way Christians have hijacked that word’ (Ibid.).

Later, Jeremy describes their arguments as infecting his work around the *bergerie*, and thus his narrative: “The next day, when I was pruning the peach trees in the orchard, [June] said the tree I was working on and its beauty were God’s creation. [Bernard] said we knew a great deal about the way this and other trees evolved and our explanations did not require a god” (Ibid.). At this point, Jeremy’s account veers away from June and Bernard and begins to further establish his position as artificer, illustrating his anxiety as based on responsibility which, though insightful about his own perceptions of the process of constructing such an account, is not a necessary element in the establishment of Bernard’s Atheism.

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I shall conclude here with the resolution that throughout this examination, and especially in reference to the dialogue above, the Atheism from within Jeremy's account represents a unique sort of progression. It begins with a commonality and is established via June and Bernard's marriage. From there it shifts into a realm of disassociated liminality, no longer linked with the politics or established base of communism. Then, with June's conversion, it becomes a negation, a direct response to an other's beliefs. It depicts a philosophical position dependent on another philosophical position, such as we see in modern definitions from individuals like Buckley (1990), Martin (1990, 2007a, and 2007b), Hyman (2009, 2010), and Reid and Mondin (2003). It is also, as we see with Bernard's responses to June's beliefs, as well as in Jeremy's constructed interactions, dependent on rationalism, reason, and naturalism, asserting a quasi-positive response to the negation of its initial dependency. This offers another insightful aspect, namely the association of Atheistic thinking with scientific thinking, as if the one is built within and atop the other. This association will link this first account with Joe's, in that Bernard's subtle use of 'scientific rationalism' in order to return to the positive assertions he once knew with communism, will become a major characteristic of that second text's translation of the dialectic between he and June as one that exists between religion and science.

THE ATHEISM IN JOE'S TEXT

While Jeremy's text establishes a sort of 'nominal Atheism,' a dialectic-based and dialogically represented means of deciphering the process by which Bernard's Atheism is validated against June's unique Theism, the experiential qualities between his and Joe's differ in a number of ways. Notably, Bernard's Atheism might best be described as 'developing,' shifting from one type to another: communism, to liminal, and then reflective of June's conversion. In comparison, Joe's Atheism might best be described as 'developed.' When he first introduces himself, his belief system is fairly well established, which we initially discover through his narration, and then through certain interactional validations.

The nominal-virtual distinction between these two texts—and these two individuals—is in many ways mimetic of the discursive development of defining Atheism cited in the *stipulation* above. While the 'name,' or 'label,' used to represent a certain identity might stay the same across a number of varying discourses, the 'experience,' or rather, the use of the term in practice, can differ quite drastically. Consider for example the ways in which the 'Atheism' imputed upon certain individuals differs from that which is later 'self-adopted' between ancient and modern, as well as how the different meanings of 'negative' and 'positive' fluctuate across time and context. The 'nominal' aspect of Atheism maintains while the virtual aspect fluctuates, adjusts, and evolves. Of course, this is not technically accurate in consideration of new terminology employed to re-brand the term 'Atheism,' such as 'ir-religion,' 'unbelief,' or 'non-religion,' the use of which, in reference to this discussion, seems all the more problematic. The 'virtual,' then, differentiates from its nominal counterpart in that it "exists for

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practical purposes rather than in name or by definition” (Jenkins, 99). That is, the virtual affords meaning to different nominal uses: “virtual identification is what a nominal identification means experientially and practically over time, to its bearer” (Ibid.).

For this reason, both Bernard and Joe belong to the same community: they are both nominally Atheistic and thus share a similar, symbolic identity. However, they do not share the same experiential type of Atheism, predominately due to their differing contexts. Therefore, their Atheism is both similar and different, and it is in recognizing the particularities of the latter that I believe will prove most useful, especially in deciphering the symbolic role their two Atheisms play in distinguishing the qualities inherent in how that term is defined across both texts. Thus, the following examination of Joe’s account should be seen as part of a wider discussion of the “virtual dimension of communal identification” (Ibid. 140), my two microanalyses of Bernard and Joe combining to form a larger macro discussion.

This analysis will take up three distinct sections: first, I will discuss certain points that reveal Joe’s own self-described Atheism via the interests⁷ that shape his non-interactive identification, his reductionist description of the origins of religion, and the narrative origins of his Scientific Worldview; second, I will then briefly examine how this Atheism is validated in reflection of Clarissa’s perception of these same things; and third, I will examine how Joe defends his Atheism in reflection of Jed’s individualistic and general Theism.



As Joe describes it, the choice to begin his account with the accident is one determined by the consequences that came after it, based themselves on the choices and actions made by each of the participants involved. Admittedly an ‘artifice’ (Joe. 17), his text is a collection of memories, offering us the opportunity to view the re-orienting aftermath of the accident, as well as its influence on those involved, through his perspective. For my intentions, this viewpoint is significant because it additionally affords us the opportunity to view how the accident marks the exact moment when Joe must consider, or even re-consider, the way his Atheism has shaped his perception of the world. This is almost like a recalibration of sorts, so that the self-reflective aspect of his first-person narration is also an invitation to view the intimate process intrinsic to his internally formed, and outwardly validated, construction of identity. This recalibration is effected in two ways. First, his established belief system must suddenly take into account a philosophical re-assessment. That is, after the sacrifice and death of John, the cold objectivity of his rationalism must confront an epistemological crisis of sorts. Second, in the days following the accident, Joe must also take into account the opposing views about John’s death expressed by others. This second aspect becomes even more challenging when it is against these opposing views that his Atheism is externally validated through dialogical interaction. As we shall see, this results in a ‘clinging’ of sorts. As Joe’s initial Atheist interests

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become anchors of an almost sacred nature, the scientific discourse that once benignly shaped his identity shifts into a somewhat infallible doctrine

In this way, the accident ‘fixes a transition’ for Joe, creating a “divergence from the expected” (Joe. 18) that challenges his rational notions about the origins of morality, altruism, and the genetic-based cognitive urge to survive. He isolates this in his description of the chaotic disorganization just as the balloon lifted their group into the air:

We never had that comfort, for there was a deeper covenant, ancient and automatic, written in our nature. Co-operation—the basis of our earliest hunting successes, the force behind our evolving capacity for language, the glue of our social cohesion. Our misery in the aftermath was proof that we knew we had failed ourselves. But letting go was in our nature too. Selfishness is also written on our hearts. This is our mammalian conflict—what to give to others, and what to keep for yourself. Treading that line, keeping the others in check, and being kept in check by them, is what we call morality. Hanging a few feet above the Chilterns escarpment, our crew enacted morality’s ancient, irresolvable dilemma: us, or me (Joe. 14-15).

His conception of morality here, poised somewhere between altruism and selfishness, depicts a type of cognitive dissonance, the resolution of which is defined by Festinger (1957) as motivated by the search for consonance (Festinger, 3). In his justification for putting the child’s life at risk in order to save his own, Joe’s conception of ‘morality’ suddenly overlaps with his scientific thinking, so that the discomfort felt in his attempt at rationalizing the inconsistency between altruism and egoism, is assuaged by an equally rationalized consonant solution: “suddenly the sensible choice was to look out for yourself” (Joe. 15). Moreover, his scientific justification for letting go the rope, regardless of any sense of cultural morality or ethical norms, is depicted as a sort of ‘equation,’ a calculated response wherein his desire to “save the boy” is measured against quantifiable notions about survival:

Almost simultaneous with the desire to stay on the rope and save the boy, barely a neuronal pulse later, came other thoughts in which fear and instant calculations of logarithmic complexity were fused. We were rising, and the ground was dropping away as the balloon was pushed westwards. I knew I had to get my legs and feet locked around the rope. But the end of the line barely reached below my waist and my grip was slipping. My legs flailed in the empty air. Every fraction of a second that passed increased the drop, and the point must come when to let go would be impossible or fatal. And compared to me [Harry] was safe curled up in the basket. The balloon might well come down safely at the bottom of the hill (Ibid. 13-14).

Joe’s dual instinctual drive to help—implicit in his immediate reaction to James’ call—as well as save himself—his letting go the rope—fuses into what Festinger refers to as two ‘non-fitting relations,’ immediately resolved by the added variable of an individual dropping to the ground, an antecedent condition that for Joe leads to an action “oriented toward dissonance reduction” (Festinger, 3). As he himself sates: “the child was not my child, and I was not going to die for it. The moment I glimpsed a body fall away—but whose?—and I felt the balloon lurch upwards, the matter was settled; altruism had no place. Being good made no sense” (Joe. 15).

The philosophical basis of Joe’s introduction here is something I will continue to address throughout my analysis of his text. Additionally, it seems to play a major underlying purpose in his writing it in the first place, as if putting into words the justification for his decision acts as a continual form of

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cathartic dissonance reduction. In this way, his description presents itself as both a rationalization that further mimics a ‘making-sense’ of the worldview that sponsors it, as well as offers an awareness about how that worldview shapes itself into an identity both challenged and validated by opposition. In reference to the epistemological process of the former, his text provides us a two-part insight: first, in his reductionist—scientific—explanation for the oppositional religious means by which he is scientifically rationalizing the tragedy of the event, and second, in how that rationalization shapes his own personal vocation. As examples of his ‘interests,’ I hope to use these aspects as clues in shaping an interpretive understanding of his process of self-identification.

One such aspect is located within three reactionary instances wherein his rationalism dictates a philosophical description about the origins of religious belief. Briefly précised above, the first appears after his description of John’s fall. In his solitary effort to confirm the man’s death, Joe depicts himself as approaching John’s body with a sense of calm—“he was sitting upright, his back to me, as though meditating” (Ibid. 22)—that manifests into an irrational pacification, the idea that perhaps some sort of unknown ‘technique’ or ‘physical law’ might have saved him: “that he should sit there so quietly in the field, as though he were collecting himself after his terrible experience, gave me hope and made me clear my throat stupidly and say, knowing that no one else could hear me, ‘Do you need help’” (Ibid.)? However, just as briefly as this logical pacification works to calm his fears, it is unjustified by his realization that John’s appearance is anatomically anomalous:

And seeing that, I became aware that what I had taken for calmness was absence. There was no one there. The quietness was that of the inanimate, and I understood again, because I had seen dead bodies before, why a pre-scientific age would have needed to invent the soul. It was no less clear than the illusion of the evening sun sinking through the sky (Ibid.).

His rationalism restored, his description immediately turns into a scientific explanation. Tellingly, he refers to this as a safeguard: “these were the thoughts with which I tried to protect myself as I began to circle the corpse” (Ibid). He has, as we might infer critically, replaced one safeguard with another, the supplanting of the ‘pre-scientific’ and superstitious thinking of the past, exchanged with a rational and scientific explanation. As he further describes:

The closing down of countless interrelated neural and bio-chemical exchanges combined to suggest to a naked eye the illusion of the extinguished spark, or the simple departure of a single necessary element. However scientifically informed we count ourselves to be, fear and awe will still surprise us in the presence of the dead. Perhaps it’s life we’re really wondering at (Ibid).

On a second occasion, this sort of juvenile ‘pre-scientific’ pacification returns later, when he describes a distracted sense of foreboding or danger while conducting research at the London Library. Occurring a few days after the accident, he depicts himself as drawn outside onto St. James Square, “right on the spot where the policewoman, Yvonne Fletcher, had been shot dead by a Libyan from a window across the road” (Ibid. 44). Seeing a small memorial of flowers tipped over onto the sidewalk, he instinctively sets them back into place, an action that, again, brings to mind a rational explanation for such superstitious actions:

At my feet was a little bunch of marigolds tied with wool, such as a child might bring. The jam jar they had arrived in had been knocked over and had a little water inside. Still glancing about me, I knelt and returned the flowers to the jar. I couldn’t help feeling as I pushed the jar

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closer to the railings where it might escape being kicked over again that it might bring me luck, or rather, protection, and that on such hopeful acts of propitiation, fending off mad wild unpredictable forces, whole religions were founded, whole systems of thought unfurled (Ibid. 44-45)

Up to this point, these two instances represent distractive pacifications, products of his post-accident search for consonance, wherein his rationalism interjects and overpowers what he seems to describe as implicit or instinctual turns to the supernatural or superstitious.

In his third description, these pacifications are replaced by the memory of an earlier and more direct scientific explanation of the genetics of religious belief. At this point his narrative is heavily infected by Jed's obsession—see below—so that this remembrance is made in reaction to those interactions, a product—like the first two with the accident—of a different sort of pacification. The memory is that of a radio interview given a year prior about the hypothesis that there might be what he refers to as a “genetic basis to religious belief” (Ibid. 159). This description, which he forms into two parts, is made in response to a two-part question: “might there be a genetic basis to religious belief, or was it merely refreshing to think so” (Ibid.)? First, he offers an initial argument that there are correlative links between the ‘selective advantage’ and ‘social advantage’ of holding to a religious ideal, which he stipulates as ‘faith:

If faith conferred selective advantage, there were any number of possible means, and nothing could be proven. Suppose religion gave status, especially to its priest caste—plenty of social advantage in that. What if it bestowed strength in adversity, the power of consolation, the chance of surviving the disaster that might crush a godless man. Perhaps it gave believers passionate conviction, the brute strength of single-mindedness (Ibid.)

Second, in addressing this question to the concept of a ‘group dynamic,’ Joe makes the case that ‘religious belief’ brings with it a communal aspect, acting as a bonding agent across singular cultures, which are then infected by ideologies to the point of supremacy over an other. This inevitably leads toward the suppression of that other and the rising fitness and survival of the initial group:

Possibly it worked on groups as well as on individuals, bringing cohesion and identity, and a sense that you and your fellows were right, even—or especially—when you were wrong. With God on our side. Uplifted by a crazed unity, armed with horrible certainty, you descend on the neighbouring tribe, beat and rape it senseless and come away burning with righteousness and drunk with the very victory your gods had promised (Ibid.).

Given his precedential nod toward the narcotic effect of conciliation inherent in ‘religious beliefs’ from his previous two descriptions, he concludes here that given enough time and the right environment, as an evolutionary entity, ‘religion’ could provide certain groups the fitness they would need to pacify and outlive others: “repeat fifty thousand times over the millennia, and the complex set of genes controlling for groundless conviction could get a strong distribution” (Ibid.)

While these three examples provide further introduction to Joe's interests, clearly dictated by a particular discourse and infused with biological language, they also generate a particular viewpoint concerning his understanding of, and opposition to, religious belief. Because of his dependency on—even supplication to—the scientific thinking used to replace the superstition of those beliefs, I shall henceforth refer to this position as his ‘Scientific Worldview.’ Thus, the view that we are seeing here,

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prior to its interactional validation, appears to be ‘positive’ in the sense that it is presenting an argument for an ideal, rather than merely denying one with which it disagrees. This is even more apparent when we compare it to Bernard’s ‘negative’ type above. However, as we are at this stage without any sort of interactional validation, this view should not be defined, for reasons of clarity, as a ‘type of Atheism.’ While the notion of ‘God’ is only mentioned briefly within his third example, his explanations here are merely of general superstitious beliefs inherent to his broad notion of ‘religion.’ In the first, it is directed at the idea of a ‘soul.’ With the second it deals with the ritualistic notion of good deeds resulting in protection or ‘luck.’ With the third, his evolutionary description is merely trying to make sense of the ‘fitness’ of religious belief and how it might bolster, as well as justify, cultural embattlement and survival. At this point, then, his interests only ‘look like’ Atheism, based on the general notion that any sort of skepticism or explanation void of supernatural answers might be, in some way, ‘Atheistic.’ Likewise, and as mentioned above, these early interests appear somewhat mimetic to Bernard’s post-communist liminal Atheism: negative in their rejection of an established ideology, yet also positive in the promotion of something different (see the above reference to Martin 2007a, 89). Thus, rather than being merely a dependent refutation of an established belief—‘I do not believe X’—Joe’s position, his Scientific Worldview, is offering its own explanation—‘I believe X.’ These theories are liminal at this point because, though negative and positive in their acknowledgment and refutation of something already established, they are yet without a direct or specific entity, such as we shall find in his interactions with Clarissa and Jed. First, however, this Scientific Worldview needs a bit more nuancing, which can be found within his broader use of narrative.

Though appraising himself as a marginal outsider to his own profession, his text is steeped in references—some even cited in his acknowledgements—to a discourse focused on cognitive and biological theories. Likewise, from an outside perspective we might equally trace influences provided by what Richardson (2001) refers to as the ‘Decade of the Brain,’ a context embedded with textual citations to neuro-scientific research such as neuroimaging, molecular biology, genetics, psychopharmacology, and cognitive science (Richardson, 181). Picked up by Bryce, Adams, and Coyle (2000: 8-14), this discourse develops into a theoretical ‘hybridization,’ the linking of ‘the study of the mind’ with the ‘study of the brain.’ We see this take shape in Joe’s account via his references to sociobiology and evolutionary psychology, re-conceptualized for his interests as a Social Science Model (Joe. 69). Given his own orientations, we can further source his worldview as developed upon such notions as Pinker’s (1994) discussion of language as a cultural development, Damasio’s (1994) contention that feelings and emotions are related to nerve system development, or Wright’s (1995) summation of evolutionary psychology as determined by human emotion: “altruism, compassion, empathy, love, conscience, the sense of justice—all of these things, the things that hold society together, the things that allow our species to think so highly of itself, can now confidently be said to have a firm genetic basis” (Wright, 26.).

Aside from his previous citation to a genetic understanding of religious belief, his reliance on evolutionary psychology is perhaps best demonstrated via his brief rejoinder to Clarissa on the

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biological meaning behind the human capacity to smile (Joe. 69-70). Focused on the re-examination of human nature, and sourcing his conception from Dawkins (1976 [2006]) and Wilson (1975), Joe contends that human beings “do not arrive in this world as blank sheets,” or, as he describes, as “all-purpose learning devices” (Joe. 69-70). Nor, he continues, are they mere ‘products’ of their environments. Rather, Joe’s understanding derives from an evolutionary and naturalistic position:

We evolved like every other creature on earth. We come into this world with limitations and capacities, all of them genetically prescribed. Many of our features, our foot shape, our eye colour, are fixed, and others, like our social and sexual behaviour, and our language learning, await the life we live to take their course. But the course is not infinitely variable. We have a nature. The word from the human biologists bears Darwin out; the way we wear our emotions on our faces is pretty much the same in all cultures, and the infant smile is one social signal that is particularly easy to isolate and study. It appears in !Kung San babies of the Kalahari at the same time as it does in American children of Manhattan’s Upper West Side, and it has the same effect (Joe. 70).

Where Dawkins’ ‘neo-Darwinist’ picture of the self seems to inspire Joe’s idea of the human body genetically disconnected from external influences, it is Wilson’s theory of ‘gene-culture co-evolution’ that has the greater influence, particularly his conception of ‘sociobiology’ that sees human behavior as being amenable to evolutionary analysis through the interconnectivity of biology and social interactions. In fact, in his own description Joe quotes from Wilson’s *On human Nature* (1978) in order to justify his argument that a human trait such as an infant smile is really the result of an innate reaction to the preservation of genes, rather than for any individual purpose:

In Edward O. Wilson’s cool phrase, it ‘triggers a more abundant share of parental love and affection.’ Then he goes on, ‘In the terminology of the zoologist, it is a social releaser, an inborn and relatively invariant signal that mediates a basic social relationship’ (Wilson quoted, Joe. 70).

When assimilated to his moral and reductionist interests, these narrative influences combine to form a more distinct basis for his Scientific Worldview. While I again concede here that this consists of a formalized and developed identity, shaped and defined by a more positivistic position in reflection of his instinctual justifications for letting go the rope—and thus reducing religious belief to soporific superstitions—I also acknowledge that it still does not represent a fully-formed type of ‘Atheism’ in and of itself. Even when influenced by external stimuli such as Ridley’s (1999) flippant use of Biblical narration to introduce the origin and power of genetics,⁸ or Dawkins’ reduction of ‘God’ to the product of a particular cultural evolution that is replicated and transmitted through parasitic imitation,⁹ Joe’s ‘Atheism’ is still not entirely concretized. That is, though it is developed and moderately established via the particular interests he has made available to us through his text, it is not culturally validated and fully constructed without complementation. It is to this interactional order in which I now turn.

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While an individual ‘identification’ is essential in developing a sense of self, ‘selfhood’ does not develop in mere isolation. As we have seen, it is instead ‘socially constructed,’ and is thus never ‘unilateral’ (Jenkins, 40 and 42). While Joe and Clarissa represent two differing perspectives concerning the accident, as well as how one might proceed in coping with this sort of tragedy, their opposition is not necessarily the most pertinent in deciphering the nuances of Joe’s Atheism. Yet, my

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dismissal of their dialectic would equally prove detrimental to my anthropological reading of Joe's text due to the interactional validation it provides prior to his confrontations with Jed. Therefore, my examination of how Joe has set up—formed—Clarissa's oppositional position in relation to his own will be predominately shorter than my discussion of his and Jed's, and should thus be seen as more of a transitional conduit.

Joe and Clarissa are partners throughout the narrative, and as they are bound by their affections for one another they equally represent two sides of a relational structure. Likewise, their identities are joined within a collective by their like-minded beliefs, in some ways reflective of June and Bernard's origination in communism. Joe illustrates this through a description of their 'post-mortem' discussion on the night of the accident, where through the ritual of re-living their emotions and experiences, their differing perceptions are accommodated into a single narrative.

For his perspective, Joe's state of mind is reflective of the interests I have thus far discussed:

He had been on the rope so long that I began to think he might stay there until the balloon drifted down, or the boy came to his senses and found the valve that released the gas, or until some beam, or god, or some other impossible cartoon thing came and gathered him up. Even as I had that hope we saw him slip down right to the end of the rope. And still he hung there. For two second, three, four. And then he let go. Even then, there was a fraction of time when he barely fell, and I still thought there was a chance that a freak physical law, a furious thermal, some phenomenon no more astonishing than the one we were witnessing would intervene and bear him up. We watched him drop. You could see the acceleration. No forgiveness, no special dispensation for flesh, or bravery, or kindness. Only ruthless gravity (Joe. 16).

Then, through his description of their discussion, Joe reveals to us Clarissa's seemingly mirrored and amended response, inflected through a quote from Milton's *Paradise Lost*—"Hurl'd headlong flaming from th'Ethereal Sky" (Milton, quoted by Clarissa, cited by Joe. 29)—that demonstrates in the same manner how her perception is built upon her own vocational interests:

What had come to mind were angels, not Milton's reprobates hurled from Heaven, but the embodiment of all goodness and justice in a golden figure swooping from the cloud base to gather the falling man in its arms. In that delirious thought-rich second it had seemed to her that [John's] fall was a challenge no angel could resist, and his death denied their existence. Did it need denying, I wanted to ask, but she was gripping my hand and saying, 'He was a good man,' with a sudden pleading note, as though I were about to condemn him. 'The boy was in the basket, and [John] wouldn't let go. He had children of his own. He was a good man. (Clarissa, cited by Joe. 31).

Next, and directly after this description, he associates Clarissa's more romantic or imaginative perception as based on her maternal instincts, noting her association of John's death with the fact that he was a 'father,' as well as a 'good man.' This is all the more poignant when he reveals to us Clarissa's physical inability, due to a botched 'routine surgical procedure,' to bear children. Though this 'feminized' perception is never again taken up within his own narrative, it is nevertheless telling of the gendered differentiation between them. However, this diverts from June and Bernard's more direct disaffections by Joe's description of his and Clarissa's later discussion about the 'meaning' of John's death.

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As it is later revealed, soon after the chaos of the accident the boy was able to overcome his fears and navigate the balloon to safety, in essence making John's death pointless. He had, as Joe remarks, 'died for nothing' (Joe. 32). To this notion, and especially in regard to Joe's perception that he had "helped kill [John]" (Ibid.), Clarissa herself struggles with the meaninglessness of John's sacrifice by arguing: "It must mean something" (Clarissa quoted, Joe. 32). This, as Joe asserts, is not necessarily a nod toward Clarissa's June-like conversion, as she affirms—"Don't worry, Joe. I'm not going weird on you" (Ibid.)—and he later confirms—"[Clarissa] has never expressed the remotest interest in the new-age package" (Joe. 86).¹⁰ However, it is still a particular ideology against which he struggles:

I'd never liked this line of thinking. [John's] death was pointless—that was part of the reason we were in shock. Good people sometimes suffered and died, not because their goodness was being tested, but precisely because there was nothing, no one, to test it. No one but us (Ibid. 32).¹¹

Clarissa regards Joe's rationalism here, in particular toward his simple response, "we tried to help and we failed" (Ibid. 33), as being 'child-like,' which he in turn perceives as a critical association of his thinking as a "kind of innocence" (Ibid.). She later validates this criticism—as well as Joe's Scientific Worldview—by referring to his earlier discussed biological and genetic perception of the smile as "rationalism gone berserk" (Clarissa quoted, Joe. 70). This exchange, which I will quote in full below, is perhaps where I might concede the most direct correlation between Joe and Clarissa and June and Bernard, with the further acknowledgment that these individuals show no evidential connection to one another. In response to his neo-Darwinist theories, Joe describes Clarissa's critique of his ideologies as a sort of "new fundamentalism" (Ibid.), a line of thinking developed along a reductionist progression, and infected throughout with a myopic focus on significant parts, rather than on the 'whole:'

'Twenty years ago you and your friends were all socialists and you blamed the environment for everyone's hard luck. Now you've got us trapped in our genes, and there's a reason for everything!' She was perturbed when I read Wilson's passage to her. Everything was being stripped down, she said, and in the process some larger meaning was lost. What a zoologist had to say about a baby's smile could be of no real interest. The truth of that smile was in the eye and heart of the parent, and in the unfolding love which only had meaning through time (Clarissa quoted and cited, Joe. 70).

Joe's embodied self, shaped by his internal self-definition, and 'presented' to Clarissa via these two interactions, encapsulates the transformation of one's self-image into a public image, so that we can see, through Joe's response to Clarissa's romantic notions about John's death, as well as to her more maternal critiques of his genetic understanding of the smile, are imbued throughout with the scientific interests that shape his self-image. However, while founded on types of opposition, their dialectic is not directly oppositional between Theism/Atheism. Rather, like his critical assessment of 'religious belief' above, their interactive collectivity here is more indicative of how his interest-based self-image has transformed into a public image which, as we shall see next, will become more progressively defined as an 'Atheism' when Clarissa's position within this interactional order is exchanged with Jed's.

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One of the major side effects of Jed's affliction is a solipsistic worldview, so that his notion of 'Theism' is manifested into a singular obsession with 'bringing Joe to God.' That is, because there is no reality outside his own, his perception of the world is only viewable through this filter. This—almost too perfectly—sets up an ideal dialectic between he and Joe who, as the artificer of their eight interactions, makes use of Jed in a manner quite mimetic of June's black dogs. Consequently, the analysis below is dependent on his interpretation, and thus should not be deemed an accurate nor objective description of Jed's Theism. Rather, and as I intend to use these eight instances—divided between face-to-face confrontations and letters from Jed to Joe—Joe's interpretation gives us an insight into his own identity development via reflection and critique.

In their first face-to-face interaction, Joe describes Jed's religiosity as a benign coping mechanism, his invitation to Joe to 'pray together' embodying an experiential or ritual aspect of his world-view. Joe further contextualizes this dialogue as taking place just after the accident, and immediately after his rational reminder about the neurological vacancy in John's body. In this way, this encounter acts as a contiguous validation, Jed's request providing Joe's narrative a correlative anthropological service. He describes himself as offering a polite declination—"I'm sorry,' I said pleasantly. 'It's not my thing at all'"(Joe. 25)—which is greeted with a further entreaty: "Look, we don't know each other and there's no reason why you should trust me [...] [e]xcept that God has brought us together in this tragedy and we have to, you know, make whatever sense of it we can" (Jed quoted, Joe. 25). Again, Joe describes himself as apologetically refusing. It is here where his description begins to present Jed's solipsistic disappointment, his inability to accept that Joe is incapable of sharing his own view of things: "I don't think you understand. You shouldn't, you know, think of this as some kind of duty. It's like, your own needs are being answered? It's got nothing to do with me, really, I'm just the messenger. It's a gift" (Ibid). At this point in the narrative, and after Joe depicts himself as taking on a tone of finality in his last rejection, their conversation becomes more dialogical, which I amend here without Joe's commentary:

Jed: What is it exactly that stands in your way? I mean, are you able to tell me, do you actually know yourself what it is?
Joe: Nothing. Nothing's standing in my way.
Jed: Then why don't you take a chance on it. You might see the point of it, the strength it can give you. Please, why don't you?
Joe: Because, my friend, no one's listening. There's no one up there
(Joe and Jed, in dialogue, Joe. 26).

Through Joe's description this initial dialogue gives us a simplistic introduction, depicting these two individuals as mirrored or dependent variables. Both men, regardless of Joe's hand in designing this interaction, are presented here as stereotypical representations, their final bit of dialogue almost perfectly matched in tone. Likewise, it also provides an initial alignment of Joe's Scientific Worldview with a specific entity, the rationalism used just prior to this interaction now attached to the belief of an Other.

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With their second interaction, these introductory notions begin to crystalize. Where with the first Joe's Atheism is merely hinted at, here it begins to take on a more specific shape, validated not only by Jed's impassioned requests, but by his clearly deranged mental state as well. Joe describes this conversation as taking place on the street outside his and Clarissa's flat. He has reluctantly agreed to speak with Jed, and finds his mood erratic and tense, yet albeit intriguing, describing him here as less 'menacing' as before, and more fragile, agitated, or desperate. Jed refers to himself as a victim, Joe's victim, and confusedly states: "you love me, and there's nothing I can do but return your love" (Jed quoted, Joe. 63). He begins to cry and declares that there is a 'reason' for their attachment, a 'purpose' that he describes as such:

To bring you to God, through love. You'll fight this like mad because you're a long way from your own feelings? But I know that the Christ is within you. At some level you know it too. That's why you fight it so hard with your education and reason and logic and this detached way you have of talking, as if you're not part of anything at all? You can pretend you don't know what I'm talking about, perhaps because you want to hurt me and dominate me, but the fact is I come bearing gifts. The purpose is to bring you to the Christ that is in you and that *is* you. That's what the gift of love is all about. It's really very simple [emphasis in original] (Ibid. 66)?

Throughout his description, Joe's perception of Jed's religious beliefs shifts in and out of focus, offering an insight into his own disorganized intentions in shaping this confrontation in the way that he has. As he himself states: "the language [Jed] was using set off responses in me, old emotional sub-routines" (Joe. 67).

By filtering Jed's emotional state through a lens of his Scientific Worldview, his depiction is clearly influenced, so that his diagnosis characterizes Jed as an individual suffering from a psychological or medical derangement awaiting a cure. In this same way, by linking Jed's religious ideologies with his illness, Joe's seemingly implicit notions about the 'soul' or experiential propitiation become intertwined with the idea that when Jed is cured of his mental affliction, he would likewise be cured of his religiosity. Hence, with this interaction, Joe's Atheism appears less like the product of mere rejection or denial, and instead like something imbued with his particular type of rationalism.

Though significantly shorter than the previous two, their third face-to-face interaction pushes Joe into an identity crisis. After realizing that Jed's obsession is not something that will "be over by the end of the day" (Joe. 73), he describes himself as turning to his writing as a consolation, a coping mechanism wherein he seeks out the tangible and empirical. It is here where he first describes himself as marginalized or parasitic upon the scientific community, and when he first introduces his genetic explanation of the infant smile. This is also where he admits that his efforts in diagnosing Jed's affliction bring back old anxieties about whom he perceives himself to be. By his own description, he places himself between two worlds: on one end, he again finds his rationalism intermixing with his diagnosis, so as to further develop his Scientific Worldview by means of transmuting Jed's religiosity into a product of his illness; on the other, these interactions are causing him to self-examine his place within the collective group out of which his sense of self might once have derived. Akin to Bernard's liminal Atheism, Joe's worldview is being both established and dis-established, given meaning by

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Jed's neurotic Theism, yet also reminding him of his place outwith the communal organization within which he was once an active member. His crisis here is evocative of an autonomous self-perception, or rather, of an alienation and externalization, what Jenkins refers to as a type of anxious isolation indicative of an "existential world in which individual moral judgments derive from personal preference or feeling, rather than from external authority or the responsibilities of position" (Jenkins 51).¹²

While this crisis seems to play a major role in defining both Joe's own identity, as well as Jed's role in shaping it, it also leads to a curious orientational change, a metaphorical narrative shift that mimics his confessional description of self as "an outsider to my own profession" (Joe. 77). Switching the narrative point-of-view from himself to Clarissa, Joe's self-perception gains an external validation, allowing him to engage with himself as if from another's viewpoint. Likewise, Joe-as-Clarissa's interpretation is quite reflective of his earlier description of his first interaction with Jed, so that his crisis-of-self appears to originate within a sort of consonant protection aimed at pacifying the anxiety that has arisen out of his sense of isolation: "the department, the professors and peers and the office he says he needs are irrelevant, but they're his protection against failure because they will never let him in" (Ibid. 82-83). Furthermore, this equally seems to suggest that his own self-perception is just as mired in obsession as Jed's:

He is back with this old frenzied ambition because he's upset—Sunday is getting to him in different ways too. The trouble with [Joe]'s precise and careful mind is that it takes no account of its own emotional field. He seems unaware that his arguments are no more than ravings, they are an aberration and they have a cause. He is therefore vulnerable, but for now she cannot make herself feel protective. Like her, he has reached the senseless core of [John's] tragedy, but he reached it unaware (Ibid. 83).

This is more accurately validated in a letter written by Clarissa and added to Joe's text toward the conclusion:

As the [Jed] thing grew I watched you go deeper into yourself and further and further away from me. You were manic, and driven, and very lonely. You were on a case, a mission. Perhaps it became a substitute for the science you wanted to be doing. You did the research, you made the logical inferences and you got a lot of things right, but in the process you forgot how to confide" (Clarissa, quoted, Joe. 217).

Perhaps more specifically, this sense of isolation is a result of Joe's re-orientation. Prompted by his actions during the accident, his isolation is symbolic of his self-construction. He is striving here to find a consonant equilibrium between the internal and external factors at play in this re-calibration of 'selfhood' that, when measured against Jed's more specific Theist ideology, develops into a more specific Atheist one. As well, this is intriguingly similar to the clinical description of Jed's obsessions by Wenn and Camia:

It was at this time of increased loneliness that [Jed] became aware that he faced a test. On a country walk he was initiated into a makeshift community of passers-by struggling to tether a balloon caught in strong winds. Such a transformation, from a 'socially empty' life to intense team-work may have been the dominating factor in precipitating the syndrome, for it was when the drama was over that he became 'aware' of [Joe]'s love; the inception of a delusional relationship ensured that [Jed] would not have to return to his former isolation" (Wenn and Camia, Appendix 1, 239).

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Basing this analysis on Mullen and Pathe's (1994) clinical interpretation—"the common features in these descriptions is of a socially inept individual isolated from others, be it by sensitivity, suspiciousness, or assumed superiority" (Mullen and Pathe, 620)—Joe and Jed's isolationism becomes seemingly inseparable from their modes of identification, to the point that they appear pragmatically identical: where Jed's isolation has 'intensified' and 'personalized' his religious convictions to the point of substituting 'God' for other 'intimate relationships' (Wenn and Camia, 237 and 241), Joe's marginalization has engendered an interest-based focus on scientific rationalism that not only contributes to his view on the genetic origins of ethics, but to his construction of Atheism as well.

By their fourth interaction, this sense of isolation is imbued with a mirrored feeling of emotional betrayal. Where Joe feels Clarissa has betrayed him in not empathizing with his fear of Jed, Jed in turn feels betrayed by Joe for not empathizing with his own emotions. Granted, while the latter is depicted at this stage as violently lost within his disorder, Jed described here as a 'madman' yelling obscenities and brought to an emotional tipping point, this shared sense of betrayal between them seems to enliven Joe as he again turns to his 'science' for a solution; a 'turn' that will be more apparent in my discussion of Jed's letters below.

While their final two face-to-face encounters afford a sense of finality to their interactions, they do not—at least for my intentions herein—contribute much more to Joe's construction of identity. That is, though he is vindicated in his proper diagnosis, and though their final confrontation ends with Jed's arrest and Joe and Clarissa's eventual reconciliation, these interactions are not as validating as the first three, nor as insightful as Joe's inclusion and analysis of Jed's letters. It is to that latter discussion in which I now turn.

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The addition of Jed's letters corroborates my reading of Joe's text by providing an evidential interpretation: Jed's description of Joe's Atheism, as well as Joe's description of Jed's Theism, revealing a reflexivity on both accounts, the self and public both internalized and externalized. Though he includes three of them in their entirety, I will here focus on his interpretation of the first two, specifically drawing out the thematic elements that arise in reflection of Jed's Theist identity and how that is validated, and reflected, in Joe's Atheist one.

The first is placed after Joe's description of their fourth face-to-face interaction, positioned chronologically to when he received it in the course of the action depicted within. In it we learn certain aspects about Jed's interests, in many ways mimetic of Joe's disclosure at the start of his own account. Intriguingly, he inserts it without commentary or description, perhaps in order to provide a type of evidential description, allowing Jed to 'speak for himself.' If this is the case, then it works quite nicely in my favor, for its inclusion offers the chance to perceive Jed's worldview without Joe's narrative

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translation, transforming it into a primary source against which to further substantiate my perception of Joe's identity.

As pursuant to his illness, Jed's 'embodied self' appears myopically focused on his religious convictions, and though he does not cite any particular dogmatic or denominational sources for his beliefs, his confessional style offers an introduction to the intense and almost overwhelming power of the correlation between his condition and his worldview. In this way, his Theism is insular and personal, a private conception of his own creation. He begins the letter with an invocation:

I close my eyes and thank God out loud for letting you exist, for letting me exist in the same time and place as you, and for letting this strange adventure between us begin. I thank Him for every little thing about us. This morning I woke and on the wall beside my bed was a perfect disc of sunlight and I thanked Him for that same sunlight falling on you! Just as last night the rain that drenched you drenched me too and bound us. I praise God that He has sent me to you. (Ibid.).

He reminds Joe of the difficulty and 'purpose' behind God's plan for them both: "I know there is difficulty and pain ahead of us, but the path that He sets us on is hard for a purpose. His purpose! It tests us and strengthens us, and in the long run it will bring us to even greater joy" (Ibid.).

He next offers an apology. He asks Joe's forgiveness in not immediately recognizing their love in their first glance. He portrays himself as unworthy, in denial, and ignorant of God's plan for them, in many ways echoing the fearful humility of Biblical characters called¹³ by God:

I stand before you naked, defenceless, dependent on your mercy, begging your forgiveness. For you knew our love from the very beginning. You recognized in that glance that passed between us, up there on the hill after he fell, all the charge and power and blessedness of love, while I was dull and stupid, denying it, trying to protect myself from it, trying to pretend that it wasn't happening, that it *couldn't* happen like this, and I ignored what you were telling me with your eyes and your every gesture [emphasis in original] (Ibid. 93-94).

He then provides a brief account of his life. He gives details about his home, specifying that it came to him through an inheritance after his mother's death, who herself inherited it from her sister (Ibid.). He reveals that his father died when he was eight, and that he has an older sister who lives in Australia, and a 'handful' of cousins. He believes himself to be the only person in his family to earn an education past the age of sixteen. He describes the dissatisfaction he felt while teaching English as a foreign language near Leicester Square, complaining about the lack of 'seriousness' in his fellow instructors. He critiques them for their criticisms of his religious beliefs, and conspiratorially makes the presumption that they "talked behind my back because I cared about my religion—not fashionable these days" (Ibid. 96). He also associates his inheritance as being the result of sacred providence, making his isolation seem like a duty to be 'calm and attentive,' to pray and meditate, and to await God's purpose to unfold for him, as it did on the day he met Joe.

As a symptomatic product of his condition, this first letter almost ideally provides an exemplary illustration of Jed's de Clerembault's syndrome—which is also why Wenn and Camia use it. In it he speaks of his isolation, and how in that state his convictions intensified, so that his meditative focus on 'God's purpose' becomes one with his neurotic need to re-enter a communal relationship. He also

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speaks of the delusional ‘signs’ and ‘signals’ left for him by Joe as ‘tests’ of his commitment. As well, and perhaps most pertinent to my examination of this and Joe’s account, he details the seemingly ideal, and thus ‘designed’ fact that the object of his affection is an Atheist, affording his condition a sense of ‘certainty,’ which only grows after their later interactions. As he states:

There are barriers ahead, of course. Mountain ranges! The biggest of which is your denial of God. But I’ve seen through that, and you know it. In fact, you probably planned it that way. It’s a game you’re playing with me, part seduction, part ordeal. You are trying to probe the limits of my faith. Does it horrify you that I can see through you so easily? I hope it thrills you, the way it thrills me when you guide me with your messages, these codes that tap straight into my soul. I know that you’ll come to God, just as I know that it’s my purpose to bring you there, through love. Or, to put it another way, I’m going to mend your rift with God through the healing power of love (Ibid. 97).

As Wenn and Camia describe it, this dialectic opposition is impeccably harmonized by Jed’s ‘personal relationship’ with God, setting up in his mind a certainty that he perceives as imbued with divine intention: “The mission to ‘bring [Joe] to God’ may be seen as an attempt to achieve a fully integrated intrapsychic world in which internalized religious sentiment and delusional love became one” (Wenn and Camia, 241). Additionally, this reveals yet another correlation with my examination of Jeremy’s account, Jed’s intent to ‘bring Joe to God’ through the ‘healing power of love,’ seemingly indistinguishable from a statement made by June in her description of the ‘center’ around which orbited her conception of ‘Theism:’ “What matters is to make the connection with this centre, this inner being, and then extend and deepen it. Then carry it outwards, to others. The healing power of love” (June quoted, Jer. 60).

However, though this is almost equally identical to Jed’s conception of the ‘Christ within Joe’—“But I know that the Christ is within you [...] the purpose is to bring you to the Christ that is in you and that *is* you” [emphasis in original] (Jed quoted, Joe. 66)—which is also mimetic of Jeremy’s description of June’s beliefs—“unicorns, wood spirits, angels, mediums, self-healing, the collective unconscious, the ‘Christ within us’” (Jer. 46)—it can in no way be seen as based on, inspired by, or motivated by June’s Theism. These individuals have, to my knowledge, never interacted, and their conceptions appear as products of different transformations in their individual lives. For this reason, I believe these similarities are actually exemplary of their shared discursive context, the setting within which they have constructed their individual and personal ‘Theisms.’ That is, I view their shared interests and conceptualizations as indicative of the way their environments have contributed to, and shaped, their ideologies, which, we must remember, are also based on texts constructed by individuals who are equally shaped by their own oppositional contexts. This is also a great example of the precariousness in attempting to ‘generalize’ the meaning of terms like this. Thus, I conclude that these matching ‘Theisms’ are examples of discursive influences, which for Jed becomes more fully developed through Joe’s inclusion, and critical interpretation, of his second letter.

Placed once more at the chronological point in which he receives it, this letter is an interlude between Joe and Clarissa’s eventual separation. In it, Jed’s focus is mostly on describing Joe, in particular his oppositional criticism of Joe’s writing and scientific rationalism. He describes the process of reading

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Joe's articles—35 in total—as 'tortuous,' feeling pity for the 'innocent readers' whose minds were polluted by their 'sad' and 'dry' content. He states that in the process he heard every word spoken in Joe's voice, a connection whereby each article is described as a "letter sent by you into the future that was going to contain us both" (Jed. 133). He asks Joe's intentions, if he wrote them out of malice or insult, or if they were meant to test him. Then he reminds himself, once again, of his duty:

He needs my help, I told myself whenever I came close to giving up, he needs me to set him free from his little cage of reason. I had moments when I wondered if I had truly understood what God wanted from me. Was I to deliver into His hands the author of these hateful pieces against Him? Perhaps I was intended for something simpler and purer. I mean, I knew you wrote about science, and I was prepared to be baffled or bored, but I didn't know you wrote out of contempt (Ibid. 133-134).

For Jed, this letter represents an opportunity, a chance to reflectively 'reach out' to Joe via his own discourse. For Joe, it represents a threat, a piece of textual evidence to support his diagnosis about Jed's hostile nature. For my intentions, it represents a reflective validation for both of them. Jed's interpretation of Joe's writing further establishes his position, while at the same time providing a discursive insight into Joe's own interests, like a filter, such as Joe offers in his own descriptions of their interactions. Seeing Joe from this side of the spectrum, through Jed's Theistic filter, we discover a slightly more refined sense of his Scientific Worldview.

Out of all the articles, Jed takes explicit offence to one in particular's adoption of 'characterization' and 'fictionalization' in an analysis of God and the Bible. Thinking perhaps Joe's intentions were meant as a joke, Jed admits to being 'shocked' by the callousness and arrogance of Joe's reduction of God as a 'literary character.'

You pretend to know what or who He is—a literary character, you say, like something out of a novel. You say the best minds in the field are prepared to take 'an educated guess' at who invented Yahweh, that the evidence points to a woman who was living around 1000 BC, Bathsheba, the Hittite who slept with David.¹⁴ A woman novelist dreamed up God! The best minds would rather die than presume to know so much. You're dealing in powers neither you nor any person on earth can have any grasp of. You go on to say that Jesus Christ was a character too, mostly made up by St. Paul and 'whoever' wrote the gospel of St. Mark (Ibid. 134).

Joe's demotion of God and Jesus to mere 'characters,' likely based on his analysis of Biblical Criticism, proves excruciating for Jed. He defends the existence of God, again, by means of the power gained by combining his love and faith:

How is it possible to love God and love you at the same time? Through faith alone, Joe. Not through facts, or pretend facts, or intellectual arrogance, but by trusting in God's wisdom and love as a living presence in our lives, the kind of presence that no human, let alone literary character, could ever have (Ibid.).

In fact, Jed attempts to use the 'grandeur' of science as a defense against Joe's arguments, as well as to bolster his own beliefs, a sort of mirroring effect whereby they seem to both be using the same material to argue two opposing positions:

You might have got the impression that I hate science. I was never much good at school and I don't take personal interest in the latest advances, but I know it is a wonderful thing. The study and measurement of nature is really nothing more than a form of extended prayer, a celebration of the glory of God's universe. The more we find out about the intricacies of His creation, the more we realize how little we know and how little we are (Ibid. 135).

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Moreover, he contends that Joe's use of science to remove God's power as 'creator' through scientific discoveries is 'childish' and 'sad.' After all, he argues, it is God that gives us this ability to think this way in the first place:

You write that we know enough about chemistry these days to speculate how life began on earth. Little mineral pools warmed by the sun, chemical bonding, protein chains, amino acids etc. The primal soup. We've flushed God out of this particular story, you said, and now he's been driven to his last redoubt, among the molecules and particles of the quantum physicists. But it doesn't work, [Joe]. Describing how the soup is made isn't the same as knowing why it's made, or who the chef is. It's a puny rant against an infinite power. Somewhere among your protestations about God is a plea to be rescued from the traps of your own logic. Your articles add up to a long cry of loneliness. There's no happiness in all this denial. What can it give you in the end (Ibid.)?

More than this, Jed accuses Joe of wanting to supplant God, to become something divine himself:

I imagined you telling me in your cold way that God and His Only Son were just characters, like James Bond or Hamlet. Or that you yourself could make life in a laboratory flask, given a handful of chemicals and a few million years. It's not only that you deny there's a God—you want to take his place (Ibid. 136-137).

These rebukes are symbols and symptomatic of both his perception of Joe, as well as his own illness. He describes him as an intermediary 'adman,' a 'cheerleader' hired to "talk up other people's stuff" (Ibid. 137), an eerily mimetic critique of Joe's own reflective self-criticisms. He makes a list of his 'artificial interests,' stating with finality that the 'truth' Joe sees in writing about bacteria, particles, agriculture, insects, satellites, nano-technology, genetic engineering, and hydrogen engines, can never be as 'real' as things like 'love' and 'faith' (Ibid.). Likewise, he makes a conclusive assimilation of himself with God, warning Joe about the danger in denying the 'truth' of their love and the inevitability of their union:

Never deny my reality, because in the end you'll deny yourself. The despair I felt at your rejection of God had something to do with my sense that you were also rejecting me. Accept me, and you'll find yourself accepting God without a thought. So promise me. Show me your fury or bitterness. I won't mind. I'll never desert you. But never, never try to pretend to yourself that I don't exist (Ibid. 138).

Joe acknowledges this personal assimilation in his later interpretation, noting Jed's own sense of 'fictionalization' in his religious references: "His one concession to a source beyond himself was a couple of references to the story of Job, and even here it was not obvious that he had read the primary material" (Joe. 153). In the same analysis, Joe singles out Jed's use of 'fabrication' as indicative of a crisis or confusion, citing part of a letter not quoted in full:

'You looked uncomfortable,' he wrote once about seeing me in the street. 'You even looked as though you might have been in pain, but that shouldn't make you doubt us. Remember how much pain Job was in, and all the time God loved him.' Again, the unexamined assumption was that God and [Jed] were one, and between them they would settle the matter of our common fates. Another reference raised the possibility that I was God. 'We're both suffering, [Joe], we're both afflicted. The question is, which one of us is Job'" (Jed cited, Joe. 153)?

This 'confusion' carries over into Joe's assessment of Jed's 'Theism,' as he sees it as being based on an exclusive adherence to the "inner voice of his private God" (Joe. 153). Citing once more Jed's utter lack of textual references, Joe 'defines' Jed's religion as being 'dreamily vague,' assigning its meaning

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to the same discursive influences I mentioned above in the correlation between June's conception of religion and Jed's ideology about the 'Christ within Joe:'

There were very few biblical references in [Jed]'s correspondence. His religion was dreamily vague on the specifics of doctrine, and he gave no impression of being attached to any particular church. His belief was a self-made affair, generally aligned to the culture of personal growth and fulfillment. There was a lot of talk of destiny, of his 'path' and how he would not be deterred from following it, and of fate—his and mine entwined" (Jed cited, Joe. 152).

Additionally, Joe's analysis of Jed's conception of 'God' is inextricably linked with his construction of self, both internally and externally designed. Joe deems this a "perfect loose structure for a disturbed mind" (Joe. 152), threading a line through Jed's religiosity and illness, just as much as his own scientific rationalism binds him to his particular Atheism, once more reflective of their 'mirrored' dependency:

Often, God was a term interchangeable with self. God's love for mankind shaded into [Jed]'s love for me. God was undeniably 'within' rather than in his heaven, and believing in him was therefore a license to respond to the calls of feeling or intuition. It was the perfect loose structure for a disturbed mind. There were no constraints of theological nicety or religious observance, no social sanction or congregational calling to account, none of the moral framework that made religions viable, however failed their cosmologies (Joe. 152-153).

Through Joe's diagnostic interpretation, Jed's Theism appears disorganized and unstable, the mirrored reflection of his own ordered and structured rationalism. As such, he worryingly describes the isolation and internalization of Jed's 'love' and 'faith,' how the pattern of his love "was not shaped by external influences" (Ibid. 143), but was rather self-determined:

His was a world determined from the inside, driven by private necessity, and this way it could remain intact. Nothing could prove him wrong, nothing was needed to prove him right. If I had written a letter declaring passionate love, it would have made no difference. He crouched in a cell of his own devising, teasing out meanings, imbuing nonexistent exchanges with their drama of hope or disappointment, always scrutinizing the physical world, its random placements and chaotic noise and colours, for the correlatives of his current emotional state—and always finding satisfaction (Ibid.).

He further determines Jed's condition as "love's prison of self-reference" (Ibid.), so that Jed, the prisoner, is locked within his own inviolable sense of solipsism. Yet, Jed does not appear entirely alone. In a self-conscious nod to the dependent nature of interactional validation, Joe's self-described actions begin to mimic Jed's accusations, so that their worlds begin to 'entwine,' much like their 'fates' cited above.¹⁵ In his obsessive need to 'test' Jed and catch him in an incriminating reaction, he describes himself as acting out his descriptions, on one occasion, and filled with the desperation and curiosity of his influence on Jed's condition, he describes himself as tempting him with a familiar ritual: "watched by [Jed], I lingered by the privet and ran my hands along it to imprint it with a message, and then I turned his way and looked at him. But he wouldn't come, and nor did he refer to that moment in the letter he wrote later the same day" (Ibid. 143). As such, Joe's narrative begins to adopt Jed's tone of desperation, noting a sense of 'bereavement' at Jed's sudden refusal to talk with him, and thus provide validation for his fears:

I wanted more than that. I longed for it. Please put the weapon in my hands, [Jed]. One little threat would have given me enough to take to the police, but he denied me, he played with me and held back, just as he said I did. I needed him to reiterate his threat because I wanted the

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certainty of it, and the fact that he would not give me satisfaction kept my suspicion alive that sooner or later he would do me harm (Ibid. 142).

Likewise, he describes himself as obsessively reading and re-reading Jed's letters, a mirrored description of Jed reading his articles. This process also depicts a pragmatic ritual not unlike the method adopted by an anthropologist who might treat the letters as 'data,' a dialogical transcription he must translate:

I gathered all [Jed]'s letters together, arranged them chronologically and fixed them in a clasp folder. I lay on the chaise longue turning the pages slowly from the beginning, looking out for and marking significant passages. These I typed out, with location references in brackets. By the end, I had four sheets of extracts of which I made three copies, placing each in a plastic folder. This patient activity brought on in me a kind of organizational trance, the administrator's illusion that all the sorrow in the world can be brought to heel with touch-typing, a decent laser printer and a box of paper clips (Joe. 151).

In what he describes as compiling a 'dossier of threats,' Joe is once more marking himself an artificer, the creator of a text, and thus description, of an individual or action. He is constructing Jed here in a certain way, molding him into an oppositional, and thus validating, identity. In seeking out the 'real threats' in Jed's writing he has become his creator, making conscious choices about how to manufacture this 'true fiction' in order to define Jed in a particular fashion. His research becomes a scientific obsession, his own prison of isolation, wherein his meticulous ordering of Jed's correspondence takes up the methodological ritual of re-orientation, of clarifying Jed's chaos in order to compile an identity built around what he perceives to be a threat, not just to his physical self, but to his embodied self and sense of 'identification' as well. From his perspective, he has become an observer, forming his subject's identity through an objective and rational base. Yet, from my end, Joe is equally a subject, and his obsession with Jed's obsession illustrates an ideal dialectical snapshot, an oppositional validation between two subjects whose dialogical—both verbal and literary—interactions act as evidential data concerning the process by which Joe defines himself in reflection of an Other.

This provides for us a more nuanced interpretation of both men's relational need of each other. When placed within Joe's account, these letters appear as mirrored expressions, reflective first-person descriptions of both Self and Other, dialectically supportive of an interactional validation. In reference to my own interpretation of Joe's Atheism, they add a secondary layer to his own self-description, much in the way their dialogues introduce a dialectical confirmation to his Scientific Worldview. Side by side they function as a whole, one validating the other, collectively presenting the discursive data necessary in formulating an interpretation of identity.

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I will conclude here with two specifics. First, through their interactions, both face-to-face and textual, Joe and Jed become an entwined entity based upon necessity. Even though his inclusion in Joe's life leaves a destructive scar, Jed seems an essential part of Joe's process of identification. Thus, I contend that even with all the pain he causes him, Joe needs Jed. Their oppositional dialectic not only

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illustrates the difference necessary for Joe to validate his science-based Atheist interests, it also affords him the opportunity to use these same interests within the process of defining Jed, and thus himself.

Second, because of this necessity, Joe's Atheism appears here as a dependent variable. While his interests seem innocuously based within a particular type of scientific rationalism, exhibited by his description of John's fall or the moral and ethical dilemma faced by he and the others in their decisions to save themselves, they are not entirely 'Atheistic' until he meets Jed. That is, though he offers hints that his Atheism is based upon his rationalism—which I incorporated into a distinct Scientific Worldview—these ideologies do not become significantly validated, and thus established, until he begins interacting with Jed's Theism, regardless of their origins or whether they might be symptomatic of his illness. Their dialectic, poised between Jed's fervent and impassioned attempts to 'bring Joe to God,' and Joe's descriptive reduction of these attempts through his diagnostic and empirical assessments, illustrates an Atheism that, like that between June and Bernard, is composed of a dependent refutation, and then promotion, of an ideology inherently 'parasitic' upon the beliefs and rituals used to define particular monotheistic and 'God-based' Theisms.

¹ Jeremy identifies June as being sixty-seven years old in 1987: "that sixty-seven could be early in the end-game" (Jer. 31).

² For information and images of the Dolmen de la Prunarede and the village of St. Maurice de Navacelles, see <http://www.trekearth.com/gallery/Europe/France/South/Languedoc-Roussillon/Saint-Maurice-Navacelles/photo1353121.htm> (accessed 13 February 2013).

³ For details on the restaurant at Les Tilleuls in St. Maurice where June and Bernard—as well as Jeremy, forty years later—stayed, see http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Restaurant_Review-g3490621-d4756520-Reviews-Les_Tilleuls-Saint_Maurice_Navacelles_Herault_Languedoc_Roussillon.html (accessed 14 February 2014).

⁴ "Institutions are established patterns of practice, recognized by such actors, which have force as 'the way things are done.'" See Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 45.

⁵ See also Thrower (1992); Smith's (1994) discussion of Marxism as 'quasi-religion'—which is really just another term for 'civil religion;' and Dixon (2002).

⁶ See also, Aveling (1907); Fabro (1968), 7; Cliteur (2009), 12; Smart (2012); Hyman (2009), 27-29; and Buckley (1990), 14-17 and 338.

⁷ "Identification and collectivity are generated as emergent by-products of the transactions and negotiations of individuals pursuing their interests." See Jenkins, 7.

⁸ "In the beginning was the word. The word proselytised the sea with its message, copying itself unceasingly and forever. The word discovered how to rearrange chemicals so as to capture little eddies in the stream of entropy and make them live." Ridley (1999), 11.

⁹ "The 'everlasting arms' hold out a cushion against our own inadequacies which, like a doctor's placebo, is none the less effective for being imaginary. These are some of the reasons why the idea of God is copied so readily by successive generations of individual brains. God exists, if only in the form of a meme with high survival value, or infective power, in the environment provided by human culture." Dawkins (1976 [2006]), 193.

¹⁰ Granted, this statement is made by Joe adopting Clarissa's perspective, and is made in response to his accusation: "I thought even you were above this kind of new-age drivel." Thus, Clarissa's like-minded position here might be nothing more than Joe's creation. Sadly, not much more is given about her religious beliefs, so I must be content with these speculations.

¹¹ Note the similarity here with his earlier response to Jed: "Because, my friend, no one's listening. There's no one up there" (Joe and Jed, in dialogue, Joe. 26).

¹² As a further reference, Jenkins cites this as related to Marx's (1844) discussion of alienation-as-estrangement, Durkheim's (1893, 11-88) differentiation between similarity and solidarity in his concept of 'anomie,' and MacIntyre's (1985, 11-14 and 16-35) notion of the 'emotive self.'

¹³ For example, see Moses—Exodus 3:11-12; Samuel—1 Samuel: 3-10; Isaiah—Isaiah 6: 5-6; Jeremiah—Jeremiah 1: 4-9; Jonah—Jonah 1-3; Mary—Luke 1: 29-38; and Saul/Paul—Acts 9: 1-9.

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¹⁴ I am not entirely certain what Jed means by this, and a review of Joe's writing lends no answers, nor any such reference. Additionally, a cursory inquiry to a few Biblical Scholars, Theologians, and other professionals returned no basis for Jed's reference here. I believe, then, that this theory stems from Jed's misunderstanding.

¹⁵ This is mimetic, as well, of an earlier description of Joe's fear of being left alone as Clarissa leaves for work, and just before his and Jed's second interaction: "standing there on the polished dance floor parquet I felt like a mental patient at the end of visiting hours. *Don't leave me here with my mind*, I thought. *Get them to let me out* [emphases in original]" (Joe. 58). As well, it is especially symbolic of Jed's later incarceration.

CONCLUSION: SUMMATION AND DEFENSE

From the outset, my intention herein has been to promote the utility—as well as ability—of using amateur textual accounts for cultural insights about Atheist identity construction, in lieu of more traditional or professional ethnography. This was done for three reasons: a lack of existent ethnographic data on the subject, the ambiguity of the term ‘Atheism’ within academic discourse, and the difficulty in locating a distinct organizational type of Atheism with which to conduct participant observation. Choosing two accounts that I believe represent suitable substitutes, I examined the Atheist construction within in order to create an ‘ethnographic understanding’ about how Atheism-as-identity is constructed within the specific contexts of those texts. I contend that, though it would be terminologically inappropriate to define them as ‘ethnography,’ I do believe, after careful examination, that in many ways they are at least ethnographically suggestive. I defend this conclusion for two specific reasons.

First, these two texts are indicative of ‘discourse’ and ‘signature,’ categories borrowed from Geertz’s (1988) conception of ethnography as a ‘kind of writing,’ that translate into ‘textual format’ and ‘voice.’ On the ‘discursive’ end, Jeremy’s text is reflective, or even mimetic, of the translation of a fieldwork account, defined by Clifford (1986) as embodying the rhetoric of the “autobiography and the ironic self-portrait” (Clifford, 14). Exemplified by texts such as Leiris’ *L’Afrique Fantôme* (1934), Levi-Straus’ *Tristes Tropiques* (1955), and Bohannon’s *Return to Laughter* (1954), the fieldwork account reflects a particular literary conduit between the personal narrative of a diary, such as Malinowski’s (1967) *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term*, and the ordered, structured, and objectively detailed formal ethnography, like we see in Jeremy’s Part Four. Moreover, appearing less ‘fictional’ than the texts cited above—especially Bohannon’s—Jeremy’s text is equally reflective of the focal shift toward the process of conducting fieldwork, such as we see with Briggs’ (1970) construction of interactional vignettes between subjects within a finite group; Rabinow’s (1977) critical examination of what might constitute the ‘doing’ of anthropology by focusing on his experiences with his subjects, rather than just on the data recorded; Dumont’s (1978) acknowledgment of the dialogical ‘anthropologization’ between the ethnographer’s ‘I’ and the subject’s ‘they; and Crapanzano’s (1980) and Dwyer’s (1982) equally dialogical attempts to allow the subjects to ‘speak for themselves.’ As well, when his case-history of June shifts into a more dialectic-focused validation between June and Bernard in Part Two, his text becomes seemingly auto-ethnographic. Similar to the manner with which Jackson, Knab, and Richard and Sally Price insert themselves into their ethnographies in order to present an ‘insider’ account, as discussed above, Jeremy’s presence in the text is equally self-reflective, so that he becomes, in some ways, an ‘informant’ just as much as June and Bernard.

In this same way, Jeremy’s self-insertion is symbolic of the author’s ‘signature,’ the idea that as ethnography is a ‘form of writing,’ there inherently exists a ‘writer,’ opening up the possibility that, just like fiction, ethnography is equally manufactured. This is perhaps more reflective of Joe’s text, as

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his form of auto-ethnography appears as both a 'true' insider account—Joe's Atheism is at focus—as well as a first-person narration from inside the culture he means to represent. More indicative of Wolf's (1992) and Ellis' (2000) descriptions of a 'fictional' type of auto-ethnography, Joe's position as author, as well as subject, is equally suggestive of a larger critique about how 'traditional' ethnography earns its authority. As his text is both self-reflective, as well as self-confessional, and because the dialogical interactions within shape a polyvocality of shared voices—Joe/Clarissa and Joe/Jed—Joe's active role as 'author-as-character' both empowers and restricts his text. On one end it permits the reader the ability to, as Clifford (1986) states, both “discern the personal bias of the ethnographer,” as well as “make sense of the complex interactions” that make up that representation (Clifford, 14). On the other, this 'first-person form' also tends to inherently encourage a sense of 'unreliability' by presenting certain limitations that an omniscient third-person narration does not. This latter issue becomes more apparent when the 'author-as-character' is found to be 'distorting' or 'misremembering' certain actions and facts, or when the author's text is shaped by bias, intent, or justification.

Thus, it seems suitable to contend that as the position of the 'insider' is ethnographically reflective of the bias of a first-person perspective, as well as the literary process of Geertz's portmanteau, 'faction'—“imaginative writing about real people in real places at real times” (Geertz, 141)—the insider's authority might be challenged by his very existence as the author—'artificer'—of the text itself. For example, after examining his text as a whole, it becomes apparent that Joe's description of the accident at the beginning, which stands as the catalytic motivation for his writing the text in the first place, is compiled from a number of differing perspectives added onto his own. First, it is formed through the cohesion of his and Clarissa's joined perspectives as they talk through the tragedy, share each other's experiences, and comfort one another. Later, as they share the story with friends, Joe notes that they do so in the 'married style:' “running alone with it for a stretch, talking through the partner's interruption sometimes, at others, giving way and handing over” (Joe. 36). It then receives more modification by John's widow when she contests his 'sacrifice' by claiming that what Joe perceived as 'altruism' was actually the result of John's attempt at looking heroic for a presumed mistress—“he was showing off to a girl [...] and we're all suffering for it now” (John's widow, quoted, Joe. 123). Joe even admits to considering this hypothesis as he walks along his 'stations of the cross' at the site of the accident: “standing by the passenger door she would have had a clear view of the whole drama, from the balloon and its basket dragging across the field, to the struggle with the ropes, and the fall” (Joe. 126). Lastly, at the close of the text one final perspective lends itself to Joe's account, the point-of-view of 'James,' whose affair with a student, and fortuitous assistance from John, reveals the true reason for his presence at the accident, as well as why his widow had suspected the affair in the first place (Ibid. 228-229).

In that within ethnographic representations 'culture' has always meant to be “constructed as an ensemble of characteristic behaviors, ceremonies and gestures, susceptible to recording and explanation by a trained onlooker” (Clifford, 1983 [1988], 125 [31]), the 'made-ness' of Joe's text skillfully treads the line between authentic and inauthentic, measured out between the acknowledgment

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of the text as artfully created, and the polyvocality inherent in the varied perspectives of the ensemble represented. Likewise, I might equally conclude from this same logic that in regard to the ‘literary conventions’ inherent in an insider’s first-person account, there might be found an equally more nuanced type of authority. That is, as seen through the perspective of the ‘indigenous ethnographer,’ auto-ethnographic by means of being both the “ethnography of one’s own group,” and encompassing “autobiographical writing that has ethnographic interest” (Reed-Danahay, 1997, 2), Joe’s account might derive a sense of authority by simply being ‘un-sullied’ by objective interpretation. Though clearly biased and influenced by his own self-reflexivity, it might still offer a certain ‘imponderabilia’ (Malinowski, 1922, 14-15) concerning his Atheism not attainable by an observer on the outside—such as we might see in Jeremy’s anxiety about re-creating June and Bernard’s story.

Which brings me to my second defense. While it is one thing to note structural and thematic similarities between these amateur accounts and the professional ethnographies cited above, it is another to blithely state that what might look similar is the same thing. This is not my intention here. Rather, my illustration of these similarities is meant as a critical assessment, notably of the restrictions and limitations we create in the process of ‘standardizing’ methods and processes in defining what is, or is not, textually authoritative or authentic. In this way, with all their flaws for being ‘un-professional,’ ‘non-traditional,’ or indicative of ‘fictional’ style, and though they provide insights that would, I admit, appear more ‘academically authentic’ within objective representations such as the ‘in-process’ accounts cited above, I still fail to see how they lose any sense of significance in their being constructed by amateurs.

After all, the Atheism provided by the individuals in these accounts appears just as thoughtfully described; and especially in reflection of Jenkins’ internal-external and interactional validations, it seems nuanced to the point of being ‘professionally’ represented. Additionally, because this Atheism is presented via first-person accounts, and delineated between historical and philosophical validation, when aligned side by side, they afford us, their readers, the opportunity to see how Atheism itself embodies more than what might be defined by a scholar making stipulations based on theoretical interpretations. That is, rather than offering a mere ‘definition,’ this analysis gives us an insight about Atheism and Atheist identity construction entirely unique to the manner with which it might be described in the scholarship cited in the Introduction. Yet, one might also argue that it provides a similar, if not the same, sort of discursive example upon which those ‘definitions’ are built. With these two texts we are provided an intimate look at how certain individuals, restricted within a particular context, have shaped their distinct Atheisms via a process bound to a dependency on certain types of ‘Theism.’ In this way, we are equally provided a means with which to ‘define’ that process as a relational ‘reaction’ to those Theisms, characterizing ‘Atheism’ here as shaped by those Theisms, so that it becomes a mirrored reflection. In both texts, this is exemplified by the manner with which the respectful Atheism of each is introduced and validated. In Jeremy’s text, this becomes a relationship between June and Bernard, while with Joe’s it is defined by the interactions between himself and Jed. Without these relationships, the ‘Atheism’ that we might determine from within these examples is not

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completely established. That is, though we might determine Bernard's communism and Joe's Scientific Worldview as 'Atheistic,' their 'Atheism' is not fully solidified until after their processes of identification are made apparent. This is not possible, as Jenkins reminds us, without the result of relational confrontation. Therefore, rather than conclude here with a stipulation that 'Atheism' is defined—in a general sense—by these examples, we can use them—as I have—in order to more efficiently examine the ways in which 'Atheists-in-particular' go about defining themselves. As a more 'anthropological' or 'discursive' approach, this moves us away from the precarious territory of 'defining things,' toward the perhaps more pragmatic domain of an ethnographic criticism.

However, while my argument here that the analysis provided herein has afforded me the ability to separate myself from the discourse wherein I would perhaps more traditionally be required to offer a 'definition,' this sort of examination is not without a particular fault concerning the inference necessary to do that. Ignoring this, especially in regard to the ethnographic 'value' that I have sourced out of these texts, would prove rather detrimental to my use of them. Thus, I will conclude here with a brief acknowledgement of this issue, not only as a critical caveat to my more experimental use of texts not usually considered 'authoritative' when compared to more empirical ones, but as a means with which to further support my notion that they do, in fact, offer an insight arguably hidden by the textual and methodological restrictions of such objective sources.

In both texts, neither subjects—Bernard and Joe—refer to themselves exclusively as 'Atheists.' That is, nowhere in these sources do these individuals directly identify as such. Rather, their description comes from secondary interpretations: in the case of Bernard, this appears via Jeremy's references, such as at the beginning of his text when he uses the phrase 'invincible atheism' (Jeremy 9); while in the case of Joe, this emerges from Wenn and Camia's description of him as a "well-known science writer who wrote from an atheistic point of view" (Joe, Appendix I, 237). Thus, a keen-eyed individual might establish an argument here that my interpretation of these subjects as Atheists, and thus my use of these texts to bolster my argument that an interpretation of their 'Atheism' is without the requisite need of a 'definition,' is rather hypocritical. This argument, I would contend, is both right and wrong. In regard to the former, this is indeed a logical conclusion: these individuals, though perhaps more so with Bernard than Joe, do not openly identify themselves as 'Atheists,' so we are inherently required to infer much of their identity via an analysis of their interactions with individuals who appear 'opposed' to their world-views. Additionally, this means there is a level of double inference taking place here, as an interactional validation is in need of two individuals dialogically opposing one another. In this way, simply stating that Bernard is an Atheist because he was once a Communist, and then later shaped his identity against June's 'Theism,' seems rather like 'filling in the blanks' left by his lack of self-description, which also seems quite similar to the theoretical stipulations against which I argued in the *stipulation* section above concerning the generalizations of the definition of Atheism. This could equally be argued in consideration of Joe's 'Atheism,' and the inference we might make of his opposition to Jed's exclusive form of 'Theism.'

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However, and on the latter end of my contention above, I would likewise defend my description of Bernard and Joe as Atheists because, like with any ethnographic text, a sense of inference is not only necessary, but in many ways intrinsic. That is, because I have translated these amateur accounts into unique types of auto-ethnography, they must be read as such. This also means that they must be read at ‘face value,’ or rather, simply ‘as they are.’ As we do not know the intricate details about how the data and descriptions presented within came into existence, and because these texts—like all texts—are artifices, and thus the result of the authors’ influence in constructing them, we can only make use of that which is provided us. In other words, though Bernard and Joe might not exclusively state ‘I am an Atheist,’ we do not know whether they ever did, simply because we do not know what Jeremy and Joe might have left out of their narratives. Such is the reality of using any type of ethnographic text, written either about one’s own culture, or especially about a culture not one’s own. As the product of a literary act, and thus as something translated for the benefit of a reader, ethnographic data is always privy to interpretation and insinuation. This does not, in my opinion, devalue that data, but rather provides a much more beneficial description than even the most objective theoretical stipulation.

Therefore, by using these accounts as auto-ethnographies, any inference that I may have adopted in examining them is forgiven by mere methodological necessity, and is not unlike the same inference we would adopt when reading the ethnographic texts cited above, such as Crapanzano’s *Tuhami*, or the ethnographic novels of Jackson, Knab, and Richard and Sally Price. Which brings me back to my initial argument concerning the anthropological utility of these types of texts. Though it might not be perfectly defined, the Atheism within these two accounts is clearly lived, imputed, and personified within individual selfhoods and dialogical interactions, so that, even as it is textualized by un-trained hands, it is still qualitatively suggestive of even the most objective, proficient, and authoritative source as that constructed by an individual looking in from the outside. In this way, even if an ‘ethnography of Atheism’ was something fully established within the anthropological study of that concept—which it will be soon—I would still argue in favor of the utility of these sorts of ‘non-traditional’ sources. Moreover, because these texts are reflective of the literary styles more expected of fictional accounts, we as the readers are offered the chance to be immersed within a certain ‘ambience,’ move alongside the individuals portrayed, empathize and ‘play-act’ with their emotions and confrontations, come to understand their beliefs, and begin to experience their Atheism ourselves. Because they look ‘as-if’ they are fictional, just like the auto-ethnographies cited above, we are given the chance to know their Atheism as they do, so that by means of pragmatic imagination, their identity constructions appear unfiltered, less winnowed by interpretation, and thus more easily accessible. Consequently, though they are not ‘ethnographies’ in a more traditional manner, they are still ‘ethnographic,’ facing not only the same sort of criticisms—such as issues of inference—but also the promotional values that correspond with using textual representations about concepts not easily defined.

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Part Three: Conclusive Remarks

CHAPTER FIVE—THE UTILITY OF PRAGMATIC ACCIDENTS

“Despite the ambiguities as to where exactly ethnography ends and fiction begins, I believe that to do away with a border would be a loss for both sides. For ethnography to become too much like fiction is to lose clarity, so that readers have to puzzle along, trying to guess what is the point of the text and how likely such events would be to happen. It is to lose the power of disciplinary shorthand for situating lives with broad contextual strokes. It is to confuse whether anthropology’s mission is to write about other people or oneself and to take potentially dangerous liberties in attempting to speak from within other minds. Most importantly, it is to undermine what I consider the heart of anthropology: the importance of close, respectful attention to the lives of other actual people that characterizes fieldwork. After all, if one is free to invent other people and their lives, why even bother with the inconvenient dislocations and anguished ethical ambiguities of fieldwork?”

— Kirin Narayan, “Ethnography and Fiction: Where is the Border?” 1999¹

5.1—Introduction: Meant to Shock

The preceding text was an experiment, both complementary and critical. As mentioned previously, it was the result of a certain progression, a theoretical culmination of the Literary Turn and the notion that writing ethnography like fiction would justify the reading of fiction as ethnography. Additionally, in this same way it was not only an attempt at addressing the political ‘blind spot’ created when ethnographers objectively remove themselves from their ethnographies, it was also designed to address the issue of textual authenticity when ethnography is perceived as fiction, and vice versa. It was, to borrow once more from Crapanzano’s own description, ‘meant to shock.’

This short Chapter is reciprocal of the fourth one, a correlative theoretical discussion that will act as a further elucidation about the style and design of “The Merits of Non-Tradition,” as well as a more distinct description of Ethnographic Criticism beyond this type of textual experimentation. In order to do this, it will incorporate three sections, each devoted to clarifying an aspect perhaps not entirely explained thus far. To begin, the first section will focus once more on textual style, reiterating many of the points made in the fourth Chapter, particularly concerning the narrative voice of ethnographic description, and how that alters the reader’s perception not only of the text itself, but of the culture depicted within. Then, in reference to the novels examined within “Merits,” this same discussion will turn to a further justification of the ‘fictionalization’ adopted, providing both an auxiliary defense of its

¹Narayan, “Ethnography and Fiction: Where is the Border?,” 143-144.

usage, as well as a critical description of its ‘inherent-ness.’ In this way, it will turn its focus toward pertinent details, such as the ‘signature’ of the author in the construction of the text, and how reading certain texts, based on the narrative voice telling us the story, alters the reader’s perception about who might be the *actual* writer. The third section will turn to a more definitive clarification of Ethnographic Criticism, utilizing McEwan’s ‘Atheist trilogy’ as examples, in order to better define, for the benefit of future uses, the complexities and requisite necessities required of this type of textual analysis. Lastly, and in reflection of this final description, the conclusion will address the question as to whether or not “Merits” is, in fact, an Ethnographic Criticism.

While the utility of this Chapter will be apparent in the explications below, perhaps its greater value is found in its relatedness to the fourth Chapter. As ‘bookends’ meant to bracket the experimentation of “Merits,” these two Chapters exist to assist the reader, an attempt on the part of the author of this Thesis to ensure the ‘shock’ or ‘twist’ here is not lost within any sort of confusion. Thus, while this Chapter’s partnership with Chapter Four will hopefully ensure the examination in “Merits” is properly understood, it will also assist in the overall transition from the empirical, methodological, and experimental discussions of Parts One and Two, to the more conclusive and direct discussions within this explanatory Part Three.

5.2—Textual Style

In the fourth Chapter, there was a great deal of attention given to the ‘description’ of Ethnographic Criticism, beginning with a review of the methodological and theoretical foundations upon which the ‘idea’ of it is built, followed by a more explanatory depiction of the ‘marital defect’ that might occur in the process of doing it. The delineating thread running through that Chapter’s narrative was Geertz’s notion of ‘discourse’ and ‘signature,’ two signifiers that describe on one end what a text *is*, and on the other, the author’s role in creating it. While the discussion therein helped prepare the reader for the unique experimentation of “Merits,” a brief reiteration here of the latter’s methodological and theoretical foundations, as well as how Geertz’s terms might have influenced its precarious location between fiction and ethnography, will not only serve to further explain why that text looked the way it did, but also why I chose to design it that way.

As mentioned previously, how a text is read is determined by the voice of the narrative itself, and in the context of ethnographic writing, there are two predominately employed types of voice: first-person—I saw the ‘X’ do this—and third-person—the ‘X’ do this. As we might also recall, the differentiation between first- and third-person narrative style alters not only the way in which the data presented within the text is revealed to us—discourse—but how we might perceive that information to have been influenced by the author—signature. Then, and within the framework of our two types of textual representation—ethnography and the novel—this differentiation plays a large part in how that data is both transcribed and examined. To better explain this, let us consider the review below, which I have slightly amended for the benefit of this Chapter.

When an ethnographic text is written from a third-person perspective, the data is presented in an objective manner, the author’s ‘voice,’ and thus opinion, relegated to footnotes or an appendix, so as not to infect the narrative with bias and/or authorial influence. In other words, the goal is to submit the data ‘as it is,’ unaffected by any sort of judgment. This is exemplified, as I cited earlier, by Malinowski’s *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*. As an amendment to this description, though, I might further determine this type of narrative as one of a two-part category, a *third-person omniscient broad*: the text reveals the culture of the subjects at central focus through an objectively wide lens. In Malinowski’s case, this encompasses the tribal culture within the Kula Ring, the trading system adopted by the inhabitants of the Trobriand Islands of New Guinea. In an antithetical manner, then, the second part of this category is defined as a *third-person omniscient narrow*: the text reveals the culture of the subjects at central focus through a more myopic, yet no less objective, perspective. This type itself is represented by examples such as Crapanzano’s *Tuhami*, or Dwyer’s *Moroccan Dialogues*. In these texts, the focus is on an individual, who the authors have isolated as archetypical symbols of their culture. This is not, however, the only means with which this type differs from its broader counterpart. In fact, to determine this narrative type as strictly ‘third-person’ is something of a misnomer, as the ‘voice’ of the narrator is not entirely vacant, such as we see in *Argonauts*. Rather, it exists in a dialogical manner, inserted within the narrative in order to drive the story along. What this then becomes is an ethnographic biography, or as Crapanzano distinguishes, a text defined as either a ‘case

history' or 'life-history:' where the former adopts much of the narrative qualities of a biography, so that the data within presents "a view of the subject from the perspective of an outsider," the latter, like the autobiography, presents the subject of the text "from his own perspective."² Moreover, the *third-person omniscient narrow* represents a transitional type, standing firmly on the objective and omniscient-voiced foundation established by Malinowski's *Argonauts*, while also leaning slightly toward a more experimental—and, albeit, more 'literary'—first-person voice.

In reflection of these two third-person ethnographic narrative types, there is an equal two-part differentiation between the first-person voice: *first-person other* and *first-person self*. The former, like the *third-person omniscient narrow*, is likewise a transitional type. That is, while it firmly fits within the context of a reflexive narrative, the observations provided by this voice offer an insight about an other, rather than about the individual speaking to us. In other words, though the voice is that of the narrator, spoken from a first-person perspective, like the *third-person omniscient narrow*, the story that it tells is about someone else. The latter, then, does the same, but turns the focus inward, rather than outward. This voice is more 'purely' reflective, as it represents a self-focused narrative about the individual speaking to us. Ethnographic examples of these two types are exemplified by the auto-ethnographic novels of Jackson, Knab, and Richard and Sally Price—'other'—and Ellis' *Ethnographic I*—'self.'

Moving beyond the means with which these differing narrative voices dictate the style of the text—the 'discourse'—there arises here a theoretical concern regarding the existence, and 'signature,' of the author within the text itself. Perhaps the central issue at the heart of the marital defect discussed in Chapter Four, this acknowledgment of the author's creative position, made via our acceptance that a text written with either a third- or first-person voice equally defines it as the product of artifice, proves analytically problematic when we begin to read fiction 'ethnographically.' That is, as the voice of the narrative not only changes the way in which the data is presented, but also read, this likewise alters how we might proceed with an examination of the 'novel as ethnography' within Ethnographic Criticism. For the sake of a useful example here, let us once again consider Eriksen's use of Naipaul's

² Crapanzano, *Tuhami*, 8.

A House for Mr. Biswas as an ‘ethnographic description,’ a methodological distinction that, as discussed in Chapter One, plays an integral role in the methodology of Ethnographic Criticism.

A House for Mr. Biswas is a *third-person omniscient narrow*, meaning that because its focus is on Mr. Biswas, it reads like a combination of the case-history and life-history, a biographical representation of a singular individual’s life, that provides for us an autobiographically allegorical view of that individual’s culture. As such, and because as an ‘ethnographic description’ it can be examined without the comparative use of an ethnographic equal, when we read it ‘anthropologically,’ it becomes something like an ‘ethnographic documentation,’ what Eriksen refers to as both a “rich and sensitive ethnography *and* an historical event in its own right” [emphasis in original].³ Consequently, and as represented by the title of his article, this definition equally transmutes Naipaul himself into a type of ‘anthropologist.’ For his usage, then, and because he regards this novel as an apt representation of Mr. Biswas’ Trinidadian identity, Eriksen describes it as having two anthropologically descriptive qualities:

[...] *A House for Mr. Biswas* has itself become something of an icon in Trinidadian society and has contributed to shaping ideology and reflexivity in that society. It can be seen simultaneously as an ethnographic description of the East Indian community in the first half of this century (and can in this way be a source of historical and ethnographic insight), and as a description of Trinidadian society which has reflexivity fed back into the society with which it deals.”⁴

As a methodological guide, then, Eriksen’s use of *A House for Mr. Biswas* paves the way for the ethnographic examination I shaped in my creation of Ethnographic Criticism: the use of a fictional text in lieu of an ethnographic one, that not only provides for us a nuanced insight about a particular concept, but that equally works to challenge the established notion that ethnography and fiction are two separate entities. Beyond the context of Eriksen’s usage here, this integrated perception works just as well with a *third-person omniscient broad*, especially given the manner with which these types of narratives mimic the fictional realism adopted by early ethnographers seeking to, as Marcus and Cushman argue, “represent the reality of a whole world or form of life.”⁵ Because of this, then, and because Ethnographic Criticism is built upon Eriksen’s own methodology, it would seem just as equally unequivocal. This is not the case, however, due in large part to Eriksen’s oversight—by means of his exclusive use of novels written from a third-person perspective—in not considering how we might do this same sort of examination when our fictional sources are written with a first-person voice.

³ Eriksen, “The Author as Anthropologist,” 177.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 189.

⁵ Marcus and Cushman, “Ethnographies as Texts,” 29.

As I briefly discussed in Chapter Four, this oversight creates an issue determined by authorial signature: where with a third-person narrative the author's voice is concealed via a stylistic objectivity, in a first-person narrative that voice becomes an integral part of that narrative. This not only plays a significant role in our perception of the data being provided, but equally, perhaps even more importantly, challenges the notion that the author of the text is the same as the narrator speaking to us. In other words, where with first-person ethnographic accounts the ethnographer has fictionalized him or herself in order to present a reflective narrative about their subjects, in first-person fictional accounts, the author has fictionalized a narrator different from themselves in order to adopt a particular narrative style. Within the context of ethnographic writing, this seems less of an issue when we consider the non-fictional qualities of these types of texts. I referred to this previously in my citation of the 'real-world' Jackson alongside his auto-ethnographic self-fictionalization in *Barawa*. This becomes problematic, however, when we contextually shift our examination from a third-person narrative fiction—such as *A House for Mr. Biswas*—to a first-person novel, like McEwan's *Black Dogs* or *Enduring Love*. In these latter examples, the fictionalized author is not the same as the author of the text, as the narrators speaking to us are, in fact, invented characters designed and created by McEwan. This is also where I situated my previous argument that the author of such a novel ceases to exist, as when we Ethnographically Critique such a text, the author whose signature we find throughout is no longer attached to the novelist. Instead, it is ascribed to the author of the text within the novel. Thus, where we might have earlier imputed the distinction 'anthropologist' onto Naipaul for his text's ability to aptly describe Mr. Biswas' culture, the distinction here would be attributed to the narrators of these internal texts: Jeremy and Joe. In other words, like how Jackson's self-fictionalization creates a different textual entity than the 'real world' Jackson, so the narrators of McEwan's novels become equally separate.

Lastly, because McEwan ceases being the author of these texts, their signature dictates a different discourse: now that they appear as if written by individuals wholly separate from McEwan, they themselves likewise cease being novels. Rather, they become first-person amateur accounts, representing the two types of first-person narratives listed above. For my intentions with "Merits," then, and because shaping it in such a way would likewise perform a critical assessment of too liberally

blurring the border between ethnography and the novel, this textual transformation was catalytic, the inspirational motivation of my own self-fictionalization, and the driving force behind my choosing to introduce Ethnographic Criticism with such an experimental primer. As such, and though the exact reasoning for this fictionalization was left pragmatically unclear in Chapter Four, revealing the magic behind this trick should assist here in clarifying a few rather important points.

5.3—A Pragmatic Accident

One of the leading reasons for the fictional style of “Merits,” and thus the fictionalization of myself as its author, is to provide a warning, a reminder that when we overlook how the style of a text might alter the way in which that text is perceived, and thus inadvertently blur the lines between fiction and non-fiction, there appears an equal alteration concerning the notions we might have about textual authority, authenticity, and the important, almost necessary, acceptance that though they might look similar, there is a significant content difference between the ethnography and the novel. Moreover, if we permit these alterations to weaken this sharp separation, then the value of the data from within the former begins to deteriorate as we struggle to determine what is ‘real’ and what is ‘imagined.’ While this is indeed an essential point of discussion here, which will receive a good deal of attention in the Conclusion, it is also, however, not the only reason for my self-fictionalization. Rather, and like the plot/subplot paradigm running throughout this Thesis as a whole, the fictional narrative that I employed within “Merits” really tells two stories.

The first is reflective of the different narrative voices used throughout this Thesis. As we might recall from the description in the Introduction, both it and the Conclusion are written from a self-reflective first-person narrative, a style chosen not only because it adds an element of intimacy to the text, but because it also allows me to be a bit more candid about my inspirations and intentions. In contrast to these, the three Chapters of Part One are presented via an omniscient third-person narration, so that while the author here is the same as the author of the Introduction and Conclusion, there exists no ‘I’ within the narrative. I adopted this style not only to ensure these Chapters were free from any subjectivity concerning the content discussed, but because also I wanted these Chapters to read like a very distinct ‘academic’ text. With “Merits,” there occurs another perspective change, this time back to a first-person voice, though markedly different from the Introduction and Conclusion. Here, this

narrative style is reflective of the auto-ethnographic self-fictionalizations that we find in the ethnographic novel, such as that used by Jackson in *Barawa* or Knab in *A War of Witches*.

My usage of this type of narrative voice not only assists my argument that “Merits” represents a critical example of this very sort of experimentation—as I shall discuss in more detail below—it also makes my analysis within the text a bit more accessible because of its fictional style. Or, as Langness and Frank argued previously: “if interpretation and explication of others’ lives is the goal, the novel may prove a better medium than the standard or topical ethnography.”⁶ In that the novel serves as a more evocative outlet than the objective ethnography, or, if nothing else, in that it permits the ethnographer a sense of freedom from the austere confines of methodological neutrality, then this type of narrative voice would likewise better illustrate how “Merits” is meant to do more than merely provide anthropological data. As such, the fictionalization of myself, and thus the presentation of my examination as a type of ‘ethnographic novel,’ means that the other ‘story’ that “Merits” tells is that of the Thesis, writ small. By designing the text via the discourse described in the first and second Chapters, “Merits” also becomes a representation, an embodied illustration of my marriage between the ‘fictional’ emendations of the Literary Turn, and the Ethical Criticism of McEwan’s fiction.

What this also does is motivate a critical assessment, a raising of the reader’s awareness not just about the issues detailed above concerning the ways in which textual style alters one’s narrative perception, but about the way it might also depict a dangerous weakening of the border between the ethnography and the novel. I might further make the argument, then, that this weakening could also lead to a confusion about which is which, that equally might, provided the right circumstances, lead to an accidental association of the novel as ethnography, and vice versa. As such, part of the experimentation within my analysis of *Black Dogs* and *Enduring Love* is situated in the details it does not provide: while the analysis itself reveals a great deal of information about the texts, both through its early descriptions, and later discussion of the characters’ interactions with one another, it fails to give specifics about where the texts themselves were ‘found,’ or where they might be located in the ‘real’ world.

⁶ Langness and Frank, “Fact, Fiction, and the Ethnographic Novel,” 21.

While this oversight might seem somewhat innocuous, given the comprehensive details provided within my analysis, it is in fact quite deliberate. By leaving out any discussion as to where my fictionalized self found these texts, I have in essence paved the way for what I might call the ‘pragmatic accident’ at the heart of that analysis. This also inspires a rather useful ‘what if,’ as well as a number of follow-up questions: if we were to come across these texts with neither the luxury of knowing they were novels, nor with the knowledge of their existence as the result of a novelist’s imagination, would our initial perception of them be that they were ‘fictions?’ As well, what clues might there be to deter us from simply assuming they were ‘real?’ Surely they look real, given the realism with which McEwan has written them. In fact, the stories even exist within a ‘real’ world: not only can we identify the places mentioned, we can isolate their narratives to a particular time as well. Granted, our attempts at locating and contacting the individuals telling them would of course inherently fail, given that they do not actually exist. Then again, we might simply excuse this by deducing that for the sake of professional discretion the authors had employed pseudonyms for themselves and the other individuals mentioned, as is an oft-used method by writers, such as Knab, who begins *A War of Witches* with this provision:

Out of respect for the privacy and traditions of the people of the Sierra de Puebla, all personal names (except the author’s), kinship relationships, and placenames have been altered so as to be unrecognizable. Events have been rearranged and locations transposed to conform to the narrative line of the story and protect the identity of the individuals involved. Any remaining similarity to actual people and events is purely coincidental.⁷

What, then, is there to ultimately determine these texts as ‘fiction?’

This final question is of course answered by the fact that we know these are novels, not only by the descriptions on their covers, but by my own discussion of them as such in Chapter Three.

Nevertheless, if we were to play along with my pragmatic ‘what ifs,’ and pretend that our ‘finding’ them was without the prerequisite knowledge of their fictional nature, we might logically conclude that because they appear real, both narratively, and because of McEwan’s own ‘tricks’—such as the fictional journal article in the second Appendix of *Enduring Love*—the question of their ‘fictitiousness’ would become a rather moot point. Perhaps, then, the leading critical element of my fictionalization in “Merits” derives exclusively from the notion that where reading a novel as ethnography might be beneficial to my interests in studying Atheist identity construction, given both the issues cited above

⁷ Knab, *A War of Witches*, provisional declaration at start of text.

about the limited access we have to an ‘anthropology of Atheism,’ as well as the methodological and theoretical support found within the discourses of this Thesis’ Part One, doing so could, if we were not explicitly cautious, inherently lead to this manner of analytical accident. It was for this reason especially that I chose to fictionalize “Merits,” not only as a physical embodiment of such an accident, but in order to equally provide a textual example of the outcome that could arise from such experimentation. As such, my intentions might then be delineated between two points: while on one end, this fictionalization would convey the sort of experimentation that I presented in the ‘non-fictional’ Parts of this Thesis, on the other, it could also exist as a fictional theoretical criticism, a demonstration of the precarious, even dangerous, consequence of weakening the border between fiction and non-fiction.

However, while my intentions here might justify the fictional style used to conduct the analytical examination within “Merits,” it likewise produces a rather tricky side-effect, an issue of descriptive clarity concerning its role as an introductory representation of Ethnographic Criticism. After all, if we were to once again simply define that analysis as the reading of a novel as ethnography, then “Merits” does not do that. Rather, in its fictional form, and even as a critique of this methodology, it is, in fact, no longer an examination of two novels. Instead, it has equally transformed alongside those novels into an analysis of two ‘real’ texts. In order to both address this issue, as well as eventually defend the notion that “Merits” still functions in this capacity, the discussion in which I now turn will attempt to more distinctively define not only what that an Ethnographic Criticism *is*, but what shape it might take in relation to the textual style of the novels chosen to conduct it.

5.4—Ethnographic Criticism beyond Theoretical Criticism

As specified within the hypothesis of the Introduction, this Thesis’ principal intention was to plot out both the established precedents that might lead to, as well as the methodological properties that make up, an Ethnographic Criticism. This was then thoroughly developed via the three Chapters of Part One, as well as the further descriptions in Chapter Four. However, due to the experimentation of my representation of that examination, and as briefly discussed above, there still might endure a general confusion about like what an Ethnographic Criticism might *actually* look. In order to mitigate this confusion, as well as to provide a useful description for later uses beyond the critical perceptions of this

Thesis' objectives concerning the sub-plot of 'everything is fiction,' I will once more borrow from McEwan's 'Atheist trilogy' in order to both demonstrate how we might read these novels as ethnography, as well as to further determine the complex and essential boundaries necessary to avoid the sort of accident discussed above. Not only will this ensure we do not perform any stylistic mistakes in our analysis—such as forgetting that the text is actually a novel—it will also assist us in making a more concise—albeit necessarily complex—description.

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Focused on the thoughts and opinions of its lead character, Henry Perowne, McEwan's *Saturday* provides a nuanced insight into Henry's opinions on religion, politics, and war, as well as an intimate perspective on the development and defense of his uniquely science-based Atheism. Told with the type of realism beneficial for this examination, the style of the narrative is a *third-person omniscient narrow*. This means the story is expressed from an omniscient voice, so that the narrator—McEwan—is providing us with descriptions and details about Henry and his interactions from a position of detached neutrality. Thus, if we were to translate *Saturday* into an ethnographic text, it would register somewhere between our above description of *third-person omniscient broad* and *narrow*: though the central focus within the text is on a single individual, it reads less like our examples above—*Tuhami* and *Moroccan Dialogues*—as the voice telling us Henry's story does not offer any personal commentary about the story itself. As a 'case-history,' then, Henry's story represents a synecdochic allegory, a biographical account wherein he becomes an individual example of his own context who, again like our examples above, stands as an illustration of a particular cultural identity via an isolated examination. Then, and with our focus again on the construction of Atheist identity as it is presented through dialogical encounters and interactional validations, Henry's story becomes useful to us as a discursive representation.

Additionally, *Saturday's* narrative perspective makes the novel especially suitable for an Ethnographic Criticism, and thus for its transformation into an ethnographic text, as it matches in both tone and objective voice the traditional absence of the ethnographer's presence in his or her ethnography. As such, were we required to make a thematic comparison here in order to further support this

transformation, *Saturday* would become something akin to, but not exactly like, *Tuhami*, as the two texts share many similarities, particularly concerning both author's focus on a singular individual as representatives of their cultural milieu. In this same way, then, McEwan would be equally comparable to Crapanzano. This latter comparison is, in fact, quite useful here, even though it is also a tad inadequate. While *Tuhami* and *Saturday* are indeed very different types of texts—especially given Crapanzano's voice within the narrative—and though *Saturday*'s textual style is a bit more reminiscent of an author-evacuated ethnography, *Tuhami*'s transitional placement between the *third-person omniscient narrow* and the *first-person other* serves as a reminder that with this style of text we are not required, nor is it necessary, to acknowledge or examine the narrator's perspective or role in shaping such a narrative. In other words, just as we might read Malinowski's *Argonauts* without needing to also read his *Diary*, nor must we make sense of Crapanzano's opinions about Tuhami's culture in order to understand it, we can ethnographically read *Saturday* without needing to first make analytical sense of McEwan's own personal notions about Atheism. This is, perhaps, not only one of the major defining characteristics of Ethnographic Criticism, it likewise assists in describing it as uniquely dissimilar to any other type of textual analysis: where the examples discussed in the third Chapter require an understanding of McEwan as the author in order to examine his writing, with Ethnographic Criticism this acknowledgment becomes redundant, as it is, in essence, the translation of the novel into a type of ethnography. As such, then, when we perform an Ethnographic Criticism we are allowing the text to 'speak for itself,' meaning that the author's intentions in shaping the narrative becomes less important than what the text itself is telling us about the subjects it represents.

As well, this proposes a much more nuanced approach to the use of fiction 'as ethnography' than Eriksen's previously discussed notion of the 'ethnographic description:' where with his methodology, the culture within the text is so well represented that it is without the need of a comparable ethnographic precedent, the methodology of Ethnographic Criticism argues that this distinction is no longer necessary, as the novel itself has become an ethnographic text. However, while this does provide a reasonable defense of both the distinctiveness and benefit of Ethnographic Criticism, particularly for my intentions concerning Atheist identity construction, the simple description I have provided here is guilty of the same oversight as Eriksen's use of the novel as an ethnographic description. That is, while the use of a third-person text appears somewhat straightforward, especially

as the ethnographic examples provided here look textually similar to a third-person novel, this unequivocality quickly fades when we shift our analytical focus onto a first-person one.

As complex and precarious the use of first-person narratives might seem, especially given the pragmatic accident underscoring the fictionalization in “Merits,” an approach of this kind is not only possible, but equally useful, as long as the individual performing such an examination is analytically conscious of the discussion above concerning narrative voice and the reflective role of the author in such a text. Moreover, this methodological prerequisite is already established by the mere fact that a first-person ethnography not only appears textually different from its third-person counterpart, but that the information provided must be read differently as well. For example, while the authorial differences between an ethnography such as *Argonauts* and an auto-ethnography, such as those described by Reed-Danahay, Van Maanen, Brandes, Denzin, and Wolcott, are isolated almost exclusively to the context of the author’s signature within the narrative, how we *use* these sources differs just as much as how they have been written. Thus, when we read an autobiographical auto-ethnography, not only are we reading the author’s textual account of his or her fieldwork, we are also reading about their experiences, interactions, and influences on that account’s existence. In this way, the ‘author’ here becomes a ‘character,’ privy to the same examination and analysis that we would bestow upon the other informants or subjects presented within the text. As such, though our examination of such an ethnographic text would dismiss the influence or opinions of the author were our data coming from a third-person account, when we shift our focus onto a first-person one, our analysis of the author is actually an analysis of yet another subject. In a related manner, then, an Ethnographic Criticism of a first-person novel must therefore incorporate a two-point analytical paradigm: not only must we ensure our analysis takes into consideration the type of ‘ethnography’ this fiction might become—as we do with a third-person novel—we must also recognize that the ‘discourse’ of this text has been formed via two authorial signatures. Consequently, where with an examination of a first-person ethnographic text we would need to both acknowledge and accept into our analysis that the author has become a character, with an Ethnographic Critique of a novel ‘as ethnography’ we would need to do the same, with the caveat that the author of the novel is not, necessarily, the author of the text within. While this same condition inspired the fictionalization of “Merits,” as well as shifted this discourse as a whole toward the notion that ‘everything is fiction,’ it also leads me toward a more distinct description.

As determined above, *Black Dogs* becomes a *first-person other* auto-ethnography, a self-reflective ethnographic snapshot of two subjects whom, when combined into an interactional unit, stand to represent the whole of their cultural milieu. When read ethnographically, we might compare *Black Dogs* with an ethnographic novel, such as Knab's *A War of Witches*, wherein Knab has become a character within the narrative in an effort to depict himself as a more empathetically accessible 'insider.' Yet, again, this is a slightly inaccurate comparison, as Knab has purposefully fictionalized himself in order to achieve this goal, while Jeremy is merely providing for us an account of his subjects alongside his own thoughts and experiences. Likewise, where we might compare *A War of Witches* with *Black Dogs*, given that the two texts seem stylistically similar, an authorial comparison becomes somewhat difficult as Knab and Jeremy are not equal, especially as the latter is the figment of McEwan's imagination. Yet, this too could be seen as an inaccurate comparison, particularly concerning the more theoretical argument that because these texts are both 'novels' in regard to their 'fictional nature,' Knab and Jeremy are equally 'fictionalized' narrators. To remedy this, then, and in order to proceed with an Ethnographic Criticism of this type of novel, we need to ensure that our examination recognizes not only the existence of this 'two-author' distinction, but of its role in how we might analytically proceed.

Additionally, this likewise requires a bit of an emendation of the 'two-author' condition discussed in this Thesis' fourth Chapter. Where in that context it helped inspire the fictionalization of "Merits," here it will act to avoid that outcome by focusing on the relationship between the external and internal authors of a first-person novel, rather than simply removing the former. In fact, we might link this relational acceptance back to Clifford's description of ethnography as a 'polyvocal' text in his "Introduction" to *Writing Culture*: where in 'traditional' ethnographic accounts authority is determined via a single-voiced narrator—monophony—an acceptance of the fact that as a discursive account, an ethnography is inherently saturated with a myriad of voices 'clamoring for expression,' equally defines the text itself as encompassing a polyvocality—polyphony—wherein even when the culture of the text is represented through the voice of one narrator, it becomes the product of many voices.⁸ For my intentions here, this translates into an analytical obligation, the acknowledgement of, even focus on,

⁸ Clifford, "Introduction," 16.

both narrators as essential to a clear and detailed analysis. In this way, just as we might determine that there exist ‘two-authors’ in Knab’s *A War of Witches*—the fictional narrator within the text and the real, external anthropologist who designed it that way—so we must also determine that just as Jeremy is the ‘true’ narrator of *Black Dogs*, so too is McEwan. For this example, then, an Ethnographic Criticism of the latter would expand the two-point analytical paradigm mentioned previously into three essential concerns: the type of ethnographic text this is (a *first-person other* auto-ethnography); the role of the internal author of the text (how has Jeremy influenced this text by inserting himself into the narrative, as well as how has his own position influenced his representation); and the role of the external author (how has McEwan influenced this text by creating an auto-ethnography, in the same way we might determine Knab’s influence on his own fictionalized self).

While this methodology does, in fact, betray the translation of *Black Dogs* into an ethnography by revealing that there are two-authors influencing the text, this betrayal is not overtly detrimental to the doing of Ethnographic Criticism. Rather, I would make the final argument here that this exposes yet another methodological link between Ethnographic Criticism and the result of the Literary Turn: just as an acceptance that an ethnography is ‘fictionalized’ by means of the author’s role in constructing it, which then leads to the notion that an ethnography can be written like a novel, then the betrayal here by acknowledging the two authors of *Black Dogs* is a characteristic product of our accepting that the ‘Knab’ within *A War of Witches* is different from the Knab who wrote the text. While these two individuals appear to be the same, by the mere fact that the one within the text is a fictionalized version of the one without, means that they, like McEwan and Jeremy, are separate authorial entities. In a comparative manner, then, with *Enduring Love* this three-part paradigm must be applied as well, though because the style of the text differs from that of *Black Dogs*, it must be perceived in a different way. As a *first-person self* auto-ethnography, it not only becomes a different type of ethnographic text, the focus shifts as well toward a more isolated description of the narrator’s identity, rather than on that of his subjects.’ The necessity of perceiving that text as constructed by ‘two authors,’ as we might do with *Black Dogs*, still remains.

5.5—Conclusion: Is “Merits” an Ethnographic Criticism

Given the description just made, as well as the discussion throughout this Chapter, an appropriate final question here might be whether or not as an ‘introduction’ to Ethnographic Criticism, “Merits” succeeds or fails. Certainly, an argument can be made for the latter, as the complete translation of *Black Dogs* and *Enduring Love* into ‘real’ texts means that the analysis that I performed was no longer about using fiction as ethnography. Rather, as one might properly argue, and as my fictional self specified, it was instead an examination of two amateur accounts. How, then, does this analysis represent an Ethnographic Criticism?

As I reasoned earlier, the fictional nature of “Merits” might best be understood as an accident, pragmatically designed to be both an introduction to Ethnographic Criticism, as well as a critical warning about not making this same mistake. To better elucidate my meaning here, it might help to fully reiterate Langness and Frank’s statement concerning the legitimacy and utility of the ethnographic novel cited above:

If we acknowledge our creative abilities rather than pretend they do not exist, if we allow ourselves to read perceptively, and if we are honest about our intent and limitations in presenting ethnographic materials, there would seem to be no compelling reason that an ethnographic novel would not be as useful or as legitimate as the standard monographs.⁹

As much as the fictionalization of “Merits” was meant as a ‘trick,’ it was equally designed to ensure that this prescribed ‘acknowledgment,’ ‘perceptivity,’ and ‘honesty’ is not overlooked by future Ethnographic Criticisms. Or, to phrase that in more colloquial terms: do not as I do. In this way, just as accepting that any type of writing involves a dose of creativity, that all ‘texts’ should be read with analytical equality, and that both of these functions are conducted with the utmost sincerity, then reading a novel as ethnography should likewise be an approach neither precarious, nor detrimental to either medium.

Thus, I will conclude this Chapter here by further reiterating that while it might not ‘look’ like the Ethnographic Criticism described above, “Merits” still maintains its identity as such, particularly due to the detailed examination that it provides of *Black Dogs* and *Enduring Love*. Because this analysis does as an Ethnographic Criticism should do by interpreting the texts ‘as if’ they are ‘real,’ the results of that analysis are in no way less useful to us. Furthermore, because “Merits” is an embodiment of the

⁹ Langness and Frank, “Fact, Fiction, and the Ethnographic Novel,” 21.

discourses described throughout Part One, and thus represents this Thesis writ small, its method of textual analysis closely reflects the methodological paradigms that exist at the foundational heart of Ethnographic Criticism. Therefore, I would lastly contend that it has, indeed, told its two stories well, on one end critically examining the way in which the author's presence dictates the discourse that makes up a text, and on the other, the larger story of 'everything is fiction.' How that then relates to what Narayan quite critically refers to as an 'undermining' of anthropology's central focus on the "close, respectful attention to the lives of other actual people" in the epigraph above, and how that equally inspires an ambiguous notion about "where exactly ethnography ends and fiction begins,"¹⁰ is something in need of more exposition. In order to better clarify this, further justify my argument that this does not, in fact, dismiss the anthropologist's 'inconvenient dislocations' and 'anguished ethical ambiguities' of his or her doing fieldwork, and in order to segue toward this Thesis' final dénouement concerning plot and sub-plot, it is toward a more distinct conclusive discussion in which I now turn.

¹⁰ Narayan, "Ethnography and Fiction: Where is the Border?" 143.

CONCLUSION—PLOT AND SUB-PLOT

“More recently, however, several schools have proclaimed that ‘everything is fiction.’ Similarities in structure between literary discourses and discourses that claim to correspond to the facts, or between games and the pursuit of truth, have led them to conclude that scientific theories are nothing but constructs, which may indeed be powerful, but are somehow ‘not really true.’ Since such constructs have just as much right to the word fiction as do literary ones, it can be tempting to treat both uses of it as the same concept and to deny any difference worth noting between literary fictions and scientific fictions, between a novel and a physical, social, or historical theory.”

—Eric Miller, “Literary Fictions and As-If Fictions,” 1997¹

1. Two Stories

As I argued in this Thesis’ Introduction, close textual analysis is like detective work: while it demands an intimate examination of the plot on the surface, including a close consideration of both the characters involved and the dialogues they share, it also necessitates an investigation of the sub-plot, the underlying ‘second story’ that might tell us pertinent details about the author’s intentions in shaping the text in the first place. This further requires an approach designed by an explicit deconstruction, a dedicated practice of seeing the text as more than just mere words on a page. In this way, close textual analysis is also like reading two stories in one: an appreciation of the aesthetic qualities on the surface, alongside an analysis of the instrumental elements hidden underneath.

With this Conclusion I will attempt to clarify how this Thesis has tried to present a plot and sub-plot, by using this ‘two story’ paradigm as a guide. In the first section, my focus will be on the structure and concentration of the Thesis in regard to the hypothesis made in the Introduction. This will also take the shape of a useful summary, and will represent my ‘first story.’ In the second section, I will turn my attention toward the ‘subplot’ underscoring my creation and use of Ethnographic Criticism in order to further elucidate the description I provided in the fourth and fifth Chapters. This section will also consider what I mean by ‘everything is fiction’ by closely examining what ‘fiction’ might mean within the context of my usage here, and how that has influenced my argument about the differences between ethnography and the novel. Lastly, I will conclude with a brief discussion about these differences, as well as the role that ‘choice’ plays in shaping any sort of text, so as to further consider where on the

¹ Eric Miller, “Literary Fictions and As-If Fictions” (*Philosophy and Rhetoric*, Vol. 30, No. 4, 1997), 428.

spectrum between ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’ I might place both the experimental ‘text’ that preceded this Conclusion, as well as the Thesis itself.

2. Plot: Ethnographic Criticism

On the surface, this Thesis has addressed the question: *what is Ethnographic Criticism?* Stemming from a hypothesis dually inspired by certain experimental approaches to the writing and reading of ethnographic texts, and in light of the difficulty in relying on more ‘traditional’ means of approaching the concept of Atheism, this Thesis has attempted to not only substantiate the utility in reading fiction as a culturally rich source, but to also provide a procedure on how that might be accomplished. In essence, then, Ethnographic Criticism is a style of textual analysis, a manner of examination that exemplifies how we might read a fictional text in order to gain an ethnographic insight about a particular concept.

Across the three foundational Chapters of Part One, we mapped out the procedural way in which this type of analysis is both formed and validated. In the first, a link was made between the literary qualities of constructing ethnographic texts and the way previous scholars have allowed those literary interests to lead them toward experimental interpretations of certain culturally significant works of fiction. In the second, a link was made between this sort of ‘ethnographic reading’ and the way Ethical Critics interpret how characters develop in fiction. This equally provided a second level of nuance to the manner in which Ethnographic Criticism enacts a similar methodology by focusing on the correlation between this sort of character develop and the ways in which individuals construct their cultural identities in the ‘real world.’ In the third, a link was made between the way Discourse Analysis removes us from the necessity of ‘defining’ Atheism, so as to both create an ‘anthropological context’ from within which we might carry out our Ethnographic Criticism, as well as to provide for us an external comprehension of the Atheism internalized in McEwan’s novels.

These chapters made up the ‘pillars’ of Ethnographic Criticism: the method, theory, and data. When combined, they represented a certain pragmatic structure designed with the intention of addressing our hypothesis concerning the use of fiction as a cultural source. This likewise was an attempt at resolving a number of inquiries presented in this Thesis’ Introduction, such as: how would we go about reading

fictional accounts as if they were similar or identical to non-fictional ones; given the association this sort of reading might have with existing literary criticism, how might that criticism play a part in both directing the texts chosen, as well as how we read them; and in reading these texts for an insight on a particular concept, how might we stipulate this concept in a manner indicative of an anthropological interpretation? This structure, devised in such a way so that the infrastructure of our Ethnographic Criticism might be grounded within established fields, was created for the sole purpose of routinizing the use of fiction in the larger study of religion. That is, when examining a religious identity that is built from a particular concept, and when faced with conceptual issues like those cited above, Ethnographic Criticism becomes a methodological means with which we might turn to fictional texts in order to gain the sort of cultural insight we might have once attained only through reading ethnographic ones.

We then tested this analytical process through an interpretation of the Atheism ‘revealed’ in two novels by Ian McEwan, locating within these examples a progressive representation of Atheist identity construction. Between the first and the second text, we identified two unique representations, the first—*Black Dogs*—signifying an Atheism ‘in development,’ and the second—*Enduring Love*—an ‘established’ Atheism forced to defend itself against an equally oppositional and external validator. When viewed through the externalized lens of our third Chapter’s discursive analysis of the definitions of Atheism, this revealed a number of correlations on an individual level, the most significant of which concentrated on ‘Atheism-as-identity’ as a contingent *process* of denial or rejection, linked to, and dependent upon, an equally unique sort of ‘Theism.’ In the first example, Bernard’s Atheism embodied a sense of transition, building to its definitive form only after it transitioned from an established base—communism—to a liminal stage—post separation from June, but still communistic—and then to an equally established position both dependent upon, and in reflection of, a proportionately established position of its own: June’s ‘Theism.’ Out of this transition we were able to decipher the elements that culminated, logically, into what we might discursively call ‘Bernard’s Atheism.’ In the second text, ‘Joe’s Atheism’ began as an established position, which then found itself in need of validation from two interactional points: internal and external. On the internal level, Joe found himself attempting to ‘re-orient’ his sense of self after the events of the balloon accident caused within him a feeling of ethical dissonance. To accommodate this, he turned toward a number of

internalized validations, given meaning and fashioned around his scientific explanations about the cause and existence of religious belief, which we identified as his ‘Scientific Worldview.’ Then, and through a select number of interactions with Jed, Joe’s ‘Atheistic base’ found itself externally validated. Through analyzing their criticisms of each other—though told with Joe’s voice—we came to discover not only that which shaped Jed’s ‘Theism,’ but how this Theism affected Joe’s Atheism via the latter’s rejection of the former.

While this analysis provided for us a means to avoid simply stipulating a definition of Atheism-in-general, it also helped establish a more nuanced Atheism-in-specific. Namely, when used as cultural examples, these Atheist identities are not only unique to the individuals who embody them, or even the contexts within which they are formed, they are also unique to the interactional relationships in which they find validation. That is, as these Atheisms are inextricably linked with identities that cannot arise *ex nihilo*, and are thus in need of an already established position in which to reflectively take shape, they are just as equally reflective of the ‘Theisms’ against which they construct themselves. From this, we might make two important conclusions: First, both etymologically and philosophically, the ‘Atheism’ in these examples appears dependent upon unique types of ‘Theism,’ and is thus shaped by those Theisms, so that it also appears as a product, or conclusion, of Theological thinking. In this way, and in these examples, Theism and Atheism share the same DNA. We see this exemplified in the way Bernard and Joe’s Atheisms are unique to the interactional validations they are engaged in between June and Jed. Or rather, the differentiation we see between Bernard and Joe’s ‘Atheisms’ is not just based on the variance between developing and developed, it is also established by the differentiation between June and Jed’s Theisms. In other words, the Atheism we might source out of these examples is uniquely intertwined with the Theist identity construction represented by June and Jed. As such, Bernard’s Atheism, though combative, seems less so than Joe’s, particularly because June’s Theism is not as fervent as Jed’s. What we might then take away from this first conclusion is a further reminder that generalized definitions appear all the more precarious because they overlook these sorts of individual-to-individual subtleties. In a likewise argument, we might also concede that as these are select examples—as we might see in more traditional ethnographic data—they equally do not represent a ‘definition’ of Atheism in a broad or general manner. Rather, these examples exist as contributions to a larger discourse on how individuals who identify as ‘Atheist’ go about doing so.

Our second conclusion follows directly from the first: because we can isolate this Atheist identity construction within the context of a relationship between Theism and Atheism, it would logically follow that this discussion falls into the larger milieu concerning the study of religion. Because the Atheism within this analysis appears like a product of a relationship between itself and Theism through the process of identification, it should likewise be considered a religious identity in the same way we might define someone who is expressing a Theistic identity. Likewise, this would also support the argument that the discussion we presented herein is equally aligned with the discourse on religious identity construction within the larger field of Religious Studies. In this manner, not only does our introduction and use of Ethnographic Criticism offer a unique voice to the study of Atheism, it contributes as well to the discourse on the study of religion.

One additional—and final—statement we might make about this analysis is that it also provides us with a particular type of referential data. By using the characters from within these novels as representative individuals exhibiting a distinct process of identity construction, we are allotted the opportunity to further use them as discursive testimonials that, when compared to the in-process ethnographic data referenced in the examples provided at the start of our second Chapter, we gain the ability to comparatively shape a larger discursive understanding about how Atheism is defined via these sorts of macro analyses.

On the surface, then, the creation, description, and use of Ethnographic Criticism within this Thesis has tried to not only give a name to a process that seems too often overlooked in the use of fiction within the context of social scientific research, it has equally tried to justify the use of that fiction in our efforts at examining identity constructions in the study of religion. Of course, doing this is not without its issues, or, as we referred to them earlier, ‘defects.’ These were exemplified in the style and structure of our analysis, which, as an example of the limitations and consequences of using such an experimental approach, begs the question as to whether any Ethnographic Criticism going forward would require such an avant-garde technique. To answer this, we must turn here toward a discussion of this Thesis’ ‘sub-plot.’

3. Sub-Plot: Everything is Fiction

Beneath the surface of my intentions in creating, describing, and using Ethnographic Criticism, I have attempted to write a second story. Based on the language—discourse—used by many of the scholars cited throughout this Thesis, this sub-plot has meant to address the question: *is everything fiction?* This question derives directly from the marriage that I arranged between the first Chapter's notion of reading fiction ethnographically, and the second Chapter's description of Ethical Criticism. By combining these two methodological 'uses' of fiction, the notion of what is 'fictional' becomes somewhat amenable to interpretation.

In fact, we see examples of this not only within the context of the Literary Turn, but in a number of diverse instances as well. From within the discourse of the former, Clifford hints at the 'fictional' nature of ethnography by referring to the constructed truths within ethnographic texts as 'powerful lies' based on exclusion and rhetoric. He equally goes on to say that even the 'best ethnographic texts,' which he calls 'seriously true fictions,' are themselves still only 'systems of truth.'² As such, and though he contends that an acceptance of the 'partiality' of ethnographic truth, rather than a strict denial of it, leads to a broader understanding of the process itself, it also leads us toward an acceptance of the 'artistry' involved:

Ethnographic truths are thus inherently partial—committed and incomplete. This point is now widely asserted—and resisted at strategic points by those who fear the collapse of clear standards of verification. But once accepted and built into ethnographic art, a rigorous sense of partiality can be a source of representational tact.³

Clifford's use of terms like 'lie,' 'fiction,' 'partial truths,' and 'art,' are unique signifiers that he and his colleagues use in order to shape a discourse around the concept of the literary—and thus 'artistically fictional'—aspects of ethnography. Much like Geertz's use of 'faction,' or the etymological delineation between 'fiction' as something made or fashioned, as well as false or made-up (1973), these terms are the hallmarks of a shift in conceptual meaning about what might be deemed 'fictional.'

As Clifford further states:

To call ethnographies fictions may raise empiricist hackles. But the word as commonly used in recent textual theory has lost its connotation of falsehood, of something merely opposed to truth. It suggests the partiality of cultural and historical truths, the ways they are systematic and exclusive. Ethnographic writings can properly be called fictions in the sense of 'something made or fashioned,' the principal burden of the word's Latin root, *fingere*. But it

² Clifford, "Introduction," 7.

³ Ibid.

is important to preserve the meaning not merely of making, but also of making up, of inventing things not actually real [emphasis in original].⁴

There is an intriguing link made here, a nexus between the fictions made from and the fictions made up that I have spoken of throughout this Thesis. Likewise, this brings us to a terminological broadening of sorts, an augmentation of ‘fiction’ itself, not only in how I make use of it, but as demonstrated by the uses of it by others outside the influence of the Literary Turn.

As a first example, we could begin with Vaihinger’s (1935) idea that ‘fiction’ really means ‘fictionalism,’ the belief that something recognized as fictional does not necessitate that thing as being completely without value: “an idea whose theoretical untruth or incorrectness, and therewith its falsity, is admitted, is not for that reason practically valueless and useless; for such an idea, in spite of its theoretical nullity may have great practical importance.”⁵ Established through his *Die Philosophie Des Als Ob*, wherein ‘consciously false’ fictional explanations are perceived as accepted within the absence of evidential phenomena, Vaihinger’s use of ‘as-if’ is underscored by a sense of scientific inquiry:

I wanted to give a complete enumeration of all the methods in which we operate intentionally with consciously false ideas, or rather judgments. I wanted to reveal the secret life of these extraordinary methods. I wanted to give a complete theory, an anatomy and physiology so to speak, or rather a biology of ‘As if.’ For the method of fiction which is found in a greater or lesser degree in all the sciences can best be expressed by this complex conjunction ‘As if.’⁶

From here, this idea of ‘as-if,’ of fictionalism performing a sort of pragmatic usefulness between ‘hypothesis’—verifiable as true or false—and fiction—equally verifiable, though not dictated as such—has been altered by a number of similar ideologies. For example, we might consider Said’s (1975) own use of Vaihinger’s notion of ‘summational fiction’ in reference to the ‘intransitive’ or ‘conceptual’ artifice of beginnings, what he deems as relational to the cognitive construction inherent in adopting practical fictions:

[A beginning] is very much a creature of the mind, very much a bristling paradox, yet also very much a figure of thought that draws special attention to itself. Its existence cannot be doubted, yet its pertinence is wholly to itself. Because it cannot truly be known, because it belongs more to silence than it does to language, because it is what has always been left behind, and because it challenges continuities that go cheerfully forward with *their* beginnings obediently affixed, it is therefore something of a necessary fiction. It is perhaps our permanent concession as finite minds to an ungraspable absolute [emphasis in original].⁷

⁴ Ibid., 6.

⁵ Hans Vaihinger, *The Philosophy of ‘As If:’ A System of the Theoretical, Practical and Religious Fictions of Mankind*, C.K. Ogden, trans. Second Edition (London: KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRUBNER & CO., LTD., 1935), viii.

⁶ Ibid., xli.

⁷ Edward W. Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (New York: Basic Books, 1975), 77.

Additionally, we could look at how Kliever (1979) designates ‘religious belief systems’ and ‘life-worlds’ as particular ‘types of fiction’ that, though not necessarily ‘imagined’ or ‘symbolic,’ are nevertheless based upon certain conceptions of those things deemed fictitious or hypothetical:

Given the linguisticity and historicity of human existence, all reality claims are fabrications or constructions. ‘Facts’ are symbolic constructions which have been established as reliable representations of a world that exists independently of all human imagination and intervention. Fictions are not simply symbolic constructs which have yet to be verified. They are not hypotheses whose truth remains in doubt for the present. They are symbolic constructs which cannot be verified and hence cannot be true.⁸

In a similar context we might compare Fine’s (1993) deduction—“if we knowingly retain a false but useful hypothesis, we have a fiction”⁹—with Miller’s (1997) actual use of the phrase ‘everything is fiction’ to denote four distinct ways of perceiving Vaihinger’s ‘as-if’ between scientific and literary fictions:

(1) simply that all human knowledge includes constructs; (2) that all actual, or even all possible, such forms of knowledge are nothing but constructs or fictions, and that data, if any are admitted at all, are always just projections out from that fiction; (3) that our most fundamental categories of possible experience are such constructs, so that reality itself can be nothing but fiction; and (4) that scientific fictions are ultimately no different from literary fictions.¹⁰

As a last example, which in a thematic way returns this discussion back to the context of the Literary Turn, we might even look at how Anderson (1983) makes use of ‘fiction’ as a conduit, a link between the ‘imagined-ness’ of national identities—“communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined”¹¹—and the discourse of ‘fiction-as-constructive-device,’ wherein the ‘national novel’ becomes an illustrative literary form that represents the ‘technical means’ of characterizing the society-at-large within an ‘imagined community.’¹²

These examples reveal as much a broad usage as that found in my third Chapter’s discursive analysis of the definitions of Atheism: the definition of ‘fiction’ is here determined by differing theoretical contexts, so that the term itself has equally become something imbued with meaning according to each distinct example. In this way, and like my conclusion with Atheism, I might then argue that due to

⁸ Lonnie D. Kliever, “Polysymbolism and Modern Religiosity” (*The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 59, No. 2, 1979), 189.

⁹ Arthur Fine, “Fictionalism” (*Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, Vol. 18, 1993), 8.

¹⁰ Miller, “Literary Fictions and As-If Fictions,” 429.

¹¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 6.

¹² As examples, Anderson uses Rizal’s (1887) *Noli Me Tangere*; Balagtas’ (Baltazar’s) *Pinagdaanang Buhay ni Florante at ni Laura sa Cahariang Albania* (1838 [1861]); Fernandez de Lizardi’s (1816) *El Periquillo Sarmiento*; and Kartodikromo’s (1924) *Semarang Hitam*.

these dissimilar conceptions, the term is no longer anchored to a specific or concrete ‘definition.’ Rather, because it is described and represented by individual uses within unique contexts, ‘fiction’ ceases being bound to the idea that it *only* represents things that are false or made-up. What this also means is that any future usage of the term—including my own—represents an equally discursive contribution, free of definitive barriers, but also determined by preceding discourses and the context of that usage. Yet, this still leaves us with the issue of separation, of perceiving a distinct difference between a cultural object—the ethnography—and a fictional representation—the novel. After all, if ‘everything’—in this instance, textualized culture—is ‘fictionalized,’ and thus the result of an acceptance that any sort of textual interpretation is both made-from and made-up, what is there to stop us from admitting that if everything is fiction, perhaps nothing is?

This statement is perhaps better clarified by translating the term ‘fiction’ in *everything is fiction* as ‘artifice.’ While an artifice might equally be defined as something both deceitful and manufactured, this term appears much less precarious than ‘fiction’ because it denotes a distinct truth: any text, whether fictional or non-fictional, is always written, and is thus designed by choice. Consider, for example, the citation of Said’s use of fiction above, and how it reflects his idea that a ‘beginning’ belongs just as much to ‘myth’ as it does to ‘logic:’ “conceived of as a place in time, and treated as a root as well as an objective.”¹³ The ‘beginning,’ here, is obviously something that not only must exist in the process of telling any sort of story—whether as an ethnography or a novel—it also reflects a significant choice made by the teller. In this way, even acknowledging that a text has a beginning means equally acknowledging that the story it tells is itself designed in a particular way. Consider further the way McEwan—or Joe, depending on how far one is willing to expand their imagination—designs the beginning of *Enduring Love*. Not only does the entire text begin with the line, “the beginning is simple to mark,” the story that follows continuously reminds us that Joe, as the artificer of this text, has the sole responsibility over how we receive it. This is further demonstrated by his admission just a few pages later:

I’ve already marked my beginning, the explosion of consequences, with the touch of a wine bottle and a shout of distress. But this pinprick is as notional as a point in Euclidian geometry, and though it seems right, I could have proposed the moment Clarissa and I planned to picnic after I had collected her from the airport, or when we decided on our route, or the field in which to have our lunch, and the time we chose to have it. There are always antecedent

¹³ Said, *Beginnings*, 43.

causes. A beginning is an artifice, and what recommends one over another is how much sense it makes of what follows.¹⁴

On a sub-plot level, this admission, and with it a further disclosure of choice, is just as equally evocative of McEwan's role in shaping Joe's narrative, perhaps most evident by his creation and inclusion of the artificial report by Wenn and Camia in the first appendix. This clever insertion not only bolsters the story's content from a position of accountability, it also plays a significant role in weakening the notion that *Enduring Love*, as a 'fiction,' is entirely made-up. By citing sources that exist within the 'real world,' and by crafting the report in such a way as to convince the reader that the story within the novel is based on some sort of 'fact,' McEwan is reminding us that the dividing line meant to separate fact from fiction is not always well defined.

This is perhaps the central point of the 'second story' that I have tried to tell throughout this Thesis, which also acts as a reminder that an artifice, by its very nature, is something imbued with 'choice.' Where we might amend the 'fiction' in our phrase *everything is fiction* as a reminder that all textual representations are the result of an artifice on the part of the author, this also means that every text is also the result of a number of conscious choices. Where above this was demonstrated by the notion of a 'beginning,' and how in recognizing that a text 'begins' gives credence to the idea that it is, in fact, designed by an individual for a unique purpose, an artifice is indeed infected by the choices made to construct it. In this same way, where McEwan's creation of a report that would assist his novel by causing the reader to question his own narrative's authenticity, my creation herein of a fictionalized analysis of two first-person accounts in order to reinforce my hypothesis about reading fiction as ethnography, is equally a product of very specific choices. To conclude this Thesis, then, I turn here to a description of those choices, not only in an effort to further justify why I chose an experimental approach, but to better explicate how those choices helped shape the design of the Thesis as a whole.

4. Conclusion: Four Choices and Future Research Questions

Just as much as an ethnography and a novel are textual siblings under the definition of 'artifice,' a thesis is just as fictionally 'made-from.' As well, as a text 'designed'—and thus 'fictionalized'—in order to make a significant contribution to, and unique statement about, a particular subject, a thesis is inherently saturated by 'choice.' However, when compared to the ethnography or the novel, a thesis is

¹⁴ McEwan, *Enduring Love*, 17-18.

its own unique sort of artifice. While the former two are designed for their own textual intentions, a thesis is designed for the sole purpose of providing a distinct type of ‘proof,’ not only about the author’s knowledge of the field of research to which he or she is contributing, but about that author’s manner of designing that research through a unique and novel sort of approach. In consideration of the ‘choices’ made to do this, a thesis needs to be quite clear about how and why those choices were made, in order to better elucidate the proof necessary for a successful defense. For my own intentions, I designed this Thesis via four specific choices.

My first choice was to use fiction. Inspired by the utility it might offer the ‘anthropological’ study of Atheism, my decision to use it herein also stems from a number of occasions where I found myself curiously perplexed by instances where a novel was used either alongside, or in lieu of, a non-fictional text on the same subject. On each of these occasions, I equally found myself intrigued by the lack of reasoning or explanation for such an un-orthodox approach, as if this usage was indicative of either an inherent or specific belief that the novel was textually interchangeable with its non-fictional counterpart. While this position might be validated by my association of both as ‘artifice,’ and thus ‘fictional’ in the sense of something both ‘made-from’ and ‘made-up,’ this was never given as a pretext for doing so. For this reason, then, my usage herein has been an attempt at locating a justification for either authenticating or strengthening the use of fiction alongside, or independent of, a non-fictional text on the same subject. On a more theoretical level, this first choice lies at the heart of my creation of Ethnographic Criticism. However, and as I have tried to explicate throughout this Thesis, particularly in Chapter Five, this sort of approach should be regulated by notable restrictions or limitations. As such, while I have attempted to ‘prove’ that a novel might be useful as an anthropological source, both in reference to my own intentions, and in order to assist others who might adopt it for their own, the process of interpreting a novel as an ethnography could, if not controlled by strict guidelines, lead us toward the sort of ‘defects’ exemplified by my “The Merits of Non-Tradition.” A significant question we might pose here, then, would consider whether or not a text that is solely the result of an author’s imagination offers the same sort of authenticity concerning his or her subject as a text that is designed within the context of strict and empirical objectivity. Or, to state that question differently: is not a novel, with its ability to bring the reader into the world of the text itself via a fictionalization of that world, not a better medium to understand or appreciate a particular culture or context than a text clearly

infected by an objective observer's separation from his or her subject? Which brings me to my second choice, and the precarious nature of textual format in the process of 'fictionalizing' another's culture.

By choosing to anchor this discussion to a marriage between the effects of the Literary Turn and the Ethical Criticism used to analyze McEwan's fiction, and then by selecting two sources that would raise the question about the 'true' author of those texts, I could position my analysis within the discourse about the precarious similarities between 'fiction' and 'non-fiction' presented in Part One. In this way, not only would the Thesis as a whole reflect the nature of a novel, wherein the characters and plot are slowly revealed across the body of the text, thereby making the reader an 'expert' by its dénouement, I could equally construct it in a manner indicative of a text both 'made-from' and 'made-up.' On the former end, it would represent the artifice of a scholarly—'non-fictional'—one: based on the information presented in the three Chapters of Part One it would accumulate those discourses into a singular discussion focused on the identity construction found within the examined data. Thus, not only would it demonstrate a methodological means with which we might read a novel as ethnography, it would also provide an example of that model 'in practice.' However, this might equally create the opportunity for me to approach my analysis in a manner more similar to the novelist's creation of a world for the benefit of his or her story, such as we saw with the ethnographic novels by Jackson, Knab, and the Prices, and as I discussed in Chapter Five: in order to more literarily convey the story of his chosen subjects, the narrator of my 'text' would appear to merge the ethnographic language that I introduced in Part One with an imaginative—yet still heavily scholastic—thematic style. Moreover, it would also tell the story of a 'fictional' character: 'Ethan G. Quillen,' the analyst, who placed himself into a fictionalized milieu—a plot designed to lead toward a particular conclusion—in order to better translate the identity construction of the individuals whose texts he had chosen to examine. By doing this, then, not only could I present an analysis that would support my hypothesis, as well as represent the precarious outcome of an excessive experimentation, it would also be linked to the experimentation conducted by others within the context out of which my analysis itself derived its theoretical inspiration. Lastly, by linking it to this established discourse it would inherently present its own unique offering: rather than fictionalize data that represents real and existing culture for a particular literary effect, it would represent an analysis—based on examining invented individuals—that would look like an analytical examination for a particular realist effect.

My third choice deals directly with the novels that I selected for that analysis. First, these two fictions were useful for thematic reasons: *Black Dogs* for providing a narrative about the difficulties inherent in textually recreating another's life that I could link to the same issues concerning the writing of ethnography; and *Enduring Love* for providing a similar correlation focused on the uncertainty about what might be deemed 'accurate' or 'authentic' about textual representations provided by one individual's interpretation. Second, they were also useful for stylistic reasons: while McEwan's use of realism fulfilled my requirement for this sort of enquiry, and though his skill in creating individuals who look and feel as if they might actually exist helped my argument that *Black Dogs* and *Enduring Love* could represent expedient sources of Atheist identity construction, it was because of their first-person narration, and how that would influence my reading of them 'ethnographically,' that perhaps more directly inspired my choice in using them. That is, while their stories provided a means with which I could further elucidate the discussions about ethnographic construction and textual analysis from the first two Chapters, their narrative perspectives as first-person accounts meant that my analysis of them as ethnographic descriptions would require a consideration about the 'place' of the author, given that my assessment about the style of the text would likewise dictate the type of ethnographic insight that they might offer. In this way, not only were they useful for my intentions as descriptions of Atheism, their shared narrative perspective, and the way that would alter my perception of them, made them ideal for my introduction, and critique, of Ethnographic Criticism.

This leads to my final choice: to present the discourse of the first three Chapters in such a way so that the experimentation of my analysis seemed like an inevitable 'next step.' Or, to borrow from the language I used above about my analysis looking like a novel, by shaping the three Chapters of Part One so that the 'stories' they told would lead to a designed conclusion, the experimental nature of my "The Merits of Non-Tradition" would seem like the logical result of correlative discourses; a type of magician's misdirection, where the detailed theoretical contextualization of those Chapters would lead the reader, via my narrative control, toward an acceptance of the 'trick' of my experimental analysis. Not only would this give that analysis—and thus the Thesis as a whole—a sense of evidential proof concerning my knowledge of these discourses, it would demonstrate a unique analytical perspective by providing an introduction, use, and critique of a new methodological approach. Of course, given the

discussion so far addressed in this Conclusion, this naturally poses the question: is my construction of Ethnographic Criticism herein nothing more than a useful device with which to defend my use of fiction as ethnography? Or, in another way: is my ‘artifice’ here representative of that term’s meaning as ‘deception,’ ‘trickery,’ or ‘artful cunning,’ and in that way revealing too much of the magic in my magic trick? In answer to these questions, I would reply both ‘yes,’ and ‘no,’ which brings us back to my notion of this Thesis’ two stories.

On one end, I would argue that Ethnographic Criticism is indeed a new and beneficial method of reading fiction beyond its limitations as mere aesthetic entertainment, and my usage of it here has revealed a pragmatic methodology that not only addresses my hypothesis, but that correspondingly places the novel alongside the ethnography as a text accessible for cultural insight. While this is not, perhaps, a correlation of equal authoritativeness, it nonetheless has affected an association that helps to defend not only my usage, but also the usages cited above in the description of my first choice. In a similar manner, my employment of it here has not only stipulated a successful interpretation of Atheist identity construction exclusive of the ambiguous discourse influencing the study of Atheism, it has also provided quite a useful insight about how individuals might shape their identities in a style more culturally relevant than that offered by a purely theoretical assessment.

On the other, my more creative engagement with it has provided a convenient critique of this very method itself, raising an important awareness about how textual experimentation might lead toward an ‘unexpected’ or entirely ‘un-orthodox’ outcome. This does not, as I reasoned at the end of Chapter Five, mean that every Ethnographic Criticism that comes after this one needs to follow this approach. Rather, the style that I chose for this first example was merely meant as an exemplary warning for those future analyses, an illustration of the ‘defect’ that might occur if we are not careful about how we use fiction ‘ethnographically,’ as well as a challenge toward the notion that when we consider all textual representations—*everything*—as ‘fiction,’ the important distinction between what is ‘real’ or ‘imagined’ within the context of the ‘fiction’ of textual construction, might become dangerously skewed. In other words, my choice to present my introduction of Ethnographic Criticism in such an experimental manner was meant as well to stress the importance of theoretical clarity. After all, if we fail to recognize these differences, and thus allow ourselves to read a novel as if it is as culturally

informative as a 'proper' ethnography, then maybe the reverse is possible as well: perhaps we can write a fiction that makes a novel look like an ethnography.

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