PHILOSOPHY OF THE ACT AND THE PRAGMATICS OF FICTION

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To John Coetzee, in appreciation.

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INTRODUCTION

This is a work concerned with literary fiction as viewed through the lens of pragmatics, in this case a somewhat revisionist pragmatics. It is not a work of general narratology, but rather one that stresses the particularity of prose fiction, with its own particular functions and associated interests. Neither is it a work of literary criticism, since it is concerned with exploring how fictional works can come to have the aesthetic and ethical dimensions that they have, rather than with evaluating them according to any special aesthetic or ethical criteria. However, since pragmatics has become a multidisciplinary field, it can naturally accommodate insights generated within narratology and literary criticism, as well as semiotics, linguistics and philosophy.

The phrase the "philosophy of the act" has appeared in the titles of at least two well-known books before. It is the title of a work by George H. Mead (1938) in the field of psychology. There is a distant relationship between that book and the present one, in the fact that Mead was an adherent of philosophical pragmatism, along with others such as Peirce, James and Dewey. An editor of Mead's book was Charles Morris, and it was also Morris (1938) who in the same year identified pragmatics as a subfield within semiotics, along with syntax and semantics. In doing so he made an important distinction between *pragmatics*, as part of general semiotics, and the philosophy of *pragmatism*. Today pragmatics has become a field in which researchers from various tendencies continue to participate, some of whom have identified themselves as neither philosophers nor semioticians. The present work falls within this more broadly defined field of pragmatics.

Let me give a brief preliminary indication of how the present work is revisionist in relation to the pragmatics that has emerged since the pioneering contribution of Morris. The field of pragmatics in more recent times has been very strongly conditioned by parallel developments in analytic philosophy, more so than by the field of semiotics. While this analytic philosophical body of work is important—it has had enormous influence in linguistics—it does have certain shortcomings, even in its most important exemplars, which become particularly evident in relation to artistic prose, the topic of this book. I believe that these shortcomings need to be addressed

by balancing the work of philosophers such as Austin, Searle and Grice with others, such as Nietzsche, Bakhtin and Lukács. As an initial indication of this let me mention the notion of *ethical intention*, drawn from the early work of Lukács. Ethics is naturally at home in the domain of practical philosophy, yet it finds no place in most of pragmatics, where a much narrower notion of intentionality is usually encountered. But if one adopts this narrower notion of an intention one finds it very hard to define the range of intentionality that can be, and regularly is, postulated in regard to the act of the author of a novel. This problem becomes apparent not only in a consideration of ethics, but also aesthetics.

On the question of aesthetics I turn to Nietzsche's early formulations in *The Birth of Tragedy*. If the aesthetic dimension is to be taken seriously then due weight must be placed on such topics as style and form, and for Nietzsche this entails the spirit of music entering into literature, although with Nietzsche this applies primarily to drama and to poetry. But I argue, perhaps contra Nietzsche, that this spirit of music is discoverable in artistic prose as well. If it is the case that authors of fictional work have both ethical and aesthetic intentions (whether more or less consciously) in writing, then it may be that this activity is *agonistic* in nature. This seems to me to follow from the notions of ethical and aesthetic intentions, since ethics is always a struggle against the unethical and the aesthetic a struggle against the unaesthetic. These struggles may be weak or strong, depending on the seriousness of authorial intentionality. The elaboration of these concerns leads me to develop later in this work a quadratic model, consisting of the dimensions of content, substance, style and form, where these familiar terms are given very specific conceptual definitions. This model constitutes a theoretical contribution to the philosophy of the act in regard to prose fiction.

If one is to take seriously Morris's formulation of pragmatics as the relationship between a sign user and the sign vehicle itself, then these ethical and aesthetic considerations must find a place within pragmatics. Morris stressed the relationship between a sign user and a sign vehicle, in that an organism would, as a result of habit, respond to the sign in a similar way that it would respond to certain properties of an absent object, or unobserved properties of a present object, the organism being the *interpreter* and the habit being the *interpretant*. When one is dealing with a human actor, it is perhaps appropriate to drop the term "organism" and to consider what sorts of *agency* are involved in the production and processing of fictional literature. I argue that these are three and only three, namely author, reader

and character, and not, say, four, where the fourth is "the narrator". I provide an argument against this latter possibility.

So when we talk about the sign users and their relations with signs we are having to do with these three sorts of agent. But what of Morris's "habit" and "interpretant"? Here we seem to come a little closer to mainstream pragmatics, particularly in the *uptake* of an illocutionary act as just the kind of act that was intended (e.g. a promise) or in the implicature that consists in the *recognition* of a meaning that was intended but not made explicit. These notions indeed do come closer to the notion of habit (or *convention* in the case of human agents), but how close do they really come to the interpretation of literature, and the uptake or recognition of authorial intention there? I suggest that the point of intersection with literature lies in the notion of *genre*. A reader, for example, recognises certain familiar generic characteristics or forms and thereby acquires certain expectations. But the question of genre, as convention, must be articulated with the other concerns already mentioned, ethics and aesthetics, in a broader philosophy of the act, since the interpretation of literature is more complex than the reception of illocutionary acts. Its meanings are unique or singular, as well as being conventional signs. They very often involve a complex web of intertextual relations, which may or may not be apprehended by the interpreter. The thinker who has done most to incorporate the theory of genre into the broader philosophy of the act in the way I am suggesting is M. M. Bakhtin, and I will rely on his insights at many stages of this work.

Authors and readers, as well as fictional characters in their own way, are sign users. When it comes to the uses of human language, pragmatics presupposes the syntactic and semantic components of the given language, and, as Morris points out, in the case of the specifically linguistic sign "interpretation becomes especially complex, and the individual and social results especially important" (1938, 36). Interestingly Morris regarded rhetoric as an early but restricted form of pragmatics. He goes on to mention many fields of signifying activity as being part of the provenance of descriptive pragmatics, including newspaper statements, political doctrines, philosophical systems and dreams as interpreted in psychoanalysis, as well as the literary, pictorial and plastic arts. Of particular relevance here, he says: "For aesthetic and practical purposes the effective use of signs may require rather extensive variations from the use of the same sign vehicles most effective for the purposes of science" (1938, 40). Some of the most important terms that appear in Morris are "context", "interpretation" and "purpose".

The second book that includes "philosophy of the act" in its title is the English translation of one of Bakhtin's early philosophical essays, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* (1993), a work principally of ethics, in which Bakhtin set out a concern that was to remain with him for his entire career, the relationship between culture and life. Bakhtin's early work is not an easy read—perhaps with good reason he held off drawing attention to the unpublished manuscripts until almost the end of his life. However, despite their frequent obscurity of expression, these essays do raise very important points concerning dialogue and alterity, which have been of great significance and which, I have no doubt, should be brought closer into the mainstream of pragmatics. I would go so far as to say that, post-Bakhtin, "the philosophy of the act" may be the best definition of pragmatics that we have.

It is interesting to observe how Bakhtin's career is almost a mirror image of that of Nietzsche. Whereas Nietzsche began with poetics and art criticism and went on to become known as a philosopher, Bakhtin made the opposite journey, from philosophy to poetics. This of course was not the only opposition between these two influential European thinkers, despite their common interest in aesthetics and ethics. Where Nietzsche praised music and tragedy above all other arts, practised atheism, and was determinedly elitist, Bakhtin was mostly interested in the novel, religiously inclined and thoroughly populist in orientation. However, both have highly interesting things to say about literature and representation, and such thinkers as these need to be considered in an expanded notion of pragmatics, along with the analytical philosophers and other Anglophone thinkers that have so far defined its mainstream.

Let me include in this brief introduction an etymological note relating to words such as *act* and *pragmatic*. These words, together with others such as *agent* and *agon*, appear to derive from a common Indo-European root, *-ag*. They are of course central to this work, concerned as it is with the *deed* in fiction, whether it be the deed of an author, a character or a reader, and thus there should be no ignoring any one of these agents in favour of the others. As I have said, it will be central to my argument that there are just these three agencies in fiction, and this too will require some engagement with proponents of other views, especially in the earlier chapters of this book, an agonistic project in itself.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DD   Direct discourse
FID   Free indirect discourse
IA   Implied author
ID   Indirect discourse
JE   *Jane Eyre*
TBOT   *The Birth of Tragedy*
TLG   *The Long Good-Bye*
TSD   *The Savage Detectives*
TTN   Third-person transcendent narrator
WSS   *Wide Sargasso Sea*

CHAPTER ONE

AGENTS IN FICTION

A nexus of three

How is it that a novel has the ethical and aesthetic dimensions that it has for the interested and engaged reader? The claim of pragmatics must be that these value dimensions are a result of relations amongst the communicating agents and the communicative or semiotic acts that they perform relative to one another. In fiction these agents are three, author, character and the reader. The English philosopher Gillian Rose (1992) introduced the term "the agon of authorship"–suggesting that written texts should be considered, not as mere texts, but as works or struggles. This is as relevant for literary examples as it is for philosophical ones. I aim to show that it is from the point of view of agonistic authorship, and the responses of readers to its artefacts (Eco 1981; Iser 1978), that fiction opens itself up to pragmatics, and thereby to an enhanced appreciation of the powerful techniques that have sustained the novel over a number of centuries.

A pragmatic analysis of a work of fiction might conceivably confine itself to the agonistic interplay of the various characters that make up a fictional world. Going further, it could compare this world and its characters to types of people in the actual world. But, it is argued, a true analysis of the pragmatics of fiction also needs to articulate the character relations with the author-reader relationship. All three types of agent perform semiotic acts, even if they are not experienced as being on the same ontological level.

Concerning the source of a work, one needs to distinguish in a reading between that which is posited and that which is empirically discovered. For example, a reader may develop postulates concerning the author of a novel while reading it, but a reader may also bring to bear knowledge about the author derived from sources outside of the text at hand. It would surely not make sense that a reader would not integrate the "empirical author" of externally derived knowledge, with the "posited author" derived from the reading. The fact that we do, as readers, use one single term "author" for this blended result is thus unsurprising, and it suggests that readers busy

themselves, more or less consciously, blending differing sorts of cognitive entities while reading, to produce an emerging composite author figure. And having read a particular work, it would again be unsurprising to find the same reader interested to bring this experience to bear somehow while reading another of the same author's works. Thus the question of intertextual relations arises in such ways.

At no point should it be thought that a work of pragmatics such as this (a) aims to legislate how a reader *ought* to read, or (b) attempts to second-guess what it is that an individual reader will or will not find interesting in any work of fiction. Such judgments would be inappropriate here. What is being suggested instead, on available evidence (such as the existence of genres that are parallel to fiction), is that many readers do find aspects of authorship to be of great interest. Other readers may only find the question of authorship to be of passing interest, to the extent, for example, that they might seek out (or avoid) further works by the same author. It is the conditions of the very possibility of these forms of interest and their variety that is at issue here, not what should or should not be the case. It also worth mentioning that many possibilities arise concerning the relationship between the author as posited in a reading of his/her work and the empirical facts of an author's life. Just to take one dimension of this: a reader may admire an author's work but be repelled by aspects of that author's biography, or vice versa.

Many kinds of questions arise concerning the triad of agents mentioned, for example: how and why does a reading public become interested in the work of a particular author and/or a particular genre of fiction? Why does a reader find certain characters and/or character types to be interesting? What preparation or education does a reader require in order to be able to access certain dimensions of a given novel?

It is suggested that fictional communication remains triadic throughout, in the sense that (i) a reader with a given level of competence would be able to posit at any stage (ii) an author's intentions and purposes, while reading "about" (iii) his/her characters. More fundamentally it argues, on pragmatic grounds, that for a competent reader there can be no doubt that the work of fiction is indeed a *work*, produced by someone who has had intentions and purposes in its creation. It is this competence, and the sorts of interest associated with it, that need to be analysed in regard to emergent novelistic forms. One should be careful not to overstate the case, however. It is not to be thought that a reader has access to an author's full set of intentions, or even that any reader aims at such an unlikely achievement. But nevertheless

the notion of the posited author goes further than that of the implied author (discussed further below). It suggests more than the simple thought that every text implies an author. It suggests instead that the reader of fiction can imagine this author or become curious about him/her, speculate about the values and tastes of the author, and be motivated to think further, and indeed seek further information, about this author. Note that the notion of implied author, if taken on its own, does not block the thought that the text may have a non-human source, such as a machine, a god or a demon of some kind. Positing an author in the sense that I have just described, instead begins as an assumption that the work has been produced by someone about whom more can become known, in principle.

Apart from author and reader, the third party, the character, inhabits an ontological realm distinct from that of author and reader. However, all three are real, as subjects and as agents in relation to one another, and one might with equal veracity state that:

> Fitzgerald wrote *The Great Gatsby*
> We read *The Great Gatsby* in high school
> Gatsby dies near the end of *The Great Gatsby*

The difference between the last statement and the other two is that it is true of a possible world known to be distinct from the actual world in which reader and author have their flesh-and-blood existences. However, the difference between actual and fictional worlds is seldom clear-cut. I would like to make it clear in this book just how much of the appeal of fiction lies in the intriguing possibilities of these two sorts of "world" being interwoven. They are intriguing not only to the interested reader, but also intriguing in the complexities they present for anything approaching a scientific analysis.

To take a very simple example: Napoleon can appear as an actual historical agent, but also as a fictional character, as in *Scarlet and Black* or *War and Peace*. So if some novelist were to present us with Napoleon's inner, silent musings, this would be a *blending* of ontological levels. We would imagine the actual historical Napoleon (in the form of whatever empirical data is available to us) and imagine also that we were being admitted into his inner subjective being. Such privileged access is the preserve of literary fiction (Gallagher 2006; 2011).

Authorship and its denialists

In literary studies there have been frequent attempts to diminish the importance of authorship in the reading of literature, from the arguments of Wimsatt and Beardsley (1972 [1946]) against the "intentional fallacy" to the more radical claims of (post-) structuralism, to which we will pay attention shortly. It is an argument of this book, however, that such debates in literary criticism tend to become spurious from the point of view of pragmatics when their normative intent is made clear. Apart from their frequent embrace of scientist and technical terminology, they are very often fundamentally concerned, with the question of how a critical reader *ought* to read, rather than with the question of what drives a reader to the act of reading, of why fiction is *interesting* in the first place. Why has it attracted the readership that it has and how has authorship managed to align itself with this kind of interest? These are the questions of a scientific nature rather than a normative one.

Witness the controversy over the "implied author" (IA), as an attempt to settle the question of authorship within professional narratology. The meaning of this term has proved to be elusive and its scientific status undecidable. In 2011 the journal *Style* devoted an entire edition to discussion of this concept. Again, the results confirmed or settled nothing, and perhaps Marie-Laure Ryan's contribution was the most sensible, in which she proposed that the IA be laid to rest. She traces briefly some of the history of author scepticism and author denial, from the New Criticism to (post-) structuralism, pointing out that Wayne Booth's original proposal concerning the implied author was "an attempt to restore to literature the human dimension" that had been denied (Ryan 2011, 30). It appears, on available evidence, that that attempt has failed and that the semantics of the expression "implied author" has fragmented into a number of widely differing postulates. In the same edition of *Style*, Tom Kindt and Hans-Harald Müller discuss several of these, all of which they reject: "the implied author as a phenomenon of reception"; "the implied author as a participant in communication"; "the implied author as a postulated subject behind the text"—the last of these having various intentionalist and non-intentionalist variants (2011, 67-79). It should go without saying that there are great incompatibilities between some of these notions, and the project of finding something like a grain of truth in each of them seems hardly worth one's time. Ryan herself comes to the telling conclusion that the IA has probably made little positive difference to the practice of criticism and that Ockham's razor is called for. She says

> I regard IA as a lame compromise between radical textualism and reading texts as the expression of a human mind (a view widely rejected by critics as biographism). I see nothing wrong with constructing an author-image; but if readers are interested in the author as a whole person, there is no reason to exclude other data in the construction of this image. We can build an image of Kafka on the basis of *The Trial*, but we will build a better image by also reading his correspondence and diaries. (2011, 41-42)

The kind of intertextuality that underpins the last sentence concerning Kafka is also of great interest and we shall return to it. But let us consider first the "radical textualism" that she mentions and which became so fashionable after the early 1960s and which is still current today, with a view to evaluating the claims on our attention that it may or may not still have (relative to the claims of pragmatics). I use the term (post-) structuralism for this radical textualism, under the influence of an interesting comment made by François Rastier, that in comparison to American structuralism, French structuralism has always been *post*-structuralism (personal communication 2007).

Its major proponents have included Barthes (1977 [1961]) and Foucault (1980). A proper critical estimation of these two essays would need to situate them within their broader intellectual context. Fortunately that job was done some time ago by Burke (1989), amongst others, in an impressive PhD thesis, the findings of which I will mention shortly. But let me first offer a much more limited set of critical comments from the specific point of view of pragmatics and the agon of authorship. Here is the central part of Barthes' essay:

> Surrealism, though unable to accord language a supreme place (language being system and the aim of the movement being, romantically, a direct subversion of codes–itself moreover illusory: a code cannot be destroyed, only "played off"), contributed to the desacrilisation of the image of the Author by ceaselessly recommending the abrupt disappointment of expectations of meaning (the famous surrealist "jolt"), by entrusting the hand with the task of writing as quickly as possible what the head itself is unaware of (automatic writing), by accepting the principle and the experience of several people writing together. Leaving aside literature itself (such distinctions really becoming invalid), linguistics has recently provided the destruction of the Author with a valuable, analytical tool by showing that the whole of the enunciation is an empty process, functioning perfectly without there being any need for it to be filled with the person of the interlocutors. Linguistically, the author is never more than the instance writing, just as I is nothing other than the instance saying I: language knows a "subject"," not a "person", and this subject, empty outside of the very

> enunciation which defines it, suffices to make language "hold together",
> suffices, that is to say, to exhaust it. (1977, 144-145)

Barthes' ex cathedra pronouncements conceal much more than they reveal. Language as pure system and code—said to be indestructible above—a staple of (post-) structuralism and the Parisian school of semiotics in this period, has the clear imprint of Saussure. But, as is so often the case, the notion presented depends on a reading of Saussure in which the langue/parole antinomy is suppressed and langue becomes the stand-in for language as a whole. Similarly tendentious readings of Saussure suppress the synchronic/diachronic antinomy and privilege the first term at the expense of the second. But such antinomies are much more insightfully taken as indicating the points where a line of thought has reached its limit and thought needs to seek a way forward by critically engaging with the antinomy itself, not by tendentiously supporting one of its poles against the other. Admittedly such tendencies do find some licence in Saussure's own practice, but that is a matter for other studies.

"Linguistics" has shown no such thing as Barthes claims here and the subsequent further broadening of linguistics, away from the narrow post-Saussurean base he represents, into many schools of thought has borne this out, agonistic as these schools may be in relation to one another. The continuing rise of pragmatics as a field aligned to modern linguistics itself attests to this.

A word or two also needs to be said about the claims for surrealism, automatic writing and group writing. To take the emergence of surrealism as some sort of herald of authorless text production is again to conceal many aspects of the issue. Surrealism has since come to be seen more as a phenomenon of psychoanalytical experimentation with occasional influences upon literature rather than any literature-wide revolution, or even indication of such a revolution. It has probably had its greatest influence in popular cultural movements, like psychedelia, rather than in fiction. Barthes would have been well aware of Sartre's vehement (1948) critique of surrealism and automatic writing, hence the feeble qualification of his own approving comments, on the basis of the alleged indestructability of codes, which comes nowhere near answering that critique. More to the point, however, surrealism has certainly not put paid in any way to the autographing of literary works, and there is still no more prospect of this now than at the time of Barthes' essay more than half a century ago. Surrealist texts, and surrealist artworks generally, are *themselves* autographed.

Automatic writing, on its own at least, would seem to be dubious as a source of novelistic fiction. It suffers from an association with crackpot mystical movements. It has turned out to be a less than widely applied technique, and when it is applied in conjunction with other techniques, this process remains subject to the intentional control of the author—that is, the very same writing subject whose psyche has "automatically" generated text—in shaping, editing, etc., so as to bring the text into line with more conscious artistic purposes.

Similarly, group writing has usually meant collaboration with others who share at least certain conscious intentions and purposes, if not others. On the face of it, such a phenomenon would seem hardly to present any challenge at all to authorship. After all if the Author somehow equates to God, as we are told, why should a group of authors not equate to a pantheon of gods?

If the addresser is somehow language itself, rather than a subject, what then of the reader? Barthes is not entirely clear on this matter of reader subjectivity. This is how he concludes his essay:

> The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination. Yet this destination cannot any longer be personal: the reader is without history, biography, psychology; he is simply that someone who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted. Which is why it is derisory to condemn the new writing in the name of a humanism hypocritically turned champion of the reader's rights. Classic criticism has never paid any attention to the reader; for it, the writer is the only person in literature. We are now beginning to let ourselves be fooled no longer by the arrogant antiphrastical recriminations of good society in favour of the very thing it sets aside, ignores, smothers, or destroys; we know that to give writing its future, it is necessary to overthrow the myth: the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author. (1977, 148)

The reader is a *space*? It is difficult to know what sort of reader could be lacking in "history, biography or psychology" and yet be a "someone", that is, an actual agent with subjective dispositions. "Classic criticism has never paid any attention to the reader," we are told, but it is difficult to see exactly what sort of attention to the reader, if any, is being proposed by Barthes. It may be the supreme irony that authors pay more *actual* attention to their readerships. Compare Bakhtin (1986, 98) on a vital aspect of this matter: "… each epoch, each literary trend and literary-artistic style, each literary genre within an epoch or trend, is typified by its own special concepts of the addressee of the literary work, a special sense and understanding of its

reader, listener, public, or people." This observation will be further engaged in the chapters that follow.

The liberationist aims that are said to underlie Barthes' call for the author's demise are proclaimed and not substantiated. I hope to make the case in due course that suppression of the author (in interpretation) is far more likely to disempower the reader than otherwise.

Foucault, for his part, discusses a construct that he calls "the author-function". The first characteristic of the author-function is that it is linked to modernity and that it is a "system of ownership for texts" (1980, 148). We may put aside for the moment the fact that written texts of many kinds have been autographed since ancient times and pay attention to the second characteristic, namely that "the author-function does not affect all discourses in a universal and constant way" (1980, 149). Whereas the author's name was once a guarantee of veracity of the scientific text, this function began to change "in the seventeenth or eighteenth century" as "scientific discourses began to be received for themselves, in the anonymity of an established or always redemonstrable truth." But then, "by the same token, literary discourses came to be accepted only when endowed with the author-function" (1980, 149). And so the author function has come to play a role whereby, it is said, we cannot tolerate anonymity in literary works. Then:

> The third characteristic of this author-function is that it does not develop spontaneously as the attribution of a discourse to an individual. It is, rather, the result of a complex operation which constructs a certain rational being that we call "author." Critics doubtless try to give this intelligible being a realistic status, by discerning, in the individual, a "deep" motive, a "creative" power, or a "design," the milieu in which writing originates. Nevertheless, these aspects of an individual which we designate as making him an author are only a projection, in more or less psychologising terms, of the operations that we force texts to undergo, the connections that we make, the traits that we establish as pertinent, the continuities that we recognize, or the exclusions that we practice. (1980, 150)

It is true that texts can be looked at in isolation and in ignorance of the precise conditions under which they have been produced, and that such readings may be legitimate and interesting. But even when readers do focus closely on the text as an object this does not mean that they entertain the thought that there is no author, or that they do not further *posit* the author as being male or female, a contemporary or someone from the ancient world, gay or straight, etc.

It is also true that autographed literature represents only a relatively small part of the literature that has ever been produced–it does not include all those instances that are referred to as "folktales" for example–and this is a different point that will be dealt with in another chapter. Folktales, legends and myths have been produced in entirely different ways to those of the written novel. Those earlier forms have been subsumed into what we recognise today as fiction; they have been "novelised", in Bakhtin's terminology, over the course of millennia. Secondly, what in modern times has been regarded as fiction, serves quite different functions and its emergent techniques do not result in mere differences of form. It is the task of pragmatics to show this. The interest that the reading public shows in novels is appreciably different in nature to what it was in the case of pre-novelistic forms.

We need to be open to the hypothesis that the autographing of literature itself serves a number of social and cultural functions, rather than the one fairly simplistic idea that an author stands as an overbearing authority on his or her work. Texts of all kinds are autographed in modern times, from journalistic articles to scientific monographs to cartoons. Most citizens in democratic society are used to adopting a critical attitude towards communicating individuals and their works, even though they may have no other personal contact with authors and artists. By-lines, autographing and all other similar means of identification serve as means of accountability and allocation of responsibility. The question of intellectual property is thereby implicated, required by individuals for their livelihoods. And there is the question of reader interest: the biographical notes on authors that are regularly supplied with novels today are supplied due to reader interest in the individuals responsible, an interest that they may want to investigate further. And far from intentionality being an invention of conservative literary critics, who wish to establish or impose criteria of validity in interpretation, it is deeply embedded in the human notions of agency that are the stuff of pragmatics. In communication amongst human individuals it is entirely reasonable to ask who it is that is communicating with me in this manner and why? And why should their identity be withheld from me? "Art and life are not one, but they must become united in myself–in the unity of my *answerability*" (Bakhtin 1990, 2 [emphasis added]). More on this later. Let us also consider the proposition that anonymity in literature may in fact involve a large-scale *loss* of meaning. Consider first the following good-natured argument:

> I'll happily concede to anti-Stratfordians that Shakespeare's Hamlet will be
> as good a play if someone down the road proves that it was actually written

by the earl of Oxford, or by Francis Bacon, or even by the spirit of Elvis Presley. But the corrected attribution will then change the meanings of Hamlet, of Shakespeare (the man), and of Shakespeare (the body of texts), for the voice of Hamlet has conditioned the ways in which readers experience the voice of other texts commonly ascribed to "William Shakespeare." (Foster 2002, 395)

Foucault may well have wished to publish his *own* writings anonymously, but I am sure that he would have had great difficulty in writing some of them without ever mentioning "Nietzsche", "Hegel", "Kant", as well as "Proust", "Mallarme", "Baudelaire" and others. And that is the point: names do not just represent some nefarious author-function that restricts our reading pleasure; they bring with them a vast wealth of intertextual associations, thereby adding layers of potential meaning for the one who is interested. Consider as a simple illustration the putative abolition, by Foucauldian decree, of items from the lexicon such as "Kafkaesque", "Shakespearean", or "Platonic". What these words currently convey to us, while they are still meaningful, is a wealth of intertextual associations that make up the fabric of culture. When speakers use these words, they are indicating how their own subjectivities have been shaped through exposure to authors and their legacy, and the ways in which such literary experience can be applied to life's situations. On this matter of the situatedness of literature within overall culture, Bakhtin made the following cautionary statement:

> The outstanding works of recent scholarship that I have mentioned … with all the diversity of their methodology are alike in that they do not separate literature from culture; they strive to understand literary phenomena in the differentiated unity of the epoch's entire culture. It should be emphasized here that literature is too complex and multifaceted a phenomenon and literary scholarship is still too young for it to be possible to speak of any one single "redeeming" method in literary scholarship. Various approaches are justified and are even quite necessary as long as they are serious and reveal something new in the literary phenomenon being studied, as long as they promote a deeper understanding of it. (1986, 3)

This is a formulation highly congenial to the multidisciplinary field of pragmatics and I have no doubt that more attention should be paid to it. It is a caution against one-sided and cavalier approaches to the study of literature. Bakhtin was writing this in 1970 (in Russian), well after Barthes' essay, and just a little before the essay by John Searle that I will turn to in the next subsection. But it could be taken as a judgment on both their (opposing) houses.

The relevance of culture as a whole here is the fact that culture is formative, it is the *Bildung*, the actuality that makes authors and readers alike what they are. Why would this reality be so stubbornly resisted by many practitioners in literary theory? Burke (1989) argues that the anti-humanism in French thought, as represented by Barthes, Foucault and Derrida, arises as a hyperbolic reaction to the Cartesian ego, said to have been resuscitated in phenomenology. In America the reception of these figures has been such that it has become an assumption that the disengagement of the author from the text has been decisively achieved, and this achievement has consequently been celebrated for opening up the possibilities of new kinds of hermeneutics and textual criticism. The further result, however, has been that criticism has polarised between two tendencies, a dogmatic author-denialism and a lingering biographism. Work and life have become polarised, the very phenomenon that Bakhtin resolutely set himself against throughout his writings, from his early philosophical works onward.

Of particular interest is the way that Burke accounts for this in agonistic terms. Beginning from Harold Bloom's theory of the "anxiety of influence", in which authorship, particularly authorship of poetry, is conceived of as a life and death Oedipal struggle against some precursor poet, Burke states with complete consistency:

> It is not difficult to see how Bloom's theory maps every bit as comfortably— if not more so—onto the relationship between critic and author such as it has been played out in recent times. We have seen that the death of the author is promulgated in agonistic terms, in the form of usurpation, as we have seen also that it is inseparable from a strong act of rewriting by all these critics: Barthes rewriting Balzac, Foucault making literally what he will of four hundred years of philosophical thought, Derrida rewriting Rousseau. (Burke 1989, 188)

A further irony in these developments has been the fact that the kinds of tour-de-force writing that is found in (post-) structuralist critics has come to rival the original literary texts as primary discourses. The author-deniers have themselves become the authors of this new form of quasi-literary discourse, so that if we were to go "in search of the most flagrant abuses of critical *auteurism* in recent times then we need look no further than the secondary literature on Barthes, Foucault and Derrida, which is for the most part given over to scrupulously faithful and entirely uncritical reconstitutions of their thought" (Burke 1989, 190).

Need I add that with this doxa in place there would be many a critic afraid to be associated with what is seen as a naïve biographism and a discredited

or conservative philosophy? The present work, however, is not a work of literary criticism, but an intervention in literary pragmatics that cannot accept this fatal polarisation of text and life, as if they belonged to entirely separate and sealed domains of being. The philosophy of the act is indeed closer to the intuitions of authors themselves. For example, one might mention a recent collection of literary essays by J. M. Coetzee (2017). One of the most innovative and acclaimed authors of our time, Coetzee begins many of the essays in this collection with a biographical sketch of the life, times and influences of a range of authors from Defoe to Beckett, drawing the most interesting parallels and connections between these lives and specific works, with considerable attention to the techniques they have developed. Even more importantly for my project he does not hesitate to make mention of various authorial *purposes*.

Authorial intention

Let us turn to a different school of thought, this time in the mainstream of pragmatics, one which is in a certain sense diametrically opposed to (post-) structuralism or radical textualism. Whereas variants of the latter focus most intently on the text and (allegedly) on the reader, the receiver of the text, speech act theory has come to focus mostly on the sender (whether conceived as author or "narrator").

In speech act theory a distinction is made between an illocutionary act and a perlocutionary act. This separation having been made, the tendency has been overwhelmingly for speech act theorists to ignore the perlocutionary altogether. Here again the antinomy itself must be brought into question rather than its partial suppression in this way. Elsewhere (2015) I showed the remarkable parallel between speech act theory and formalistic Kantian ethics, which similarly tends to separate the deed from its effect or result. But the philosophy of the act that I am hoping to advance is not a project of choosing between a formal intention in an act, on the one hand, and its effect on the other, but rather to appreciate the act both in its generic and in its unique or non-recurrent aspects, and to see it as a dialogic unity. A key concept in that project is *intended effect*, i.e. purpose.

At first sight speech act theory would not seem to offer much to the study of fiction, given that Austin (1975, 104) regarded literature as being "not serious" and "not full normal" use of language. No doubt speech acts performed by characters in a novel are seen as non-serious because the characters do not exist as actual people. The way in which one might apply speech act theory to fiction then is to pretend that the characters are real and

to ask questions concerning their speech, such as "What speech act is character X performing here?" or "Is X's speech act felicitous or not?" and so on. But this alone cannot be the pragmatics of fiction, even though it may be pragmatics of a sort within fiction.

However, to dismiss the contribution of speech act theory altogether would be to overlook the important notion of the intentional act, discussed most influentially by John Searle (1969; 1975). This intentionality can itself be split into two. Any communicator has intentions of a generic nature, in other words to perform socially recognised acts. But intention may also have another sense, to perform an act with certain intended consequences. Speech act theory has prioritised the first aspect over the second, the conventional and generic over the singular and unique.

Searle writes at the end of his (1975) article: "Literary critics have explained on an ad hoc and particularistic basis how the author conveys a serious speech act through the performance of the pretended speech acts which constitute the work of fiction, but there is as yet no general theory of the mechanisms by which such serious illocutionary intentions are conveyed by pretended illocutions." (1975, 332)

"Serious speech act" is, from an agonistic perspective, a highly attenuated notion of authorial intentionality. Searle may have defended the intentional nature of an author's act, especially its conventional-generic nature, and also conceded the possibility of its "seriousness" (contra Austin), but for us this is not where the matter can rest. The notion of illocutionary act is reductionist because it does not have any bearing on questions of style or intended effect, and therefore has no bearing on aesthetics or ethics. The best that this approach can be expected to yield is the intention of an author to produce a work of a certain genre or sub-genre of fiction, defined for us by "constitutive rules". This would tell us nothing about why a reader might find one work more compelling or satisfying than another, or even why a genre, so constituted, would be interesting.

Searle is taken to task in the same issue of *New Literary History* in which his article appeared, for relying on the "discredited" notion of authorial intention (Doležel 1975, 468). But from what point of view is it discredited? The case against Searle is that his position is said to involve a judgment that the text is fictional and then on that basis an intention is ascribed to the author, i.e. the intention to produce a fictional text. Looking back in time at this sort of objection—if one can even recognise it as an objection—and perhaps ignoring some of the intellectual context of its period (Barthes,

etc.), one might be somewhat bemused by such a charge. After all, are we to think that readers (and critics) do not make judgments as to a text's fictionality or otherwise? "The intention is not independently testable, at least not by logical procedures," we are told. Well, let us consider that perhaps the existence of an author as source of the text is also not testable by logical procedures. I see little to choose between these two propositions. But if after all there turns out to have been an author, we surely are not to believe ("logically") that perhaps this author produced the text by accident while dusting her computer keyboard, or perhaps (automatically?) while unconscious.

Searle's intentionality cannot be discredited from the point of view whereby the author as an actual agent is bracketed out of existence, the kind of view of which the abovementioned is a variant. Such approaches are fundamentally inconscient of pragmatics and the question of the relationship between sign and sign user that provides its scientific raison d'être. Speech act theory, for its part, makes the reasonable claim that there is no speech without a speaker, and that part of decoding that speech lies in a recognition of the speaker's intention in speaking. It is not the postulate of authorial intention that is the weakness in Searle's position—that is actually its only strength— rather it is the anaemic notion of intention that he has always favoured, i.e. illocutionary intention. Authorial intention in the act of writing is inherently linked to purposes. Without such a notion the question of literary techniques would be incomprehensible. What would they be *for*? Let it be readily admitted though that this point is not, and cannot be, substantiated by (post-) structuralist procedures, which are entirely unequipped to help us at all with any aspect of authorship, including intention or purpose, not because of their superior logic but because they are reductionist, albeit in an opposite way to speech act theory.

From intention to reception

From the perspective of pragmatics, a competent reader of fiction understands him/herself to be a joint participant in an intentional act, a dialogic act. It is only in this way that a text achieves full coherence, as a work. Even in cases of randomness in composition, there is some generic framing device, such as a name or a context, which indicates that this is not *merely* a random occurrence brought about by nature or machine for example (cf. Ruthrof 2004). The *telos* is such that we understand the complexities of character, plot, perspective, etc., as all somehow a result of authorial purposiveness, whether we know the identity of the author empirically or not. Yet the

author can only be posited on the basis of, and to the extent of, the individual reader's cognitive powers, and the precise content of these positings is an empirical matter.

The question of the author's freedom is situated within the communicative situation, which imposes a constraint, a generic constraint. The author is bound to communicate with a reader in a way that is not only intelligible but that also produces other effects, for example an aesthetic experience. To put it in Bakhtinian terms, the word of an author is constituted by, and in dialogue with, the word of another; it is never entirely free, solipsistic or sufficient unto itself. Considering the role of the reader in relationship to the author's work, any idea that he or she has an entirely free set of wishes to impose on the work, *a la* Foucault, would at the very least require some qualification. For example, does an author not have some conception of his or her reading public and what it is that interests that public, or how much effort its members are prepared to make in the work of comprehending it? It is true that no two readings of a work are exactly alike—interest, attention span, competence and background knowledge all play a role in a reading. Yet the discourse strategy adopted by an author must be based on some apprehension, some calculation, more or less conscious, more or less intuitive, concerning these readership factors. In the following chapter we will consider some of the challenges that the reading of fiction poses to the reader who is sufficiently prepared and interested to meet them.

The hypothesis here is simply that the author posits the kind of readership that might benefit from reading his/her work. Just as a reader may develop certain postulates concerning the author of a given work, similarly an author, rather than believing that any and every other human being might be a reader of her work, may have in mind certain postulates concerning members of this readership, for example that they have had a literary education of some kind, that they have read *Jane Eyre*, that they have heard of Charles Darwin, and so on.

CHAPTER TWO

EMERGENT TECHNIQUES OF FICTION

The narrator

As late as her 2011 article, mentioned in the previous chapter, Ryan describes Searle's (1975) contribution as "groundbreaking", thereby remaining firmly in support of not only intentionality in general, but also the illocutionary formulation of what it is that an author intends and does. Let us trace this back to one of her own early articles that appeared following Searle's. It deals with the matter raised by Barthes, the question of who it is that speaks. Ryan (1981) arrives at the conclusion that speech must in all cases of fiction be attributable to a narrator rather than to the author, even if this is an "impersonal narrator" (her term), or the "third-person omniscient narrator" postulated by literary critics. If the narrator is of this impersonal kind, then this means that the text entails, logically, a speaker devoid of properties. This then relieves the reader, perhaps somewhat too easily, of any need to seek an answer to the question of who it is that speaks. The truism is offered that a linguistic meaning implies a speaker as origin of that meaning. However the postulate of an impersonal being speaking raises logical problems of its own. Such a being could not be a subject. Yet an act of narrating necessarily has subjective elements, for example in the selection of one thing to be reported rather than another.

If this seems rather unsatisfactory, let us rather consider the alternative proposal that the communicating person in fiction is never *not* the author. The "voice" or "speaker" is better understood then as a matter of alternative masks or personae donned by the author. As Bakhtin put it: "The novelist stands in need of some essential formal and generic mask that could serve to define the position from which he views life, as well as the position from which he makes that life public" (1988, 161). In one case the mask is such that the author speaks through a character's speech and in another case the author speaks in such a way as to transcend character speech. Thus the author's discourse is "refracted". When speaking transcendently authors have traditionally resorted to an upper register of standard language in contrast to the low, dialectal or idiosyncratic speech of characters.

Richard Walsh has more recently questioned the coherence of the narrator concept and whether "the idea that the narrator, as a distinct and inherent agent of fictional narrative, is a logical, or even plausible, construct" (1997, 497). He is undoubtedly correct that this is a question for literary fiction specifically rather than for narrative in general. He goes on to make the critical point that

> The function of the narrator is to allow the narrative to be read as something known rather than something imagined, something reported as fact rather than something told as fiction. But this view of the matter suffers the embarrassment that some of the things such narrator is required to "know" are clear indices of the narrative's fictional status. The most obvious of these occurs with internal and free focalisation, that is, the narrative's access to the mind of another. (1997, 499)

This type of focalisation is of course not the only manifestation of so-called omniscience. The more radical use of scene shifting techniques (the "meanwhile back at the ranch" effect) is another, as is the writing of secret histories, i.e. the reporting of fictional events that are given as backgrounds or illuminations of actual historical events. In all these cases it is not simply the case that an untruth is being told, just because that is what fiction does and everyone knows and appreciates that. It is much more radically the case that no-one *could* possibly tell the truth about certain matters of which we read in fiction. Let us be quite clear: in fiction a reader is required to accept, at least in part, revelations about matters, the truth of which could not be told, by anyone. This is one sense in which fiction differs from religious revelation. In the case of the latter the reader is required to believe that the revelations are possible *and* true. In the former case *neither* of these beliefs is required; in fact *both* may be suspended.

To take a hypothetical example: suppose that a novel would provide details of a conversation between Hitler and Eva Braun in the Berlin bunker shortly before the suicides of both. The fictionality of this dialogue would not be apparent to a reader purely on the basis that it is false or incorrectly reported for the sake of some kind of artistic effect. It would be regarded as fictional by a reader, one having the requisite historical knowledge, on the basis of its impossibility to be reported, because it is well known that no-one was privy to that last conversation. Here again we see how it is that fictionality requires a certain competence on the part of a reader. Having made these points, let us evaluate Walsh's interesting argument, which leads to the following position, stated with refreshing clarity:

> The answer I am proposing to my original question "Who is the narrator?"
> is this: The narrator is always either a character who narrates or the author.
> There is no intermediate position. (1997, 505)

Along the way he helpfully explains, for those of us who do not have a
classical education, two of Gerard Genette's famous technical distinctions

> between homodiegetic heterodiegetic narrators (a matter of person; that is,
> in place of the common distinction between first- and third-person narrators,
> a more exact contrast between involvement and noninvolvement in the
> story), and between intradiegetic and extradiegetic narrators (a matter of
> level; that is, the distinction between a narrator who narrates within a larger,
> framing narrative, and one whose narration itself constitutes the primary
> narrative). Between them, these distinctions produce four classes of
> narrators (Genette 1980 [1972]: 248); my intention is to show that none of
> them require a distinct narrative agent. (1997, 497)

The notion of "narrative agent" will need some critical discussion as we
proceed, but let us first look closely at the nuts and bolts of Walsh's
argument:

> My argument against the narrator, then, comes down to this: Fictions are
> narrated by their authors, or by characters. Extradiegetic homodiegetic
> narrators, being represented, are characters, just as all intradiegetic narrators
> are. Extradiegetic heterodiegetic narrators (that is, "impersonal" and
> "authorial" narrators), who cannot be represented without thereby being
> rendered homodiegetic or intradiegetic, are in no way distinguishable from
> authors. This assertion is unaffected by the fictionality of the narrative since
> that is best accounted for by the function of conversational implicature in
> maintaining the felicity of speech acts; nor is it affected by issues of
> unreliability because unreliability always requires characterisation; nor by
> covert narration because that concept is an abuse of the logic of
> representation; nor by the implied author because the senses in which that
> term conflicts with my argument are themselves bogus. (1997, 510-511)

The first and most important point made here is that extradiegetic
heterodiegetic narrators cannot be distinguished from authors, as narrating
agents. But is there not a distinction to be made between two forms of
authorial *discourse*, one of which is the transcendent voice of tradition,
whereby impossible knowledge is made acceptable to readers, and another
quite different form of discourse, where the author enters his or her own text
as author? For the sake of consistency let us refer to these two possibilities
as the transcendent and immanent authorial voices. Where the latter form of
authorial discourse occurs, as in some of the work by John Fowles, for
example, there is an element of surprise, if not confusion, on the part of the

reader more used to the transcendent authorial voice, which begs an explanation not offered in Walsh's argument. This has considerable significance.

A second important point concerns the maxim of truthfulness. When the author adopts the immanent mode of discourse, admittedly a relatively rare occurrence so far, it would be highly confusing to find this author not "telling the truth". So we have the author presenting the narrative in one voice and commenting on that narrative in another. In *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, Fowles appears at certain moments to oscillate between the two, i.e. when "telling the story" and when addressing his readers directly on historical facts about the Victorian era. When he does enter the latter mode, we would not expect him to be telling us the impossible *or* telling untruths, as we, competent readers of fiction, license him to do when in transcendent mode. The author appears to us as unmasked at that moment. It does not necessarily mean that an author, like Fowles, is not misrepresenting himself at such moments; it does mean that the author is presenting a self which is to be *taken* as himself. Here ordinary considerations of truthfulness and accuracy apply just as they apply in self-presentation outside of fiction.

Walsh's argument in response to this point might well be that Paul Grice's maxim of truthfulness is exploited at one moment and not at another, but this does not really address the criterion of possible vs. impossible knowledge that I have raised. Even more fundamentally it misrepresents the transcendent narrative voice, the one he simply equates with the author. It is not really a question of not telling the truth, i.e. exploiting Grice's maxim of truthfulness, since strictly speaking the author is not *telling* us about anything in this voice. Rather he or she is *creating* the fictional world, using narrative techniques, rather than telling us "about" it.

Thus the criterion of truthfulness, whether one looks at this in a Gricean way or not, cannot be the main criterion separating fiction from non-fiction. And here we see the problem of a pragmatics of fiction (Gricean maxims, relevance theory) that does not take the reader sufficiently into consideration, just as this was seen as a problem in speech act theory. A reader who generally prefers to read fiction rather than non-fiction would surely not do this purely *because* it is untrue, or, in the case of a sophisticated Gricean reader of fiction, purely *because* the maxim of truthfulness is being exploited. The fact is that a secret or hidden world is being created by the author using the linguistic forms normally associated with telling, such as sentence types, tense sequences, forms of deixis, names and so on.

Now let us consider Walsh's further proposition that the character as a narrator is quite distinct from the author as narrator. I have already distinguished between two modes of the authorial discourse. Why should we not consider the character speech as similarly a mode of authorial discourse? After all, every word that a character speaks, including the "homodiegetic extradiegetic cases," where a character's narrative constitutes the "primary narrative", as Walsh has put it, has been written by the author. And after all the character does not *actually* exist in the same way that the author does. Walsh's awkward mixing of ontological levels goes straight to the question of what a narrative agent in fiction is. If author and character have their existence on two different ontological levels, as they must do, then can the term "narrator" have the same sort of meaning in both cases? This is not a question that seems ever to be posed in narratology, as I have done here.

I have already made a distinction in author's discourse between a transcendent voice and an immanent voice. The difference between the two is that the first is "masked" while the second is (apparently) not. What I am proposing now is to make a further difference within the category of masked voices. Let us consider that it is the author who speaks in the persona of a transcendent storyteller *or* in the personae of character storytellers. The notion of persona or mask is an ancient one, and in the manner of Bakhtin one should emphasise that these are *generic* conventions of fiction. Transcendent storyteller is one persona, character storyteller another. Both are ancient in origin, the difference being that the character and character storyteller are agents in the fictional world, while the transcendent storyteller is merely a technique.

To clarify also, this does not suggest that the third-person transcendent narrator (TTN) should be given the status of agency as I have done with the character, on the grounds perhaps that they are both equally masks of the author. This suggestion would ignore the fact that the character (and character-narrator) is an agent in the fictional world, while the TTN is not. The TTN is a theoretical construct and does not appear as an agent in the fictional world. If there is any empirical question here it is whether readers process the text in such a way that they apprehend the TTN as an agent who is made by the author to act *in* this fictional world. My hypothesis is that they do not, rather that they read *about* the characters and not about the TTN.

The transcendent "storyteller" is not an actual storyteller. The author is actual and creates the storytelling persona, together with everything else in

the structure of the work. The fact that the storytelling persona can sometimes be described with some sort of rationale, as "omniscient" is already an indication that it is not the "unmasked" author. When the author enters the unmasked mode, it signals an explicit intent to refer in some manner or other to the actual world of his/her own knowledge or experience, an occurrence that has been relatively rare historically. The point here is not somehow to try to prohibit use of the term narrator—it has become a convenience amongst critics—but it does seem important from the point of view of pragmatics to make certain distinctions relating to agency. The narrative agent in the actual world is the author, in the fictional world the agents are characters. The TTN is not an agent in either world, but rather a technicality of discourse.

John Fowles in his *A Maggot* has made it quite impossible for us to postulate a consistent storytelling narrator at all. There are even insertions of authentic period documents into the text, with the original typography ostensibly intact, which is perhaps less surprising to a reader who has witnessed Fowles's various ways of inserting himself as commentator into his texts— an irruption of the actual world within the fictional text—or who is familiar with Bakhtin's observations that the novel has developed as that form of writing that can integrate into itself *any* and *every* other form of discourse. There are also very extensive passages of dramatic courtroom dialogue in *A Maggot*, sans external narrative comment. What we have in the courtroom passages is a series of characters that are all narrators in the non-technical sense (character storytellers), meaning that they are telling stories about their experiences within the fictional world, with utterly indeterminable degrees of truthfulness. Then there are also passages where it is clear that the author is expressing his own opinions concerning certain of his characters, as well as concerning factual historical events. What we do not get is any kind of consistent narrative agency. Instead we observe the author performing various kinds of semiotic acts, including the insertion of his own personal views as well as external text. Note that the questions of reference and truth are separable here. When Fowles represents his actual self to a reader in this novel it is at least conceivable that he is not telling the truth, or that he is misrepresenting himself, but there is no similar reason to think that he is not *referring* to himself.

The purely transcendent storytelling voice does not inhabit the fictional world; it is a fictional technique, not an agency, which authors can dispense with, since characters, can be made to tell their own stories. And having them tell their own stories can involve irony, unreliability, insincerity and untruthfulness. What has made the figure of a "third-person omniscient

narrator" so ubiquitous, I have argued elsewhere (2015), is that it seems to stand for something like a Lacanian "big Other", especially as this notion has been discussed by Žižek (2006; 2013). It is a voice of authority, a pure language in its transcendent impersonality. This provides an explanation why authors have tended to use the standard form, in its upper register, for this type of narrative. The transcendent narrator has been fit-for-purpose in relation to the function that I call "revelation", the way in which third-person impersonality bypasses limitations in the possible knowledge that any narrating subject could have. It is as if the third-person narrative puts the reader in the place of the big Other, in the position where direct insight into someone *else's* inner world seems achievable. This suggests rather enticingly that the pursuit of such knowledge is a human aspiration. Žižek, amongst others, has even suggested that it may be achievable via technology in the foreseeable future. In this possibility, whether utopian or dystopian, we see a second meaning of transcendence in fiction. Besides meaning authoritative remoteness and impersonality, it also means that the *reader* is afforded the insight that transcends normal human perceptual abilities, a transcendence that is still not available through any other means than fiction. Fiction has invented the quasi-omniscient reader.

As a vivid example of transcendence in narrative, consider the following excerpt from Roberto Bolaño's novel *2666*:

> He put the cap back on the bottle and returned it to the minibar. After a while he fell asleep with the TV on.
>
> *
>
> While Fate was sleeping, there was a report on an American who had disappeared in Santa Teresa, in the state of Sonora in the north of Mexico …
>
> *
>
> As this report was showing on TV, Fate dreamed of a man he'd written a story about, the first story he'd had published in *Black Dawn*, after three other pieces were rejected. (2016, 258)

The reader is privy to the scene in all its dimensions: the private actions of the character, what happened on TV after he fell asleep (which he could not know himself, being asleep), and the content of his dream. The middle section of this passage, elided above, has a faint irony to it. Whereas in folklore dreams have often been regarded as portents, in this case it is the TV broadcast that begins to draw the reader's attention to matters that will

be consequential for the dreaming character (*Fate*) later. Because he is asleep and dreaming, Fate misses the TV portent, but the alert reader does not. The reader is able to sense something that the character misses concerning his own future.

A mistake that Walsh appears to make concerning this type of narrative is his claim that the transcendent voice is that of the author just because it is not a "representation" in the way that a character-narrator is. But the character, as a form of representation, is the result of an act performed by an author, just as adopting a transcendent tone is the act of an author. The differences between all three modes of discourse that I have mentioned, transcendent tone, a character's speech and the unmasked voice of the author, are available to interpretation because they are *differences* in mode of discourse *and* function, rather than being distinct as representation opposed to non-representation.

If we recall Morris's formulation mentioned in my introduction, to which one should I think remain faithful in order to avoid confusion, that the sign vehicle represents "certain properties of an absent object," then clearly this notion of absence, from a semiotic point of view, seems an adequate notion for both fictional and non-fictional discourses. The fact of representation, it must be insisted, consists not in the truth, or otherwise, of statements about the existence of some specific object. If a child says that the dog ate his homework, there is nothing in this statement *as representation* that depends on its truthfulness.

A work of fiction is a work of representation in its entirety. If one considers the meaning of the word "representation" in art and aesthetics, going back as far as Aristotle or Plato, one notes that there is hardly any human activity that can be said to be free of representation; in the arts this would probably only apply to music. Now Walsh may have intended this term to be taken in a special technical sense. However in that case we would be required to set aside much of what we know of linguistics, semiotics and philosophy, which seems unjustifiable. Works of non-fiction too involve representation. The name of the author on the cover of a novel, whether it is a pseudonym or not, is also a representation.

In fiction there is a process of creation in which story, plot, perspective, axiology and actual world experiences (of author and/or others) are all woven stylistically into one finished artefact. However, this fictional world must be unfolded in time and in a linear manner by reliance on certain linguistic mechanisms drawn from the *true* genres of telling. These are

harnessed to the fictional project, from other everyday genres, the "primary genres" of which Bakhtin (1986: 61-62) speaks. The novel is a "secondary genre"; it depends for its stylistic possibilities, with certain exceptions, on the primary genres of telling, and there is no limit to the ways in which these can be incorporated into the fictional work. This is technique.

While one agrees with logicists and speech act theorists that there must be one who speaks (or writes), and even that there may be a certain "pretence" involved in the various masks that the author dons in doing so, as transcendent storyteller, character-observer, character-participant, and so on, there is, in actuality, no agent communicating with a reader other than an author. The "impersonal" voice that Ryan imagines, and which Walsh simply identifies with the author, is not truly impersonal. Rather it is a literary practice that allows the author to speak in a transcendent manner at one moment while retaining the option of speaking though characters at others. These practices and the rewards they offer are such that they enable a certain imaginative experience. And so between intentional author and receptive reader we have the veritable social contract of fiction.

It is perhaps the case that many readers of fiction are not yet ready to accept the immanent appearance of the author in mid-text, addressing the reader, apparently truthfully and sincerely, on some or other matter connected with his/her fictional world or the actual world. But clearly some are ready to do so, without becoming confused.

Characterisation and topicalisation

For a large part of the history of the novel, its ethos has been of the kind that is associated with social realism, and to a considerable extent this is still the case. This mimetic function has continually developed, not only in response to a changing social context, which must continuously yield new topics, but at the same time also with the development of new techniques, especially in the matter of characterisation.

In the pragmatics that I espouse the relationship of an author to a milieu or to a character type is essentially agonistic, and it is constitutive of the work in its ethical dimension. Since fiction tends to impart a sense of social milieu, one finds that what is of interest in a wide range of authors, such as Turgenev, Dickens or Zola, is often the interaction amongst characters that, in their typicality, represent differing social classes. In other cases it is the demimonde, or the milieu of criminals, or perhaps the lives of alienated individuals, whose membership of any milieu is tenuous or thwarted in

some way. In Henry James it is frequently the subtle relations amongst characters of similarly genteel backgrounds but differing nationalities. Agonistic, gendered character relations have continued to develop and change, whether in the Brontës, Jean Rhys or Jean Genet. All of the foregoing social categories are historical developments, as are their representations in literature as character types.

Sometimes a sense of milieu is created by the naming of actual persons likely to be known to a reader, thereby bringing actual-world associations into the reading. In Bret Easton Ellis's popular (or notorious) novel *Glamorama*, there are lists of literally hundreds of famous persons mentioned, interspersed with fictional characters, thereby bringing about in an immediate way the recognition of American celebrity culture. In his crime fiction, as we shall see, James Ellroy writes in an extreme form of free indirect discourse (FID), blending character speech with third person narrative, so as to sustain a sense of underworld character and milieu, including its subjective elements, while also referencing actual persons such as J. Edgar Hoover, or actual events such as the assassination of J. F. Kennedy.

A milieu provides the ground for plausible characters to emerge and to enter agonistic relations with one another. It is the social tableau against which the character/figure is silhouetted. (Brown 1981). Characters may be regarded as figures that "stand out" from a background as its most striking exemplars. This is particularly true of the more stereotypical kind of character, who often appears as a despised or ridiculed figure. But characters may also stand out from their backgrounds so that it is as if figure and ground are somehow in conflict with each other. One might say then that a character represents a milieu *problematically*, in such a way as to manifest its instabilities or tensions, and thereby suggestive of an author's own more or less fraught relationship to it. It is in an author's relationship to a milieu, and/or the ideas that arise in this relationship, that the agon of literary fiction has its origins, as I hope to show. In setting out to express a critical attitude towards milieux of his/her experience, an author him/herself is revealed as a figure that "stands out" from them. This needs to be argued in a work of pragmatics against any charges of "biographism" that might be forthcoming from neighbouring disciplines.

It seems that the struggle for a novelist is frequently one whereby his or her own origins (family, milieu, background, antagonisms) are carried into the act of writing as a set of problems to be overcome. Characterisation becomes

an act of passing judgment on a milieu or a type. Consider the following from F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Beautiful and Damned*:

> "You related to Adam J. Patch?" he inquired of Anthony, emitting two slender strings of smoke from nostrils over-wide.
>
> Anthony admitted it with the ghost of a smile.
>
> "He's a fine man," pronounced Bloeckman profoundly. He's a fine example of an American."
>
> "Yes," agreed Anthony, "he certainly is."
>
> – I detest these underdone men, he thought coldly. Boiled looking! Ought to be shoved back in the oven; just one more minute would do it.
>
> Bloeckman squinted at his watch.
>
> "Time these girls were showing up …"
>
> – Anthony waited breathlessly; it came –
>
> "…but then," with a widening smile, "you know how women are." (1974, 81)

This dialogue between Bloeckman and Anthony Patch is presented from Anthony's perspective—Bloeckman's thoughts are effectively non-existent. But the passage also indicates something of the perspective of the author. Consider the mocking description *pronounced … profoundly* contrasted with the banality of Bloeckman's expressed sentiments. This intentional irony stereotypes the character and invites the reader to share momentarily the tedium of conversing with someone seemingly incapable of expressing more than obtuse platitudes. One imagines the author as someone who has himself been afflicted by the company of the Bloeckman type. Bakhtin offers a general formulation concerning this kind of phenomenon:

> The author's reaction to what he depicts always enters into the image. The author's relationship is a *constitutive* aspect of the image. (1986, 115 [emphasis added])

The greater the distance that the author wishes to put between him/herself and a character type or milieu, the greater the temptations of caricature and stereotyping. Such characters as a Bloeckman are viewed externally for purposes of expressing distaste. A refusal to present the inner world of a character becomes in such cases a form of judgment.

Representations of social estrangement, such as the above example, are found throughout much of fiction that is located close to the pole of social realism. But, at the furthest extreme from this, one might mention Kafka's *Metamorphosis* as a decidedly more allegorical treatment of disaffection. The character who suddenly finds himself turned into non-human vermin, and is thereby irrevocably separated from family and all familiarity, represents the ultimate outsider. To a reader—this reader in particular—the relevant authorial image here is of one who has himself experienced despised otherness, and who wishes to express it in its universal and most dystopian aspect rather than in any social particularity. Although this is clearly not mimetic social realism, there is at least an affinity with realist treatments of similar topics. The common element is the agon of authorship. The allegorical and the mimetic modes of presenting thematic or topical content both have long histories and they enter the works of modern authors, sometimes both modes within the oeuvre of a specific author, or even within a single work.

Technique and its purposes

Many of the emergent techniques of fiction have been analysed and discussed in various disciplines and across disciplines, including literary criticism, narratology, semiotics and others. The techniques to be discussed here may be similar. However the modus operandi of each of these neighbouring disciplines may not always be well aligned with the scientific-functionalist perspectives of pragmatics. A properly functional analysis would illustrate inter alia the changing interests and competences of readers and the ways in which writers have managed to satisfy those interests historically. It would therefore need to encompass both synchronic and diachronic aspects. FID is an interesting case because in a relatively short historical timespan it has become an almost indispensable stylistic feature in third-person narrative, across subgenres of fiction. Why? We must look in all such cases at the question of readers' interests and how these have evolved.

The following is an example showing the kind of virtuoso use of FID that readers have come to expect from any popular author:

> He was a man, he was a Panamanian, he was small and Asian and silk-skinned, with heavy eyelids and a black suit and an air of sanctity. His suit was polished to a regimental brightness, like the suits worn by office messengers and undertakers. His hair was waved, his dimpled white shirt was spotless and his visiting card, which was made in the form of a sticky

label to be fixed beside your telephone, announced him in Spanish and English as Sánchez Jesús-María Romarez II, driver of limousines day and night, English spoken but not, alas, as well as he would wish, señor; his English, he would say, was of the people but not of the scholar—a deprecating smile to heaven—and had been acquired mostly from his American and British clients, though fortified, it was true, by his early attendances at school, though these, alas, had been fewer than he would have wished, for his father was not a rich man, señor, and neither was Sánchez.

At which sad admission, Sánchez fixed his gaze dotingly on Rooke and got down to business. (John le Carré, *The Night Manager*, 2016, 394)

A remarkable feature of this passage is the way that it turns into FID halfway through the character description, in fact in mid-sentence. One becomes aware of a gradual shading of pure author speech—standard-language, third-person, transcendent narrative—into speech that almost imperceptibly blends with character speech. In such a pithy way one obtains a complete character description, including appearance, values, demeanour, and attitude towards the well-to-do foreigner, a character-type that a reader might imagine to be regularly encountered in the tropics. Certainly much of the enjoyment of a reader in such passages lies in the state-of-the-art use of FID to produce character types in which inner and outer characteristics are skilfully interwoven.

I will return to the question of typing and stereotyping. Here I am more concerned with introducing the connections between the evolving technical expertise of authors and the functionality that it brings to the reader whose appreciation has been prepared by centuries of literary evolution and education. On the importance of a diachronic approach to stylistic innovation and functionality, consider the observations below from Fludernik. In her paper dealing with the evolution of scene shifting in English narrative literature, she concludes:

We have looked at what initially appeared to be a very minor example of historical change. Its significance became apparent in relation to the more general development of narrative structure between the late Middle Ages and the nineteenth century. In addition, the scene shift was ideally suited to demonstrate that formal analysis needs to be complemented by a functional approach. In this way I was able to demonstrate how a function can be superseded and its former expressions still used for new purposes. The example of the scene shift was chosen for its very mundaneness. If even such basic features of narrative have so far remained unanalysed from a diachronic perspective, it becomes self-evident how many questions there

still are to be answered, how much there is still to be done in narrative studies, particularly from a diachronic perspective. (Fludernik 2003, 344)

Free indirect discourse (FID) is more recent than the scene shift, mostly a development of the nineteenth century. While there is potentially no limit to any inventory of these fictional devices, there may well be limits to the reading public's rate of absorption of new techniques, an empirical question. To illustrate I will use a recent example from a popular genre, the crime novel, one which does require the reader to absorb innovative devices, or the innovative use of existing devices. Let us first consider what Fludernik has had to say about the structural and functional features of FID.

> According to my own model, FID can be defined by means of the conjunction of an interpretative intervention on the part of the textual recipient, who posits a discourse of alterity (that is, a notional discourse SELF different from that of the reportative SELF of the current narrator-speaker), with a minimal set of syntactic features, which constitute a sort of necessary condition, a mould that has to be fitted. Explicitness of FID, on the other hand, is achieved by adding to these minimal conditions a set of syntactic and lexical features … (1995, 95)

Alterity is at the heart of literary fiction, in its revelatory function. What we have is the triadic structure of fictional agency: one SELF is the character, "a notional discourse SELF," concerning whose interior life information is provided by the "reportative Self," the author in transcendent mode, to another SELF (the interpretatively competent reader). But alterity surely does not in itself require FID. A transcendent narrative voice could after all report in the familiar forms: *He thought that … / She said "…"* Let us follow Fludernik further:

> What therefore are the minimal syntactic conditions for an FID reading to become operative? There are only two: the deictic (that is, anaphoric) alignment of "personal" referential expressions to the deictic centre of the reporting discourse, and the ex negativo syntactic condition that contenders for FID must not be phrased in a verb-plus-complement clause structure. (1995, 95)

In the example provided below, the two syntactic conditions pertain through almost the whole extract. Secondly, other features are added to the FID representation, as suggested in the previous Fludernik quotation, in this case character speech of an extreme colloquial nature. Thirdly, I suggest that the *aesthetic* function of FID comes into view. If the verb-plus-complement clause structure of ID or DD had been used, this passage would have lost its

unique "music". Here then are the opening paragraphs of James Ellroy's novel, *The Cold Six Thousand*:

> They sent him to Dallas to kill a nigger pimp named Wendell Durfee. He wasn't sure he could do it.
>
> The Casino Operators Council flew him. They supplied first-class fare. They tapped their slush fund. They greased him. They fed him six cold.
>
> Nobody *said* it:
>
> Kill that coon. Do it good. Take our hit fee.
>
> The flight ran smooth. A stew served drinks. She saw his gun. She played up. She asked dumb questions.
>
> He said he worked Vegas PD. He ran the intel squad. He built files and logged information.
>
> She loved it. She swooned.
>
> "Hon, what you doin' in Dallas?"
>
> He told her.
>
> A Negro shivved a twenty-one dealer. The dealer lost an eye. The Negro booked to big D. She loved it. She brought him highballs. He omitted details.
>
> The dealer provoked the attack. The council issued the contract—death for ADW Two.
>
> The preflight pep talk. Lieutenant Buddy Fritsch:
>
> "I don't have to tell you what we expect, son. And I don't have to add that your father expects it too."
>
> The stew played geisha girl. The stew fluffed her beehive.
>
> "What's your name?"
>
> "Wayne Tedrow."
>
> She whooped. "You just have to be Junior!"
>
> He looked through her. He doodled. He yawned.
>
> She fawned. She just looooved his daddy. He flew with her oodles. She knew he was a Mormon wheel. She'd loooove to know more. (2010, 1-2)

The most remarkable feature of this passage is that the third-person narrative nowhere adopts a transcendent tone. It retains the register of colloquial character-speech throughout. It also blurs the distinction between free indirect discourse (FID), direct discourse (DD) and indirect discourse (ID). In many cases it is not even possible to separate the various utterances according to these categories.

The first sentence is third-person narrative. Yet the use of *nigger* is startlingly far from transcendent style, but indicative rather of speech and/or thought within the character's milieu. Thus the sentence has an aspect associated with FID (incorporation of character's perspective into third-person narrative) *and* an affinity with DD speech style. This becomes more apparent in the second paragraph and continues throughout much of the extract: *tapped*, *greased*, *six cold*. The doubled effect of these opening sentences is one of being taken into the private musings of the character during his flight, while simultaneously being supplied with the relevant background information.

The next two very short paragraphs build on the character's recollections, thinking back on what had been said and not said. And at the same time Ellroy begins to suggest for the alert reader's benefit one of his own abiding themes, the corrupt connections between organised crime and law enforcement.

When the dialogue with the stewardess begins, we are told that *She loved it* and *She swooned*. This is by no means transcendent narrator-speak, but rather an evaluative description from the perspective of the character to whom she is speaking. The same applies to *The stew played geisha girl*. The perspective remains Tedrow's; we see her as he sees her.

In the sequence *A Negro shivved ... booked to big D* there is nothing of the verb-plus- complement constructions of ID and DD. But the shift from *nigger* earlier to *Negro* nevertheless suggests a shift from private thoughts to audible speech, suggesting that *nigger* would be inappropriate in this conversation, while the slang *shivved* would be readily understood by the stewardess (and the reader) to refer to a stabbing. Note how such a construction needs to be apprehended by both the interlocutor-character and the reader for its multiple functions to be operational: (a) character replying to his interlocutor; (b) author providing more background information to the reader; (c) author creating character type and milieu.

The next paragraph supplies omitted details. We find out, but the stewardess does not, that *The dealer provoked the attack* and *The council issued the*

contract—death for ADW Two. The reason for this information being withheld from the stewardess, while it represents what is on Tedrow's mind, is that it conveys all too clearly (to us) the illicit link between police work and organised crime. The *council* can be taken to be mafia controlled, and its deadly modus operandi being the issuing of a *contrac*t. But note the style of language used here: *death for ADW Two*. Assault with a Deadly Weapon is the form of a charge associated with police. In other words Tedrow does not reveal to the stewardess that his principals are both the police and the mob, but Ellroy reveals it to *us*.

This is clarified in the next two paragraphs concerning the police commission: *The preflight pep talk ... your father expects it too*. The way this is inserted, however, is not just for our clarification, but it also gives the impression of Tedrow recalling his briefing while he is simultaneously in conversation with the stewardess.

The sequence of *She fawned ... She'd loooove to know more* is a case of FID that includes elements of DD, which, on general level, is characteristic of the extract as a whole. Verbatim character expressions are blended into third-person narration.

In this Ellroy passage, pronouns outside of quotation marks remain in the third person despite the character language found there. Fludernik's "ex negativo condition" also holds throughout most of the extract. There is only one instance of the verb-plus-complement clause structure (*He said he worked* …) and thus FID provides for the general form of the extract as a whole. What makes FID significant aesthetically is not the syntactic innovation that it brings about, which is really slight in regard to the general descriptive linguistic rules of the language. Rather it is the way that it enables the continuous flow of third-person narrative even while providing a sense of the character's internal subjective states and disposition. This tells us much about the revelatory function of fiction. As we have seen, transcendent third-person narrative in general has served the purpose of providing for the reader a quasi-omniscient vantage point, from where hidden or private things can be witnessed. This can be elegantly sustained over the course of lengthy passages with the skilful use of FID.

What makes the Ellroy extract radical and perhaps challenging to certain readers is the fact that the FID is carried forward entirely in character speech rather than in the loftier tones that have been historically associated with the transcendent mode of narrative. By sustaining character speech through the FID passages, a technique emerges whereby the sense of character and

milieu is reinforced by continuous immersion in its speech style, a mimetic strategy that is genuinely innovative. As we have seen, the third-person narrative need not be disrupted at all by direct character speech in order for a character's thoughts or mentality to be evoked. Historically this may be a recent form of presenting alterity, but it need not be the last. The analysis of the Ellroy quotation above, with its variations on FID as a general type, suggests that whenever a reading public has become sufficiently ready for a new mode of embedding one voice within another, an author will be found to provide it.

But of course this is not the only way in which alterity and interior life can be represented. If one were to rewrite the Ellroy passage using the traditional *He thought that ... / she said, "..."* forms of ID or DD, the same function could arguably be served. However the passage would look (and sound) very different to what it does. Therefore we must conclude that FID serves not only to represent alterity and interior life, but to do so *in an aesthetic manner*. In the Ellroy example it does this through a rhythm brought about by the use of single-clause sentences virtually throughout, i.e. except for the interruption of the section *I don't have to tell you ... expects it too*. Not only is there this syntactic rhythm underpinning the character speech, but there is even in the last two paragraphs a brief resort to rhyme, the vulgarity of which is perhaps supportive of the representation of "low" character types.

What I propose is to take seriously Nietzsche's thesis in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1910) on the fundamental nature of music in aesthetics, particularly the aesthetics of all those arts that unfold in linear sequences of time, including of course dance, drama and poetry. But what of prose? Surely the Dionysian impulse is overshadowed there by the Apollonian impulse towards concept and image? The question of rhythm in prose has long been elusive and controversial on two grounds. Firstly prose does not seem to scan very well in the way that verse does. Secondly prose is thought to be written, unlike poetry, for the eye rather than the ear. These are indeed difficulties, but I intend to illustrate the possibility of a music of artistic prose in Chapter 5. But let me make some preliminary proposals now concerning two concepts: *syntactic rhythm* and *lexical-semantic harmony*.

Nothing seems to illustrate these notions better than FID. In the following passage from Jean Rhys's *Quartet*, the familiar function of FID to convey private thought and emotion is evident. But what would be lost if each thought and feeling had been expressed by verb-plus-complement?

> She turned several times uneasily; then sighed, put on the light and lit a cigarette with shaking hands. Humbug it all was. The rotten things that people did. The mean things they got away with–sailed away with–smirking. Nobody caring a bit. Didn't she know something about that? Didn't she though! But, of course, anything to do with money was swooped on and punished ferociously.
>
> Humbug! she said aloud. (1969, 29)

The syntactic rhythms provide the sense of "flow" in the passage. The verbs in the first sentence set the rhythm into motion before the FID kicks in. We have just one third-person pronoun serving as the subject of three clauses with their simple past verbs.

The next three clauses are able to dispense entirely with the third-person pronoun *she*, due to FID. In each case the grammatical object or complement is brought forward before the subject and verb. We also have the symmetry between the phrasal verbs *got away with* and *sailed away with*. Then the two successive participles *smirking* and *caring*, followed by the two rhetorical question forms, the second of which is punctuated as an exclamation. The last sentence of the FID part acts as a kind of conclusion, breaking with the repetitive rhythms of the preceding sentences. Finally, the last sentence of the extract marks an eruption of speech and a return to verb-plus-complement structure.

On lexical harmony I will comment equally briefly at this stage. What one sees above is a kind of elegant repetition-in-variation: *rotten things* and *mean things*; *got away* and *sailed away*; *smirking* and *not caring*; *swooped on* and *punished*. In each of these pairs there is a harmony in meaning between the first item and the second. Each term adds a complementary sense to the other. The lexical return of *humbug* is effective because it dramatises the switch from thought to speech, and their unison, so to speak.

The sad beauty that I find in this passage from Rhys seems to lie in the combined effect of the revelation of private life with the mood music that FID prose is able to afford. Its dual functioning, uniting the domains of substance and style, is thereby revealed. Consider another passage from *Quartet*:

> Silence. And then more desperate conversation about the café–how old it was, how famous it was, how ugly it was. (1969, 108)

The syntactic rhythm is obvious in the second half of this quotation. The harmony amongst the three adjectives there is a more dissonant one, just as

much of modern music is more dissonant than baroque. Rhys is a master of ambivalent feeling, and in fact sequences of adjectives like this are common from her in establishing such feeling. Equally striking in this passage is the break in rhythm between the beginning, where the sentence fragment, *Silence*, with its full stop mimes the activity, or awkward lack thereof, amongst the four seated characters. It is followed by a longer sentence fragment which, in its accelerated rhythm, mimics the effect of a number of voices suddenly sounding. The triad of adjectives with its dissonant third, *ugly*, appears as an elaboration on the earlier thematic *desperate*. There is no way of telling how the three epithets might be attributed to different speakers among the quartet.

This matter of the aesthetics of prose will be taken up in more detail in Chapter 5.

Ideas to the foreground

From this brief digression into the Dionysian aspect of artistic prose, let us return for the moment to the Apollonian element of fiction: concept, category and image, identified by Nietzsche with the plastic and pictorial arts in particular. We saw earlier how this impulse may realise itself in the mimetic procedures of characterisation and topicalisation. An author may, however, seek to steer it in another direction from that signposted by the popular techniques of individuation and typing that have been discussed. Instead of a radical alterity of speakers, what one encounters instead is a consistent speech style in which character idiosyncrasies are held to a minimum. It is in fact the opposite of what we have seen with examples like Le Carré and Ellroy. Instead of character speech that serves to type characters and milieux, the standard form of the language is strictly maintained throughout, even in the characters' dialogue. Such can be the case with the philosophical novel, or the "novel of ideas", such as J. M. Coetzee's recent *The Childhood of Jesus*.

What we do get throughout this work is the normal embedding of characters" speech as DD, with the quotation marks and the familiar verb-plus-complement construction. However, these "voices" are not distinct in style from the transcendent authorial discourse that incorporates them. There is no departure anywhere from the blandest unvarying standard, i.e. towards anything identifiable as character-speech style. Dockworkers, for example, do not speak differently from state officials. They discuss the labour that they do in terms that could easily be imagined occurring in a college seminar. No-one speaks differently from anyone else; there is

virtually nothing of milieu in the whole novel or in anyone's speech, just as
the setting of the novel is in no recognisable country. The effect in such a
case is a certain suppression of the social-realist tendency in fiction in
favour of the presentation of philosophical ideas and allegory. Consider this
extract:

> "I don't want to argue, Álvaro, but objectively speaking all that I do, all that
> we dockers do, is move stuff from point A to point B, one bag after another,
> day after day. If all our sweat were for the sake of some higher cause, it
> would be a different matter. But eating in order to live and living in order to
> eat—that is the way of the bacterium, not the …"
>
> "Not the what?"
>
> "Not the human being. Not the pinnacle of creation."
>
> Usually it is the lunchtime breaks that are given over to philosophical
> disputation—Do we die or are we endlessly reincarnated? Do the farther
> planets rotate around the sun or around one another reciprocally? Is this the
> best of all possible worlds?—but today instead of making their way home,
> several of the stevedores drift over to listen to the debate. (2014, 129)

There is nothing in the above extract to differentiate the utterances of
characters as labourers (a) from the speech of other strata of society, (b)
from one another's speech, or (c) from the third-person transcendent speech
within which theirs is embedded. The two halves of this extract are identical
in register. It is inconceivable from the point of view of strict realism that a
poor dockworker should be made to utter expressions such as *objectively
speaking*, *some higher cause*, *the way of the bacterium*, *the pinnacle of
creation*, let alone the subjunctive construction *If all our sweat were for the
sake of …* The questions in the last paragraph are noteworthy in that they
appear to have no addresser or addressee. It certainly could be that these are
questions the workers are asking themselves or one another, albeit in speech
uncharacteristic of workers. But they could just as easily be questions posed
by the author for consideration by a reader.

Clearly the aim is not to mimic the speech of actual stevedores. Furthermore,
there is nothing in these passages to suggest any antagonism among the
characters or any suggestion that the views of one are to be preferred to
others through any means such as sympathetic (or hostile) characterisation.
In fact these workers are all portrayed with equal sympathy, to the extent
that they are portrayed at all. Insofar as any bias towards specific characters
is absent, the author's own stance seems quite withdrawn from their
disputations.

So we have seen two different modes in which the word of the author may be discerned within the word of the character: as a partisan voice aligning itself with or against a character type or point of view, or else as a relatively detached voice presenting an ethical or philosophical problem for a reader to grapple with. Thus the novel has been formed between two stylistic poles. At the one pole there is a plethora of voices representing social types and their various relations to the author and to one another, while at the other pole there is minimal distinction between social types. The former appears to offer more in the way of realism and irony, whereas the latter appears to be associated more with allegory and a generalised human condition. Naturally a great many works are located between these two extremes, having some of the characteristics of both.

From the point of view of pragmatics one is in the best position to fully appreciate how the worlds of simulated persons might relate to the actual worlds of authors and readers. I have tried to provide an initial outline of what the substance of these relations might be. Considering characters in depth leads us to a concern with the worlds they inhabit and their relationships to the worlds that we as readers inhabit.

Yet to be posed in the following chapters is the question of how and why it is that readers of fiction are also interested in such genres as interviews with authors, literary biographies and authors' published journals. The intertextuality involving the fictional work and these kinds of parallel texts clearly brings together information concerning the empirical author and the author-figure posited in a reading of his/her work. It is worth mentioning in passing that, for pragmatics research, there is also a source of data to be found in the way that readers are able to reflect on themselves and how they have responded to a character, milieu or author. It is not inconceivable that such development of the reader's sense of self may somehow have been part of an author's intentions and purposes—just as much as there may also be unforeseen consequences following from the latter. Although not all of these topics can be satisfactorily dealt with here, none of them are beyond investigation as part of broader pragmatics research into agency, i.e. provided that one's theoretical framework does not militate against it. Without wanting to discuss it in the context of this particular book, I would like to draw the reader's attention to Emirbayer and Mische's useful (1998) sociology article, "What is agency?" which is highly compatible with my pragmatics research and has no doubt helped to shape my own perspective.

CHAPTER THREE

REVELATION, PRIVATE LIFE
AND ANSWERABILITY

Generic modes of revelation

In this chapter I will begin to discuss the function of revelation that is inherent in fiction, but in order to do that, it is necessary that this function be brought into relation with some of the familiar concerns and concepts of mainstream pragmatics. Here I will return to Searle. We saw that he claimed that the writer of fiction has an illocutionary intention and I suggested that this might simply mean the intention to produce a text of certain genre or subgenre. Although this tells us nothing about the *singular* purpose of an individual work, the generic question and the intentionality that it implies is nevertheless important in any treatment of pragmatics. If Searle's notion of illocutionary intention is does not seem promising in regard to fiction, let us seek to expand it in a way that is more adequate.

The starting point that I suggest for this is the question of communicative purpose. Texts may serve both general communicative purposes and singular ones and there seems to be a continuum of these purposes. Let us consider the more general end of this continuum first. One might expect the oldest and more enduring *forms* of fictional revelation to be the more generalised in the history of fiction. Let us consider what these might be. If revelation is indeed a key, this suggests that curiosity as a desire for revelation is a general human interest, as much in art and entertainment as it is in science or religion. Its modes of fictional satisfaction might be discussed in terms of certain categories derived from a careful study of Bakhtin's historical work on genres: *romance*, *adventure*, *mystery*, and *private life*. A consideration of these categories takes us some distance in understanding the popularity of certain novelistic genres and their characters, such as the romantic hero and heroine, the detective and the spy.

Bakhtin (1981) discusses three ancient genres that he regards as foundational for the emergence of the novel as we have come to know it: "the Greek romance"; "the adventure novel of everyday life"; and "the ancient

biography and autobiography." He also pays attention to medieval literature and in particular to the chivalric romance. All of these are relevant for our purposes, and I will illustrate their relevance for the pragmatics of modern fiction using one of the well-known detective novels of Raymond Chandler. To pose the question of genre in a way that is interesting from the point of view of pragmatics: how is it that an author may have been able to form the "illocutionary intention" to write something known as a work of detective fiction? This question requires an answer that is at least partly diachronic in nature.

The Greek romance is itself said to be an amalgam of features of earlier narrative and poetic genres. In Bakhtin's account, the narrative in the Greek romance is such that the lovers are confronted with obstacles that retard and delay their union. These include various adventures, such as:

> … the abduction of the bride on the eve of the wedding, the *absence of parental consent* (if parents exist), a different bridegroom and bride intended for either of the lovers (*false couples*), the flight of the lovers, their journey, a storm at sea, a miraculous rescue, an attack by *pirates*, *captivity* and *prison*, an attempt on the innocence of the hero and heroine, the offering up of the heroine as a purifying sacrifice, wars, battles, being *sold into slavery*, presumed deaths, *disguising one's identity*, recognition and failures of recognition, presumed betrayals, attempts on chastity and fidelity, false accusations of crimes, court trials, court inquiries into the chastity and fidelities of the lovers. The heroes find their parents (if unknown). Meetings with unexpected friends or enemies play an important role, as do fortune-telling, prophecy, prophetic dreams, premonitions and sleeping potions. The novel ends happily with the lovers united in marriage. Such is the schema for the basic components of the plot. (1981, 87-88)

It is remarkable to note how many aspects of this schema are generally discernible in popular literature even today, in the ways in which an inevitable or predictable outcome is delayed by an obligatory series of obstacles and setbacks of various kinds, all of which have the quality of adventure in some or other sense, with an ultimately happy resolution. This general schema is perhaps the most ubiquitous in the history of the novel. Notice how it applies to detective fiction: the solving of the mystery and unmasking of the villain are *expected* after delay by a series of false trails, mysteries and perhaps a certain amount of adventure. However other elements in the above description from Bakhtin are also worth noting, particularly the steadfast purity of the lovers, their inextinguishable love, and the testing of these through trial by ordeal. They are idealised and their union is fated, meant to be. There is a distinct lack of character development.

A comparison of the Greek romance to popular literature resembles Auden's (1980) comparison of Greek tragedy to the "thriller":

> As in the Aristotelian description of tragedy there is Concealment (the innocent seem guilty and the guilty seem innocent) and Manifestation (the real guilt is brought to consciousness). There is also peripeteia, in this case not a reversal of fortune but a double reversal from apparent guilt to innocence and from apparent innocence to guilt.

> … Greek tragedy and the detective story have one characteristic in common in which they both differ from modern tragedy, namely, the characters are not changed in or by their actions: in Greek tragedy because their actions are fated, in the detective story because the decisive event, the murder, has already occurred. Time and space therefore are simply the when and where of *revealing* [emphasis added] either what has to happen or what has actually happened. In consequence, the detective story probably should, and usually does, obey the classical unities, whereas modern tragedy, in which the characters develop with time, can only do so by a technical tour de force; and the thriller, like the picaresque novel, even demands frequent changes of time and place. (1980, 16-17)

Certain principles of generic development are clearly in view. Popular fiction in modern times depends upon ancient schemas, and indeed constraints, whereas other modern works have departed from these, for example in the matter of character development. These observations will be subjected to more detailed investigation in what follows. But are these patterns intentional? The whole of pragmatics seems to be at stake in this question and I hope to have offered a plausible view of this by the time I am done. In passing let me just quote Raymond Chandler's correspondence: "I wrote melodrama because when I looked around me it was the only kind of writing I saw that was relatively honest and yet was not trying to put over somebody's party line" (1988, 214). Are such comments reliable? Perhaps not, but what is surely indisputable is that authors have some conception of what it is that they do. An illocutionary intention in Searle's sense must be something rather less subjective than this, but Chandler's comment does at least signal to us is an author's awareness of a *generic background* to his own work, as a formative influence upon it. This "performing of the act" of melodrama writing has aspects that need to be explored further.

The question of adventure, and the way it structures time, is closely related to the lack of character development that Bakhtin observes in the Greek romance. Adventure is concerned with the unexpected, the chance event, so that "time segments are introduced and intersect with specific link-words: 'suddenly' and 'just at that moment'" (Bakhtin 1981, 92). While in the

adventure novel such as the Greek romance there might be some explanation of why things happen, this is never essential. Fate provides an implicit explanation for the "suddenlys" and "just-at-that-moments":

> Moments of adventuristic time occur at those points when the normal course of events is interrupted. These points provide an opening for the intrusion of nonhuman forces—fate, gods, villains—and it is precisely these forces, and not the heroes, who in adventure-time take all the initiative. Of course the heroes themselves act in adventure-time—they escape, defend themselves, engage in battle, save themselves—but they act, as it were, as merely physical persons, and the initiative does not belong to them. Even love is unexpectedly sent to them by all-powerful Eros. In this time persons are forever having things happen *to* them … (1981, 95)

Clearly there are some generalities of adventure fiction here, even though modern adventure literature has departed in other respects. In Chandler's detective novels, we do not observe his hero, Phillip Marlowe, between cases, as it were, when he is at a loose end in his shabby office, except in the sense that he (together with the reader) is waiting for something to happen. And it is certain that corrupt human nature (rather than fate as such) will send someone into that office in order that another adventure may begin.

A feature of the Greek romance of great significance is the emergence of private life. Bakhtin says that in the Greek romance "a man can *only* function as an isolated and private individual, deprived of any organic connection with his country, his city, his own social group, his clan, even his own family." This is linked to adventure time in that "privacy and isolation are the essential features of the human image in a Greek romance, and they are inevitably linked up with the peculiarities of adventure-time and abstract space" (1981, 108).

The emergence of private life is of tremendous importance for the later development of the novel, but one should be cautious in equating this with the modern theme of alienation, which has added further layers of meaning to the plight of the solitary human being in literature. In that regard Kafka is the true exemplar. Yet the figure of the private eye in popular detective fiction, like the spy, tends to be lonely and suffers adventures without support or companionship in his/her work from surrounding familiars. The private eye is indeed a "private I".

The second type of ancient novel discussed by Bakhtin is the "adventure novel of everyday life," which refers to the *Satyricon* of Petronius and *The*

Golden Ass of Apuleius. The "chronotype" in this case is "a new type of adventure-time, one sharply distinct from Greek adventure-time, one that is a special sort of everyday time." (1981, 111) This involves two essential components, a metamorphosis of the character and a course of life that corresponds to a course of travel. Thus the schema is one of "a path of life" along which a change occurs, for example a metamorphosis of the kind crisis/rebirth, a well-known instantiation in Christianity being the transformation of Saul into Paul on the road to Damascus.

Bakhtin describes how the idea of metamorphosis went through complex developments in philosophy, religion, folklore and literature. This sort of transformation is not yet, however, what it has become in the *Bildungsroman*, the novel of character development in modern times. In fact, true character development is still relatively rare in popular romances and adventure literature today. In Chandler's novels, with their theme of corruption, one frequently encounters an inversion of the transformation schema: the character is encountered as someone other and *worse* than he or she once was, but, unlike the case in a novel of character development, one does not witness the transformation in process. This is also a similarity with the *Satyricon*, as Auerbach (2003, 28-30) has pointed out, where the characters at Trimalchio's banquet, including Trimalchio himself and Fortunata, are seen as what they have already *become*, i.e. from what they were in the past, rather than in their process of becoming. This is seen as a very limited kind of realism, but nevertheless a form that makes Petronius unique in the fiction of antiquity, according to Auerbach, while Chandler by contrast shows it to be a modern commonplace. When in *The Long Good-Bye* (*TLG*) one encounters Roger Wade, he has already degenerated from a successful writer into an alcoholic. Terry Lennox has been transformed by certain war experiences that are left vague:

> I was in the Commandos, bud. They don't take you if you're a piece of fluff.
> I got badly hurt and it wasn't any fun with those Nazi doctors. It did
> something to me. (1989, 320)

Lennox's faked transformation into a Mexican, Cisco Maioranos, via plastic surgery and disguise, is something of a parody of the "real" wartime transformation, which itself is only important to the plot in a marginal sense. These negative or degenerative transformations do, however, seem to have an ethical significance: they help to convey the sense that Marlowe is surrounded by a moral wasteland. Rather than being merely an ancient vestige, it would seem that these transformations contribute to the somewhat depressing quality that has sometimes been noted in Chandler's novels

(Auden quoted in Drabble 1985, 183), this despite these novels' frequently comic style. In fact, the inversion of the crisis/rebirth schema itself has a parallel in religion, in the notion of "fallenness". In the Chandler novels the character of Marlowe stands out by contrast with these other fallen characters, as a solitary, incorruptible (and therefore unchanging) individual. This combination of incorruptible hero and fallen word is at the ethical core of Chandler's work. Marlowe is a redeemer figure.

But let us return to Bakhtin's distinction between the two ancient genres already introduced and which seems so crucial in understanding the diachronic evolution of popular fiction. In the case of everyday-time, he argues, adventure-time has now been integrated into a whole by the sequence "guilt–punishment–redemption–blessedness", grounded in *individual responsibility*, and escaping from some of the abstractness that characterised the adventure-time of the Greek romance. While this schema might lead to a greater degree of what we might call realism today, nevertheless there are limitations to this. Lucius, in the shape of an ass, for example, observes and studies everyday life, which is personal and private, as Bakhtin explains:

> A contradiction developed between the public nature of the literary form and the private nature of its content. The process of working out private genres had begun. But this process remained incomplete in ancient times. (1981, 123)

On the one hand there is the adventure-time of the hero, and on the other the private everyday-time which he observes. In both *The Golden Ass* and *The Satyricon* the heroes "pass through the everyday sphere of private life but do not participate internally in it" (1981, 129). This could with some justification also describe what Chandler's Phillip Marlowe does. The "chronotope" of this revelation of everyday life is such that the heroes retain a certain solitariness while passing through and observing everyday life, which is revealed in its heterogeneity in a series of discrete episodes. This is recognisable also as the form of the picaresque novel. In Chandler there is the solitary hero, whose personal life is described in some detail: the shabbiness of his office, his solo chess playing, his drinking habits, his personal moral philosophy. The "path" of his life passes through a series of discrete adventures, in the various novels, and although there is no transformation of his own character, which is always seen as already fully formed, he does survive innumerable tests of his integrity. On the other hand, there is everyday life revealed in its heterogeneity. While the heroes of the *Satyricon* are "spies, charlatans and parasites, spying and eavesdropping on all of the cynical aspects of private life" (Bakhtin 1981, 129), the private

eye serves a similar revelatory function. In Chapter 21 of *TLG* we encounter the woman whose bag is being robbed by a friend, the big man whose dog is being poisoned by a neighbour, the middle-aged Jewish man whose Gentile wife is always running away and needing to be traced, all of whom have no organic relation to the plot. And when Marlowe has to find a certain doctor with the initial V, a not inconsiderable part of the novel is taken up with the encounter with two other doctors, equally underhanded, before eventually finding the correct one. Chandler's vison, of a world corrupted both on a large scale and on a petty scale, is given its unity through the private eye and the integration of separate episodes of everyday life.

The third genre discussed by Bakhtin is the ancient biography and autobiography, of which there are two subgenres. The first he calls Platonic, which is characterised as "the seeker's path", which depends on the schema of crisis and rebirth already mentioned, e.g. "the words of the oracle as a turning point in the course of Socrates' life" (1981, 130-131). The second type is the rhetorical autobiography, "the civic funeral and memorial speech" (1981, 131). It is this second type and its particularly public character that he gives most attention. However, the important point about these biographies is their highly idealised nature, and the fact that in the ancient world the breaking down of the public wholeness of the individual into any kinds of private moments had scarcely begun:

> The starting point for an ecomium is the idealised image of a definite life type, a specific profession—that of a military commander, ruler, political figure. This idealised form is nothing but an accumulation of all the attributes adhering to a given profession: a commander should be *like this*, followed by an enumeration of all the qualities and virtues of a commander. All these idealised qualities are then discovered in the life of the man being eulogised. (1981, 136)

Bakhtin traces the evolution of similar types of (auto-) biography through the Roman-Hellenistic period until certain modifications of the idealised models are observed. The first of these "consists of a satirico-ironic or humorous treatment, in satires and diatribes, of one's self and one's life." These are found in verse, and, interestingly, "include an element of the parodying of public and heroic forms." (1981, 143) Parody and humour, especially when aimed at the high and mighty, are important elements in Bakhtin's account of evolution and change in genres.

The second modification is observed in the familiar letter. In place of the ossified and stereotypical public forms, "a new private sense of self, suited to the drawing room, began to emerge," and "a whole series of categories

involving self-consciousness and the shaping of a life into a biography—success, happiness, merit—began to lose their public and state significance and passed over to the private and personal plane." (1981, 143)

The third modification according to Bakhtin is the stoic type. In all examples of this type there is "… the advent of a new form for relating to one's self. One might best characterise this new relationship by using Augustine's term 'Soliloquia,' that is, 'solitary conversations with oneself.'" (1981, 145) Of great significance for the evolution of literary genres in this third modification is "… a sharp increase in the weight of events pertaining to one's own personal and intimate life; events enormously important in the private life of a given individual have no importance at all for others, and almost no larger social or political significance …" (1981, 145) Here again we see how certain popular modern novels depend on these developments in antiquity, particularly in revelations of private and domestic detail and personal feelings.

Let us now turn to the influence also of the medieval world, and the chivalric romance in particular. The chivalric romance or "courtly romance" (Auerbach 2003, 123-142), while similar in some respects to the ancient genres already discussed–adventure-time, testing of lovers' fidelity, enchantments–also contains newer elements. Whereas earlier adventure-time tended to be a rupture in normal life, in the chivalric romance the "'suddenly' is normalised, as it were," so that the "unexpected, and only the unexpected, is what is expected." (1981, 152) Whereas in the Greek romance the hero suffered adventures as the action of fate and the gods, passively, the hero of the chivalric romance is an "adventurer *per se*" (1981, 152). In the chivalric romance "chance has all the seductiveness of the miraculous and the mysterious; it is personified by good and evil fairies, good and evil magicians; in enchanted groves, in castles and everywhere it lies in wait." (1981, 152-153) Interestingly, Bakhtin makes the point that these adventures intrigue not only the reader but also the hero himself.

In the fact that the chivalric hero glorifies himself and others (liege, lord, lady) Bakhtin sees a similarity with the epic rather than with the Greek romance. This similarity extends to character: the heroes of chivalric romance are seen as both individualised and symbolic.

> Lancelot in no way resembles Parzival, Parzival does not resemble Tristan. But several novels have been created around each of these figures. Strictly speaking these are not heroes of individual novels (in general there are no *individual*, self-contained chivalric romances)—what we get is heroes of *cycles*. They cannot, therefore, belong to individual novelists as their private

> property (of course, we do not have in mind author's copyright and such notions)—like epic heroes, they belong to a common storehouse of images, although this is an international storehouse, and not, as in the epic, one that is merely national. (1981, 153)

While there are very important differences here with what we have come to know as the novel–not least in the question of individual authorship–the chivalric romance is an important influence on the modern novel. As for authorship, the writers of such works are clearly acting in ways different to the writers of modern fiction, insofar as the author is not entirely answerable for the creation of character and story, but instead participates in the creation of a fictional world together with other writers, some of whom might be unknown. Nevertheless, it may be argued that all authors participate in something appreciatively larger than their own individual imaginations, if not in regard to characters' names and their peculiar identities, but at least in regard to other generic features, which have themselves become a "storehouse" available to the author. This can be seen in the influence of the chivalric romance upon modern adventure and mystery fiction, including the detective novel.

The miraculous in the chivalric romance extends to time, which it tends to structure in the manner of fairy-talelike and dreamlike distortions. Bakhtin characterises this as a "subjective playing with time," which is "utterly foreign to antiquity" (1981, 155). This subjectivism in time reappears in subsequent literary developments, in romanticism, symbolism, expressionism and surrealism. These elements of the chivalric romance also appear in "hardboiled" detective novels, particularly those of Chandler. It is known that Chandler was steeped in medieval literature (Knight 1980). This medieval influence is sometimes observed in the hero as "literary archetype" (Grella 1980). What we observe with the detective hero is a fusion of the national hero (epic) and the inveterate adventurer (chivalric romance). In American culture the frontiersman has been just such an archetype, but like the frontiersman, the lonely man of the forest, the detective acts similarly according to his personal code while remaining sceptical towards the official justice system. And like the knight the detective is involved in a perpetual struggle against evil. As Chandler's hero says: in *TLG*:

> "I'm a romantic, Bernie. I hear voices crying in the night and I go see what's the matter. You don't make a dime that way. You got sense, you shut your windows and turn up more sound on the TV set. Or you shove down on the gas and get far away from there. Stay out of other people's troubles…" (1989, 237)

The detective is chivalric in the sense that he expects no material reward, and in his relationship to women characters:

> The moral code often exacts a severe personal sacrifice. The detective generally finds that the beautiful and available girl is also the source of guilt; consequently he is compelled to arrest a woman he desires or even loves. (Grella 1980, 116)

In *TLG*, for example, Marlowe quells his desire for Eileen Wade and eventually reveals her to be the murderer. He is celibate for a different reason that is traceable to the chivalric romance: he cannot settle into married life since this would divert him from the *quest*. Like the knight, the detective must confront in the course of his quest the "magical quack":

> The quackery begins as a reasonable representation of the Southern California setting, where in a … symbolic landscape zany religions proliferate like the orange trees. The device also implies the emptiness of the modern American spiritual condition, enriching the dark vision of the private eye novels by demonstrating the extents to which the faithless will go to find significance in a bleakly dispirited world. Perhaps most important, the bizarre cults and temples lend a quasi-magical element of the Grail romance to the hard-boiled thriller—the detective-knight must journey to a Perilous Chapel where an ambivalent Merlin figure, a mad or evil priest, presides. His eventual triumph over the charlatan becomes a ritual feat, a besting of the powers of darkness. (Grella 1980, 114)

In Chandler the doctor can take the place of the Merlin figure, and, as I have mentioned, in *TLG* Marlowe confronts three evil doctors in their lairs. It is important to bear in mind that the detective novel does not merely recapitulate some aspect of the chivalric romance. Grella's phrase above, "a reasonable representation of the Southern California setting," is important because it highlights the peculiarly modern and empirical elements in Chandler that are fused with the romantic, adventure and quest elements. The mimetic reasonableness of the representation seems apparent to anyone who even today strolls along, say, Hollywood Boulevard, with its temples to everything from scientology to tarot reading. The question of genre, if examined carefully, always yields some or other elements from the remote past combined with the current or recent.

Even the subjective-miraculous distortion of time and space in the chivalric romance, as discussed by Bakhtin, is frequently present in that the detective finds himself in, and reports on, his experience of, drugged and drunken states, disorientation after being knocked unconscious, and so forth. In *TLG* this is all closely related to problems of identity, which Bakhtin has also

identified as a feature of the chivalric romance. "We … find oriental and fairy-tale motifs that are ultimately linked to the issue of identity: enchantments of every sort, which temporarily take a man out of the ordinary course of events and transport him to a strange world." (Bakhtin 1981, 151) In *TLG* Eileen Wade enters such a strange, inexplicable state where she confronts Marlowe in a bizarrely seductive scene, mistaking him for Terry Lennox, the latter name itself an alias for Paul Marsden. The scene ends as follows:

> I went back to the door and shut it—from the outside this time. Some kind of weird noises were coming from the woman on the bed, but that's all they were now. Weird noises. *The spell was broken.* (1989, 180 [emphasis added])

Grella (1980, 116) claims that "the hardboiled detective novel inverts the conventions of both whodunit and romance." The later are generally "wish fulfilment forms", both of them providing "absolution" and satisfying resolutions. We will examine a very well-known case of this shortly. But what has been clarified here is how the history of the novel shows patterns of continuity and departure, sometimes in the form of inversion. I have maintained that one component of authorial intention is generic, that is, a certain attitude towards the developments of genre leading up to the time of the author's own act of writing. One of the examples of generic inversion that Bakhtin has provided much commentary on is Rabelais and his relationship to medieval discourse:

> … Rabelais opposes human corporeality (and the surrounding world that is in a direct zone of contact with the body) not only to medieval, ascetic other-worldly ideology, but to the licentiousness and coarseness of medieval practice as well. He wants to return both a language and a meaning to the body, return to it the idealised quality it had in ancient times, and simultaneously return a reality, a materiality, to the language and to meaning. (1981, 171)

Not only is the dialectic of continuity and inversion clearly articulated above, but also the *intentional* nature of both continuity and inversion. In like manner, Chandler "wants to return" to the elements of ancient and medieval narratives while opposing to them some of the concerns of modern realism, in which a "nightmare vision reverses normal wish fulfilment, frustrating rather than gratifying human desires." (Grella 1980, 116) Chandler's characters inhabit a moral wasteland, a precondition, one might even suspect, for modern social realism.

There is a further chronotope discussed by Bakhtin, that of the idyll, which has considerable significance in a discussion of Chandler. An important

theme in *TLG* concerns the relationship between the city and the countryside, particularly in the notion of the "encroaching city" and the idyll makes it appearance both in an uninverted and in an inverted way. Bakhtin characterises the idyllic as follows; it is determined by a

> … general relationship to the immanent unity of folkloric time. This finds expression predominantly in the special relationship that time has to space in the idyll: an organic fastening-down, a grafting of life and its events to a place, to a familiar territory with all its nooks and crannies, its familiar mountains, valleys, fields, rivers and forests, and one's own home. Idyllic life and is events are inseparable from this concrete, spatial corner of the world where the fathers and grandfathers lived and where one's children and their children will live. This little spatial world is limited, and sufficient unto itself, not linked in any intrinsic way with other places, with the rest of the world. (1981, 225)

The idyll is inverted in Chandler in the sense that the idyllic world is vanished and replaced by its opposite, an ugly urban environment, but it remains uninverted in the sense of a nostalgia, in the way that Chandler suggests a lost Edenic state in his descriptions of the dominance of the city over the countryside and a "vanishing frontier". As Grella points out:

> The private eye has responded to the national urge; he has completed the Westward trek. The detective novel concerns itself with what happens to Huck Finn when he runs out of "territory".

> He does not find the Edenic land of his dreams, the Great Good Place of the American imagination, but the Great Bad Place … a green and golden land raped of its fecundity and beauty … Instead of a fertile valley, he discovers a cultural cesspool, containing the dregs of a neon-and-plastic civilisation. (Grella 1980, 112)

One way in which the idyll makes a most overt appearance in the *TLG* is through the pun on the name "Idle Valley". This is the territory inhabited by the *idle* rich. It is also *idyllic*, but in the inverted sense. Instead of the home of the peasantry and their folklore, it is artificial and corrupted by wealth. It is repugnant to Marlowe, who observes ironically:

> Across the lake there was a blue haze against the hills. The ocean breeze had begun to filter through the low mountains to the west. It wiped the air clean and it wiped away just enough of the heat. Idle Valley was having a perfect summer. Somebody had planned it that way. Paradise incorporated, and also Highly Restricted. Only the nicest people. Absolutely no central Europeans. Just the cream, the top-drawer crowd, the lovely, lovely people. Like the Lorings and the Wades. Pure gold. (*TLG* 1989, 210-211)

Romance and its other

To illustrate further how it is that authorial intention largely resides in an attitude towards historical genre, I will take up a particularly striking case. Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* occupies a singular place in the history of English fiction and it demonstrates certain principles of pragmatics with extraordinary clarity, including intentionality, revelation, context and answerability. But to understand this, one first needs to consider its antecedent, *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë.

Jane Eyre (*JE*) is in virtually every respect a romantic novel. Not only was it written during the high-watermark period of romanticism in art, it exhibits some of the chief concerns of romanticism in fiction, especially those characteristic of the gothic tendency. It also exhibits with great clarity the ancient romantic patterns already mentioned in the Bakhtinian discussion of the Greek romance, as well as aspects of the crisis/rebirth schema that lead to the felicitous conclusion. It is also a vehicle for feminine emotional expression. It thus provides a template for the (sentimentally) romantic popular fiction of more recent times.

Yet there are also important elements of social realism in *JE* and there is little doubt that some of those elements, combined as they are with the romantic, account for much of the novel's landmark status in English literature. This work appeared at almost the same time that works incorporating social realism had begun to appear elsewhere in other European languages, such as those of Stendhal and Balzac in France. There are, for example, the following elements to be found in *JE*: *social types* as objects of critical observation; the occasional use of "low" or *dialectal* speech, at least in the representation of servants and peasants; a simulacrum of *character development* linked to social situations and institutions.

The character development aspect, however, should not be overstated. Jane never ceases to be a romantic heroine at any stage, despite a series of apparent crisis/rebirth episodes, each of which is linked to a specific place: her difficult childhood as an unloved and bullied adoptee; her oppressive school days at Lowood school, where she nevertheless encounters positive role models; her engagement as governess at Thornfield, where she finds love but where her marriage to Rochester, her employer, is dramatically prevented; her time at Moor House where she stays with family members without mutual recognition, partly due to her assumed name, and where she turns down the marriage offer of her cousin St. John. Finally, after many trials, she reunites and finds love with Rochester. But these personal crises

on Jane's part leading up to the eventual marriage with Rochester are more like tests of her continuing virtue and innocent nature rather than true character development. We should thus carefully qualify any thought of *JE* as a *Bildungsroman*.

What these episodes certainly do is serve as experience. Jane's travails take her through a range of social experiences, through which we the readers are able to observe everyday life of rural England at differing social levels. Secondly, the fact that milieux are observed from Jane's own perspective— her governess period in Rochester's household is especially important in this respect—means that she serves as a moral standard against which all others can be judged by a reader. So, in a sense *JE* is "an adventure novel of everyday life," to recall Bakhtin's term. But it is also very much in the mould of the Greek romance described by Bakhtin in all of the following elements: the thwarting of the lovers' initial marriage plans; the absence of parental consent (and parents); false couples (Rochester and Blanche Ingram, Jane and St. John); journeys and travails; disguising of identity followed by recognition; family reunion; prophecy and premonition (Jane mysteriously hears Rochester's voice while considering St. John's proposal); happy ending and union in marriage. These are profoundly deep levels of generic intertextuality to be found in comparing works from antiquity and the 19th century and they constitute the bedrock *form* of these works.

Rochester undergoes more profound changes according to the crisis/rebirth schema. His early marriage in the West Indies and the madness of his first wife, who lives on as the "madwoman in the attic", have been defining elements of his character. He goes on to live a dissolute life, but is transformed by his love for Jane, although their marriage must be delayed and apparently prevented. Then, in the fire started by his mad wife, in which she meets her death, he is disfigured and partially blinded. He has changed from a naïve young aristocrat, through the ordeals of his first marriage and its bizarre aftermath, his loss of Jane and disfigurement, to his eventual happy union with Jane in marriage. This continuing trial by ordeal is even more extreme than Jane's, because he must be *made* good in a way that she need not. Her testing, for its part, consists in remaining true to herself, and also to her love for him even after his disfigurement.

As I have mentioned, the author of *JE* has incorporated certain elements of fiction that are not ancient but rather more of her time, despite the ancient and deep-level romantic and adventure forms. I have mentioned the nascent realism, and there is also the gothic element. The gothic is not a medieval

literary phenomenon, but rather a romantic evocation of the middle ages in order to create an atmosphere of mystery and/or horror. It already had a history in romantic works some decades before Brontë's work, and in *JE* it appears mostly in regard to the mystery of the monstrous madwoman in the attic. Through this vehicle Rochester's Thornfield appears as the place where the love of Jane's life blooms *and*, simultaneously, as a medieval-type castle with a terrible secret, via which much of the interest in the novel is created and sustained. The first-person style of the expressive autobiography is another definitively modern element, despite certain ancient roots in autobiography that I have mentioned. Even if one does not identify Brontë with her character directly, there is the generic influence of autobiography that underlies the act of an author in evoking the sympathy of a reader for a struggling innocent. The novel becomes a *simulated* autobiography. It may not be that Jane is Charlotte, but it is difficult to avoid the thought that Jane is someone that Charlotte would want the reader to admire.

Genre, in the way I have presented it here, is a crystallisation of textual forms or schemas from the past, whether the remote past or the more recent past. What arises from this is a theoretical question that may merely be mentioned now: whether it is the case that it is the conscious intention of an author to combine these schemas in the act of writing in just this or that way, or, whether these schemas are themselves constitutive of the author's intention, i.e. at a less conscious level. It is a question that comes sharply into focus when one considers Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (*WSS*), which can in no way be described as a romantic novel.

While Rhys's novel may be coherent in itself, this coherence is of a relatively meagre kind when a reading of it is made without regard to its context. Two aspects of context, when taken into account, expand the significance of this work greatly: (a) its relationship with *Jane Eyre*; and (b) the background of the author, specifically her West Indian origins and her ambivalent relationship to England and the English in the century after Charlotte Brontë.

It is surely the case that *WSS* is able to enter the same universe of discourse as that inhabited by *JE* due to those modern qualities that it shares with the latter. Rhys is able to open up a dialogue with Brontë, even to engage in a polemic with her, precisely because *JE* does convey a recognisable social attitude—one that would still have been familiar in Rhys's time—and even in the way that it employs the gothic as an enhancement of expressive feeling. What Rhys does is to write a novel that provides an alternative account of two of Brontë's characters, Antoinette/Bertha (hereafter Antoinette)

and Rochester, in which the "madwoman" status of the former is entirely detached from the gothic notion of horror, instead it becomes the horror of society and history. The romantic Rochester, he who in *JE* redeems himself through trial by ordeal and marries the heroine in a final triumph of goodness and fine sentiment, appears considerably less heroic in *WSS*. Stripped of romanticism, he is instead shown as a man out of his depth in a milieu that he neither understands nor respects. In other words, he too becomes a social type, the ineffectual and not very admirable aristocrat in pursuit of the dowry available to the husband of an unstable but alluring creole woman in the diaspora of the colonial West Indies. In this agonistic exchange of narratives, Rhys draws on her own creole background to provide a work that opposes itself to J*E* on almost every level. Most crucially its vision is profoundly dystopian. Thus, it is not merely the fact that Rhys identifies with the madwoman creole, rather than with the English countrywoman of Brontë's imagination that animates *WSS*, but rather the fact that it opposes itself *generically*. While some differences in genre are to be expected between two novels from different centuries it is far less to be expected that this would be made overtly oppositional, as in this case. It is not to be doubted that this was Rhys's intention.

> The choice of *Jane Eyre* as a starting point is important to Rhys. In one of her letters, she writes about her work on the novel: "it might be possible to unhitch the whole thing from Charlotte Brontë 's novel, but I don't want to do that. It is that particular mad Creole I want to write about, not any of the other mad Creoles." (Olaussen 1993, 65)

As I have said, *WSS* attains its full coherence only when placed in the context both of its relationship with *JE and* the background of the author, whose deeply ambivalent relationship to England and the English, is described in her unfinished autobiography *Smile Please*. Let it be clear that there is not merely an intention to write a response to *JE*, but also the more complex intention to open up a polemic in which Rhys's undoubtedly more critical-realist sensibility is deliberately counter-posed to that of the still romantic Brontë. In this we see the effect and importance of a convergence of the ethical and the generic. Those events in the far-off West Indies that are necessarily so opaque in Brontë's account are vivid and terrible in Rhys. The madness that is merely gothic in its mystery—a genetic etiology is hinted at in *JE*—becomes firmly situated in the history of colonialism, slavery and mis-recognitions that are both gendered and cultural in nature. And money, which arrives apparently as a reward for the virtuous in *JE*, is deeply implicated in the most terrible vicissitudes of fortune of the central female character in *WSS*.

For those readers of *WSS* who have previously read *JE*—and one assumes that not all of its readers have done so—there is a most peculiar consequence. They already "know" the fates of the two leading characters, that is, as soon as they recognise the identities of these characters. They realise that Antoinette is the mad and grotesque woman in the attic in *JE* and that her newlywed husband in *WSS* is Rochester. They know that Antoinette will meet her end in a blazing inferno started by her own hand, and they know that Rochester will live "happily ever after" in the time-honoured generic fashion after his trial by ordeal. All this is "known" from another novel written in the previous century. Thus, the revelation in *WSS* is of quite a different nature from that in *JE* and the type of interest and sense of anticipation it arouses are also quite different. The reader senses a different kind of revelatory purpose on Rhys's part. It is worth exploring further what this might have been.

One most peculiar aspect of *WSS* is the use of first-person narrative from a doomed character, even for the narration of those events, which, we already "know" from *JE*, are close to the moment of her demise. From a conventionally realist point of view, this clearly poses problems for the reader. Are we to assume that this is her ghost narrating her story? Or rather, does this unrealistic aspect, force us into a recognition of the author's purpose, that it is not just to supply the missing bits of Brontë's work, while remaining broadly consistent with its chronology of events, but instead to provide a corrective counter-narrative. As one reaches the end of this sad and harrowing novel, one might well come to the conclusion that Brontë's is less than a credible account in its one-sidedness. For this purpose, the first-person narrative for a character marginal in *JE* is an available technique, even if it is to be repurposed in a certain sense, as the voice of the voiceless: the dead Antoinette, who in life was never given a voice by Brontë.

The first-person narrative here does more than provide another side of the story, although it does do that. More profoundly it challenges the rather simplistic notions of madness and character provided by *JE*. Antoinette has an inner life that is absent from *JE*, and she emerges as a victim and symbol of the terrifying historical pathologies of slavery and its aftermath, as well as patriarchy. The Rochester character, who is never named in *WSS*, appears as an ineffectual pawn in a game that he does not understand and is almost powerless to affect. The black characters, who of course are entirely absent from *JE*, emerge as many-sided people with their own conflicts, forms of knowledge, wisdom and emotions. Christophine in particular, Antoinette's only real friend, who is illiterate to the point of not even knowing whether

England is an actual place, exhibits greater wisdom and self-control than the two central characters. But there are really no "unflawed" characters, as arguably Jane Eyre is, and no trace of romance anywhere in this work.

Very little of these possibilities for interpretation are available to those who have not previously read *JE*. Someone such as myself, who first read *WSS* before reading *JE* and then read it again after reading *JE*, can attest to this. But it is also worth considering how familiarity with Jean Rhys's own autobiography helps to inform a reading of *WSS*. The term "Creole" that is used so frequently in connection with Rhys's life and work is shown to have considerable cultural and historical significance. It reflects the situation of the colonial (sometimes) slave-owning class who have for the most part never lived in England, who feel and are seen as being different to the English, and for whom the abolition of slavery represented a catastrophic fall in their material situation. The creole background is Rhys's own, and she portrays it often in a harsh and unsentimental way. As Antoinette has to explain to Rochester, who does not understand the import of a song being sung by a servant:

> "It was a song about a white cockroach. That's me. That's what they call all of us who were here before their own people in Africa sold them to the slave traders. And I've heard English women call us white niggers. So between you I often wonder who I am and where is my country and where do I belong and why was I ever born at all …" (2019, 74)

The fact that Antoinette has no clear idea of herself, and her somewhat banal account of the history of the West Indies, are perhaps not as significant as the fact that she belongs to a small group of people who are universally despised and debased. Antoinette sees her mother descend into madness, handed into the "care" of black people who abuse her to the end of her life in a terrible inversion of a terrible history, this after the burning of their home by freed slaves when Antoinette was a little girl and the death of her little brother. When Antoinette says "between you" to Rochester she expresses the fact of being a complete outsider to the two unsympathetic groups of people in whose control her destiny lies, the blacks and the English. But she has one friend, her long-time servant, Christophine, to whom at the height of her desperation she turns for a witchcraft solution to her situation. Needless to say, this does not work for her and she descends into an alcohol fueled breakdown.

In her own autobiography, Rhys, who was the daughter of a Welsh doctor and a creole woman, has written about her complex relations with black people in her original home on the island of Dominica. She also mentions

having witnessed black rioting and her own mother's fear at that. Yet she also reports on her mother's admiration for black babies, and her own ardent desire and prayer to be black, which may have partly stemmed from her mother's attitude to the babies. But she says: "The black people that I knew well were different, individuals who I liked or disliked." (1979, 48) Among those she seems to have admired was their family cook, Josephine, who is clearly a model for Christophine in *WSS*, since at one point in *WSS* the clue for this is provided, where a certain Mr Fraser in a letter to Rochester writes concerning a "dangerous" servant woman named "Josephine or Christophine Dubois" (2019, 108). A neat little touch we have here, as a reminder of the link between fictional and actual worlds.

Rhys has a complex approach to character and virtually every character in *WSS* is presented as having good and bad, as well as inexplicable, characteristics, and almost every one has both negative and positive judgments pronounced upon them by *other* characters. This is true of the Rochester character as well, who does get to narrate in first-person manner for a section of the book, but who finds himself lost in a moral climate very far from the certainties of his own class and background. As an upper-class Englishman, he understands neither the creoles nor the blacks and thus ends by condemning them all alike. His seem to be the very moral certainties that Rhys wishes to call into question. Radical ambivalence about people and types of people permeates both *WSS* and her autobiography. In the latter she writes of the aftermath of one unfortunate episode in her own childhood:

> I never tried to be friendly with any of the coloured girls again. I was polite and that was all.
>
> They hate us. We are hated.
>
> Not possible.
>
> Yes it is possible and it is so. (1979, 49)

And on the very next page she writes:

> Side by side with my growing wariness of black people there was envy. I decided that they had a better time than we did. They laughed a lot though they seldom smiled. They were stronger than we were, they could walk a long way without getting tired, carry heavy weights with ease.
>
> Every night someone gave a dance, you could hear the drums. We had few dances. They were more alive, more a part of the place than we were. (1979, 50)

In short, one recognises that Jean Rhys herself had great difficulty in identifying with English, creole or black people alike, and seems to have been acutely aware of the positive and negative characteristics, not only of individuals but also of whole cultures. These facts are what condition her writing of *WSS* and her unfinished autobiography, both of which were written late in her life and with considerable experience of having lived as a lonely outsider, perhaps especially in England. In *WSS* she has Antoinette's mother say to Mason, her second (English) husband, as overheard by Antoinette:

> "You don't like, or even recognise the good in them," she said, "and you won't believe in the other side."

> "They're too damn lazy to be dangerous," said Mr Mason. "I know that." (2019, 16)

This exchange foreshadows the relationship between Antoinette herself and Rochester, and it encapsulates very neatly the triangular relations between the creoles, the English and the black slave descendants. Rhys shows that in these disagreements between the creole women and their English husbands, it is the women who are the more accurate in their perceptions, but ultimately with tragic consequences for themselves. Such insights are very far from the worldview and knowledge that could have been possessed by Charlotte Brontë, and they represent an area of darkness that could never have found a place in the latter's writing, for both personal and generic reasons.

The contents of *WSS* are an amalgam of *JE* and Rhys's own life experiences in the West Indies and in England. Just to mention one illustrative example: the motif of the burning house. In her own childhood Rhys experienced rioting black people, but not the burning of a house, although it appears that some such incident occurred to her mother's (slave-owning) family more or less in the period in which both *JE* and *WSS* are set. In *JE* the Antoinette character repeatedly starts fires, including the one that brings about her own death. In *WSS* there is a combination of these two as Antoinette undergoes the trauma of seeing her family home burnt in a riot, and she also experiences being severely injured in the same riot by a stone thrown by a black girl, Tia, who was previously her friend but has turned against her. In both novels there are burning houses, in Rhys's autobiography a black riot, in her mother's family, after emancipation, a burning house. In *WSS* these are combined.

Antoinette's death, which naturally occurs in the same manner in both novels, takes on levels of significance in *WSS* that are obviously quite absent in *JE*. During the burning of Antoinette's home by black people in her childhood, Antoinette is confronted by her former best friend, Tia, who throws a stone at her, injuring her face badly. They face each other like frightfully opposing mirror images, blood pouring down Antoinette while tears run down Tia's face. Antoinette and her family are rescued by the appearance of the parrot with its burning clipped wings, the sight of which frightens away the superstitious black rioters.

The second burning, in which Antoinette, as the older madwoman, dies, involves her plunging from the burning roof like the parrot of her childhood. Just preceding this she wakes from a dream of a reddened sky and screams "Tia!" Waking, Antoinette knows what she must now do: there must be another burning in which she herself must die. This has been seen as a form of racial reconciliation:

> Many years before she had said, "I will live with Tia and I will be like her." But first she had to let Tia know the terms on which she planned for them to be together. All she had offered Tia before was the domination of her white skin. But as Antoinette burns down the Great House which imprisons her— as Tia had burnt down the Great House which was the centre of her exploitation—Tia welcomes her home. (Selma James 1983 quoted in Olaussen 1993, 66-67)

We can perhaps now characterise the nature of the revelatory act that has so profoundly shaped Rhys's novel. It was her stated intention to tell the story of Brontë's madwoman, a story that Brontë herself had mostly neglected, or, been unable, to tell herself. In doing so. Rhys reveals a form of life unknown to Brontë, and a notion of character and character development that did not exist in the more romantic era in which Brontë was working. Each character that appears in the two novels appears in a quite different light. Antoinette's madness is given a historical context and a deeply sympathetic explanation. In *JE* she is little more than a wild beast whose function, in almost destroying Rochester's life and happiness, is to provide an ordeal that he must survive, in time-honoured romantic fashion. Rochester himself appears in *WSS* as a shallow man of his class, the impecunious aristocrat who is prepared to marry for money the beautiful heiress, despite the distinct drawback of her non-English status and domicile. If in *JE* he appears as a man who must overcome his youthful errors to undergo a moral development, in *WSS* he simply comes to exhibit his personal limitations ever more clearly, especially a lack of any interest in, or sympathy for, persons different to himself. Antoinette appears as a

victim of patriarchal machinations of the most extreme kind. Her entire inherited fortune from her stepfather, Mr Mason, is handed over to Rochester by Mason's son Richard, in accordance with "English law", so that he, Rochester, now becomes effectively a kind of guardian or owner rather than simply her husband. Yet she is devastated by his cynical lack of love for her, despite his occasional outpourings of lust and, alternately, attempts at coldly reasoning with her. Centres of wisdom in *WSS* are provided by two women, Antoinette's Aunt Cora and by her black servant Christophine, neither of whom appears in *JE*. Jane, who provides the moral centre of *JE*, does not appear as a character in *WSS*. Black people, and the historical aftermath of slavery, which concern Brontë so little, are central to *WSS*.

"There is always the other side, always," says Antoinette in response to Rochester's question as to whether there is another side to a certain character's story (2019, 96). In this belief there seems to be a close affinity between Rhys and her character Antoinette. There is certainly another side to Brontë's story; of that Rhys leaves us in no doubt. Let us note that this is necessarily both an intentional opposition and a generic one. We do not need to read Rhys's correspondence to see that this is the case. There is no trace of romanticism in *WSS* and relatively little realism in *JE*, but enough for Rhys to engage with it, polemically. Let us note a final technical point that brings out an unusual aspect of this.

How is it that both Antoinette and Rochester can be first person narrators of *WSS*, and what does this tell us about Rhys's intentions? When Rochester is narrating, what point in his life occasions such narrative reflections, we may ask—is it during his happy marriage to Jane perhaps? But the first-person narrative of Antoinette is more intriguing still. Let us consider the following:

> I can remember every second of that morning. If I shut my eyes I can see the deep blue colour of the sky and the mango leaves, the pink and red hibiscus, the yellow handkerchief she wore around her head, tied in the Martinique fashion with the sharp points in front, but now I see everything still, fixed forever, like the colours in a stained-glass window. Only the clouds move. It was wrapped in a leaf, what she had given me, and I felt it cool and smooth against my skin. (2019, 87)

This is the fateful moment that Antoinette takes the *obeah* remedy from Christophine. In context, this is a most remarkable passage, one that brings into question the very concept of narrator. To put it simply: from what point in time is Antoinette narrating these events? Given that we "know" from *JE*—and *WSS* is quite consistent with this—that Antoinette has died, how

do we understand the temporal references when she says in the above: *I can see, I see everything still*, *only the clouds move*? Is she reporting thus from her madwoman in the attic self? Is she perhaps reporting from beyond the grave? The latter interpretation would perhaps add depths of meaning to a phrase such as *fixed forever*. Perhaps a more realistic interpretation might be that these reflections occur a little later in Antoinette's mind, before leaving for England? But these matters are undecidable, and surely the purpose is rather to highlight the fateful moment that is ostensibly being "recalled"? After all, this is the moment when Antoinette's fate is sealed. She is leaving Christophine after her visit to obtain the "love potion" that turns out to be toxic for Rochester, giving rise to the melodramatic scene that opens the way to Antoinette's final descent into madness.

Let us consider also the ending of the novel in the light of this narrative peculiarity:

> … I got up, took the keys and unlocked the door. I was outside holding my candle. Now at last I know why I was brought here and what I have to do. There must have been a draught for the flame flickered ands and I thought it was out. But I shielded it with my hand and it burned up again to light me along the dark passage. (2019, 148)

Naively realist notions of narrator become entirely untenable in the interpretation of this novel, as I have previously suggested. It is logically possible for these to be the final thoughts of Antoinette in the moments before she starts the conflagration that maims Rochester and brings about the end of her own life. It is *not* logically possible, however, for this to be *her account* of those moments just before her death. What we have here cannot be reminiscence and the "voice" cannot in any plausible sense be that of Antoinette. What we have is a technique of representation of subjectivity at fateful moments in the biography of the character as presented to us by the author. The so-called first-person narrator is not an account of events in the manner of the autobiography, it is the creation of subjectivity, and in this strategy an author, like Rhys, can make it impossible for us to see this as simply pseudo (fictional) autobiography, as Jane's narration is in *JE*. It is a more radical form of representation of inner life, one that borrows from the conventions of autobiography while it exposes the impossibility of the novel being read as if it were autobiography. This is entirely in line with Rhys's purposes in writing *WSS* in response to *JE*. What Rhys offers us is the subjectivity of a character for whom in *JE* there was none. This is the importance of *WSS*, and the paradoxical technique, of an impossible narration, is in a sense forced upon the author, because she cannot bring to light the subjectivity of her character without using the first-

person narrative form; yet it is firmly part of her purpose not to change the chronology that was offered by Brontë. Thus, Antoinette must narrate from beyond the grave, so that we may know the story of her inner life, without her becoming a character other than Brontë's. In this way the first-person narrative technique has been radically repurposed.

Revelation and private life

> All characters and events in this publication, other than those clearly in the public domain, are fictitious and any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely accidental.

The above is a standard declaration of the kind often found in the preface pages of novels. It has been copied here directly from the front matter of Mark Behr's (2000) novel *Embrace*, where it appears in a font small enough to create reading difficulty even for those with reasonably good eyesight. There are no doubt important legal reasons for this kind of statement, yet there seem to be senses in which it cannot be true. The latter possibility is of considerable interest in the pragmatics of fiction; it goes to the very definition of fiction.

Mark Behr was a South African author. He was born in Tanzania (formerly Tanganyika) in 1963 and relocated with his parents to South Africa as a child. His family were bilingual in Afrikaans and English, although they spoke mainly Afrikaans at home. His father worked as a game ranger in Natal Province (now KwaZulu Natal, or KZN), where Mark spent part of his childhood. He attended the elite music school located in the Drakensberg mountains, home of the world-renowned Drakensberg Boys Choir, in which he performed. In the 1990s Behr publicly revealed certain facts about his own life. The one set of facts concerned his recruitment and practice as a spy for the apartheid regime on its opponents, particularly students at the University of Stellenbosch, where he was himself a student. He apparently turned double agent later after becoming friends with left-leaning students. He also came out as gay. Both sets of revelations were made around the time of the publication of his first novel. He died in 2015.

The central character of *Embrace*, and subject of its first-person narrative, is a boy named Karl De Man. The narrative oscillates between two periods of Karl's life. One period is his childhood in various parts of KZN, the most idyllic parts of which are spent on the game farm where his father is a game ranger. These parts of the novel are described with both a warm affection for his parents and siblings and a considerable amount of painful memory.

As a narrator Karl is troubled and perplexed at times by the paternalistic and casual racism of his family. At times this seems to him the natural order of things—the derogatory term *kaffir* is used by the whole family, including Karl himself, for black people—and at other times he becomes much more ambivalent. This ambivalence intensifies during his time at school in the Drakensberg, where he becomes acquainted with other social and political views, especially the liberal views of his closest friend there. This racism is not condemned by the narrator, who is after all an older version of Karl, but it is portrayed as increasingly troubling to the young Karl. The other troubling factor in Karl's home life concerns the attempts of his family to curb some of his effeminate tendencies and to make him into a "more manly" rugby-loving youth.

Scene shifts and time shifts are techniques used regularly in the novel. The most important time shifts occur between Karl's childhood on the one hand and his youth as he approaches and reaches puberty on the other. These two time periods are shown as the early 1970s and the mid to late 1970s respectively. The most important scene shifts are between Karl at home and Karl at school, and these coincide to a great extent with the broad time shifts just mentioned. However, there are also scene shifts within these time periods that correspond with narrower time shifts; these are mainly accounts of Karl's visits home during his school holidays. The school of course is in the Drakensberg and is the seat of the Drakensberg Boys Choir, in which Karl performs. The school and the choir are revealed as a hotbed of pubescent homosexual activity. Karl has two simultaneous sexual relationships while there, one with the best friend mentioned above and the other with his choirmaster. A major part of the dramatic tension in the novel concerns the question of whether these two affairs will be kept secret from the school and also from each other.

The narrative time periods are clearly coordinated with actual African history, through events and personages mentioned, such as the land nationalisation in Tanganyika in 1964, the Soweto uprising of 1976, the Prime Ministership of B. J. Vorster, and numerous cultural references, such as the hit songs of Abba, the belated advent of television in South Africa, the programming with which it began, etc. What is also achieved by these various references, however, is that the events of Karl's life are coordinated exactly with the chronology of Mark Behr's own life. In 1970 Behr was seven and in 1976 thirteen years old. This is the same as Karl's ages in those years.

It is thus clear that in certain respects the declaration concerning the similarity with real persons being "purely accidental" cannot be taken at face value. It is a legalistic declaration, the precise meanings and purposes of which need not detain us here. For our purposes, what it amounts to is an instruction that the novel should be *taken as* fiction, that this is its illocutionary force, so to speak. It should not be taken as a declaration by the author as some sort of denial of his own answerability, of the fact that events in the novel resemble very closely events in his own life, which, given his own public revelations, would be beyond plausibility. But, paradoxically, the declaration may also provide protection for the author in the event of a legal challenge from some or other "real person". This paradox is one that illustrates some of the sophistication that has become inherent in the publication of fiction.

Nevertheless, *Embrace* is not an autobiography as such, it is a novel. Nor could it be fairly described as an autobiography posing (more or less dishonestly) as a novel. The issue of similarity between a fictional world and the actual world is one of universal applicability in fiction. The case being discussed just now is notable in the similarity of detail between the fictional and actual worlds, but this does not mean that *every* detail is somehow identical or even similar. The force of the declaration of fictionality is such that the author is not required to "tell the truth" about these matters even though they may be rather obviously based on his own experiences. It can be argued that all works of fiction must in some way be based on experiences of the author, no matter how obliquely.

But what then of the argument that fiction is not only characterised by a freedom from obligation to tell the truth about the actual world, but also by a freedom to narrate matters that would be otherwise impossible to narrate? If Karl De Man is based very closely on the model of Mark Behr himself, is the latter not thereby able to narrate any or every single aspect of his own life under cover of another name? What might prevent this? There are two kinds of constraint that have a bearing here. One of them relates to ethics and the other to aesthetics. Only the second involves an impossibility.

Taking the ethical issue first, this is related to the legal matters already mentioned. Although Behr does not name actual individuals as characters in *Embrace*, he certainly does name the Drakensberg Boys Choir School, which many years later is still in existence and still celebrated. One of the prominent themes in the novel is the secrecy relating to homosexual activity in an institutional context of that kind, and the damage that could be done to the reputation of the school and choir by disclosure of said activity,

particularly within conservative society. This is a theme *in* this novel, but it has a bearing on the novel's place in society as well. There is no way of saying which, if any, of the specific acts in the novel actually happened, or happened in quite the ways that are described. The author's answerability does not require these details of disclosure. This is an ethical and legal constraint. While an author would know that a reader is likely to interpret the events described as being similar to actual events, he also has the security of knowing that this matter remains undecidable to the reading public. The school for its part could not challenge the author, who is protected by the cited declaration and the conventions of fictionality. Answerability and security are thus balanced in a *generic* manner.

Among several aesthetic constraints on disclosure there is one that involves the hardness of intractability, which separates fiction from biography and other factual genres, even while in other respects there are undoubtedly imprecise boundaries between genres. Aesthetically an author is constrained to maintain a satisfying flow or rhythm in the revelatory narrative, such as a reading public would expect from an accomplished work of fiction. It would not do, for example, for an author only to repeat verbatim the actual words of remembered dialogues, or to relate only remembered particulars. Memory is just not a sufficient resource for the aesthetic function. And what of thoughts and impressions in the author's own life that were not put into words at the time but must now be rendered verbally? And are remembered thoughts and impressions propositional in form? It is surely the case that the reader of fiction grants to a fictional first-person narrator a precision of memory that may be doubted of the narrator of an autobiography. This is another instance of the licence that a reader grants to fiction, rather like the licence in cases of third-person transcendent narrative.

In fact, it is precisely on the basis of claims of memories made by authors of autobiographies, that scepticism is sometimes expressed by their readers. This raises the interesting thought that perhaps most autobiographies contain some elements of fiction, while, as we have seen in the case of *Embrace*, much fiction contains elements of biography and autobiography. In accepting this interesting overlap, while nevertheless maintaining the distinction between fiction and non-fiction, we will look later at the example of Julian Barnes's recent biographical novel about Dmitri Shostakovich, *The Noise of Time*, as the kind of work that raises just these sorts of issues. But let me first illustrate some of the points already made with two extracts from *Embrace*. One is from Karl's childhood in the early part of the book, and one from his adolescence in a later chapter, bearing in mind though that the novel alternates between these two periods virtually throughout. The

point is to identify those manifested techniques that help us to distinguish between the acts of writing fiction and writing biography.

> Because Jonas and Boy are kaffirs and kaffirs don't know anything. Bok must take care of them. Kaffirs are dangerous. Kaffirs are stupid. Thick like pap and their lips. They also stink because they never bath. Kaffirs are also niggers and wogs and houtkoppe and boys and baboons and Afs and natives and Zulus and Muntus and Sothos and Xhosas and the picaninnies hang rocks on their filafoois to make them long like black mambas. Bokkie doesn't allow Jonas and Boy into the house they must wait outside. Me and Lena go to the hut and sit and drink magou with the boys and they teach me the drums and we sing with the drums and how to cut wood for masks and statues. I love Jonas best. Jonas is best on the drums. Jonas teaches me to sing 'Thashi igabane'. I love Boy too. Boy carries me on his shoulders and his hair is like Lossie's feathers and he smells like fire and grass and if I fall asleep he carries me home. Boy is strong and looks after Bokkie when Bok's away on elephant patrols or chasing the poachers. When Bok's away on Save the White Rhino then Boy sleeps with the gun outside the kitchen wall so we can call him if something happens. In the bush the kaffirs know their place. In town Uncle Michael says the Munts are getting restless like in Tanganyika. (2000, 69)

What is the purpose of the first-person monologue here? The shocking first part of the extract is clearly not offered as speech, although it undoubtedly mimics a certain speech style. It suggests how adult racist speech has been internalised by the childhood Karl in an "undigested" form, that is, sans logical reflection. Every common racist proposition is reproduced in Karl's thinking. In revealing the nature of some of Karl's thoughts, the nature of the adult world is also revealed, not only the fictional world, but also the actual world known by the author. So, there is multi-functionality at work in this simple form of speech. There is even a suggestion of how racist stereotypes are reproduced in the way that adults explicitly propagate myths to children. It may be that the myth of the artificially lengthened penis has been told by male adult to male child as a form of amusement, but internalised as literal truth.

The sentence in the middle of the extract *Bokkie doesn't allow …*, marks a change in the passage away from representing internal states of consciousness to observation. Bokkie is Karl's mother; she doesn't allow the blacks into their house. Yet Karl and his sister are free to visit them in their abode and even to drink a traditional beverage with them. But most striking is the way in which the second half of the extract contrasts with the first.

The change in style and its continuity are significant. The continuity lies in the maintenance of the present tense and the childlike simplicity of grammatical expression, but a change in its function occurs: from the description of ingrained thoughts to an account of habits. The habits appear to contradict the thoughts against which they are juxtaposed. The sentences become longer and the active agency of the blacks is stressed together with the passivity of Karl himself. The child has no qualms about closeness with the black workers, learns from them and even expresses love, but with a childlike inability to work through the contradiction that this implies, or the difference between himself and his parents. The learning of arts, especially music from Jonas, is significant in the context of the novel, because of the way that Karl goes on to become a musical prodigy, with no apparent influence from his parents in that regard.

There is no doubt whatsoever of the role that similar contradictions played in the life and *Bildung* of the author himself. A reader familiar with some details concerning the latter—of course not all Behr's readers are thus informed—would be impelled to sense the author's strategy: a fictionalised working out of the contradictions of his own life and growth in this mode of discourse. It is fictionalised in the obvious sense that the author takes no responsibility for any kind of factual veracity or accuracy of any reported detail, nor any suggestion that these thoughts somehow occurred exactly as represented (given also that they are indeed FID-type *representations*, rather than the thoughts themselves). Nevertheless, he remains answerable (i.e. open to criticism) for the representation of inner life and for descriptions that he knows can be recognised as based on his own experiences. The FID constructions consist in the fact that there is no "I thought that …" or "I felt that …", which would create a reflective distance between the adult Karl-narrator figure and his childhood. Instead the representations have a feeling of directness to them, of immediacy, a sure sign of fictionality at a technical level. One has a sense of the author grappling with the question—"how did a mind like mine work at that age?"—and finding these generic ways of answering it.

Once one has accepted the contradictions expressed, the last sentence of the extract comes as something of a startling pseudo-resolution. Boy looks after them all when Karl's father is away, but this is because the blacks *know their place* in the country, unlike in the city, implying that the former is the authentic way for things to be. This will not be a satisfactory explanation of the racial situation for Karl de Man, nor did it turn out to be so for Mark Behr himself.

Let us contrast the above passage with another much later in this long novel:

'Would you like to see this institution's name dragged through the mud?'

'No, Sir.'

'Then let us make a pact. That neither you nor I will ever speak about this outside these four walls.' Mathison looked at the boy with a face again become friendly, inviting Karl to trust.

'Yes, Sir.'

'So everything will be just the way it is. Right?' He nods, prodding the boy to agreement. From outside comes the twittering of sparrows and from the distance the gurgling of turkeys. It is almost dawn. 'We will not make a scandal,' Mathison continues. 'So that the newspapers will not destroy what is a sacred and national treasure of our country.' Again he waits for his words to sink in. Karl nods. 'And, so you will go on as if nothing happened, right?'

'You will not do anything to `Mr Cilliers, Sir?'

Mathison casts his eyes around the room. 'You just leave that to me, right? That is an issue that has nothing to do with you, right?'

'Yes, Mr Mathison. But if everything is to be the same then Mr Cilliers will be the same. Like he won't be fired and he'll still be the senior conductor, Sir?'

'What is important here is that you don't want to cause damage to this school and neither do I. We will not do anything to do damage to the institution.' An extended pause, before he says, 'I am extremely proud of you, Karl. You must trust me. Do you?

'Only if you promise not to do anything to Mr Cilliers, Sir.'

Mathison seems agitated. 'I give you my word of honour that I will do nothing to that man that may hurt this institution. Okay?'

'Yes, Sir.'

'And you will now give me your word of honour that you will never repeat to anyone, for as long as you live, what you have told me here tonight?'

'I promise, Mr Mathison. I give you my word of honour.' (2000, 671)

The switch to third-person narrative seen above comes only in Section V, the shortest section, more than 600 pages into the novel. It represents the period in which Karl says good-bye to the music school and closes a chapter

in his life. *The boy* is seen as a young man facing adulthood. We have been privy to all his secret experiences and thoughts. Here we look at him in a more objective way, as someone who has been learning of the ways in which the adult world works, the world in which he must, as any grown-up, find his place in the ethical scheme of things, and perhaps make his compromises as a man of *honour*. The late switch to third-person narrative in *Embrace* coincides with a switch from revelation of both Karl's secret life and the revelation of the famous Drakensberg school's secret life to a thematisation of the latter. It is as if a key function of fiction is itself being made explicit in the above passage, in effect demonstrating that fiction reveals private life of characters and actual people and institutions in ways that must be sometimes prevented in other genres of communication. Karl must promise his principal that he will not disclose what has transpired involving himself and one of the senior teachers. Mark Behr must also not disclose this actuality, *except* in the manner of fiction and under the protection of the declaration of fictionality that I quoted at the beginning of this subsection. Behr's novel, and the above extract in particular, illustrates one of the more important reasons why fiction involves an oblique path to truth. This seems to get to the essence of its functionality.

While it may make very little difference to any given reader of Behr's novel to know the facts of his biography and the ways in which *Embrace* is based on it, it does illustrate one of the ways in which the fictional and actual worlds relate to one another. This is actually of interest to certain readers, those who have an interest in authors and the ways in which they have turned their life experiences into fiction. As I have suggested, it is also the case, for both ethical and aesthetic reasons, that Behr could in all probability *not* have written this novel as a straight autobiography. Thus, it has, as a condition of its possibility, that his life be written under the legal and ethical cover of fictionality, yet remain faithful to his own memories and experiences. Literature and life are never entirely separate in the agon of fictional authorship, and the precise manner of their entwinement in different cases may well be a source of fascination to certain readers. Let me mention a less straightforward example than one that simply overrides the legalistic disavowal of its autobiographical nature, Coetzee's *Summertime*.

A note on an autobiographical novel

By way of conclusion to this chapter, it is worth considering briefly a novel that lies at the border between fiction and non-fiction, as a way of clarifying further what it is that we mean by fiction and what it is that authors set out

to do in fiction. The works in question are regarded as novels because they employ the techniques of fiction even while they relate matters that are factual, that is, which show a point-for-point verisimilitude with the facts of a certain individual's life, including the character's actual name. However, since the work is being read as fiction—itself a generic act—departures from the factual may be tolerated.

The techniques involved are the techniques of revelation of the kind already discussed, in which matters that are hidden to one character, but perhaps not to others, or matters that are hidden only from the reader, are finally disclosed. But how does this work when the central character is an actual person? We have seen in Mark Behr's novel discussed above, that the autobiographical element in the novel is denied at one level (the legalistic), even while it is apparent to anyone who has even a passing familiarity with facts of Behr's own life. This is one kind of paradox of the biographical work of fiction. There are other kinds that will be discussed, including those in the case that is mentioned immediately below. The key to understanding these paradoxes lies in the nature of revelation. It is not a simple question of "true story vs. fiction", but rather the revelation of matters that cannot normally be revealed. This is the defining feature of fiction, not that it is always doing this, but rather that it alone *can* do this. This applies no less when the characters are actual people than when they are purely fictional. It can also be argued, as I do, that in all of fiction there is something of the actual world in it, most importantly in the author's attitude towards some milieu of the actual world.

J. M. Coetzee's autobiographical work *Summertime* is a particularly bold initiative in this regard, in that the author takes upon himself what certainly seems an impossible level of answerability: to represent through fictional techniques the ways in which he himself has been perceived by individuals who have known him in his life. He is portrayed in the novel as having died and an English biographer is working on his life by interviewing the people who knew him.

These persons are fictionalised; they have a dual ontological status, as both fictional characters and, one assumes, as actual individuals (that Coetzee, the author, remembers). To complicate matters further the overall "narrator" is the (fictional) biographer who is working on a period of Coetzee's life; he reports verbatim what the other character narrators (presumed to be actual people) tell him about *John Coetzee*, whom they knew during the period in which the biographer is interested. The text is made up of fragments of this biographer's work in progress. Furthermore, in the process

Coetzee himself is also fictionalized, for example in the very fact that the *John Coetzee* at the centre of the novel is said to have died.

As many of Coetzee's works do, *Summertime* poses ethical problems—and the answerability question arises in this way: is it permissible to represent the subjective life of one's acquaintances, both intimate and professional, while placing oneself at the centre of their narratives? Is it permissible to play fast and loose with genres, so that the ostensible facts may all become doubted? To what extent, then, are these named people actual individuals? Why does it matter, if it does? As a *Guardian* reviewer noted:

> It isn't clear, and probably shouldn't matter, whether or not the interviewees have direct real-life counterparts. If they do, the novelist does at least appear to have changed their names, in some cases more than once; Coetzee's cousin in *Boyhood*, Agnes, becomes Margot in *Summertime*. (Jones 2009, no pag.)

Jones describes Coetzee's book as both "anti-allegorical" and "anti-autobiographical" due to some of its perplexing aspects, and goes on to suggest that a central part of Coetzee's purpose is an ethical questioning of why it is that the life of a famous novelist should be of more interest than the lives of the people who have known him, given their memories of him as a rather ordinary and unremarkable human being. Yet readers are interested in authors and they read their biographies even if, as in this case, they get somewhat more than they bargained for, a measure of perplexity included.

What Coetzee does in this novel, amongst other things, is to foreground the notion that revelation in fiction is concerned with the disclosure of that which cannot normally be known, and not necessarily with the creation of a non-factual world. What is fictional in this work is not the imaginative creation of a character, John Coetzee but the fictional revelation of thoughts and memories of those who might have known him, the actual John Coetzee. Secondly, there is also a genuine innovation in regard to the narrator question. This narration occurs in a question and answer format: the questions of the fictional biographer and the lengthy replies of the interviewees, which constitute the bulk of the narrative. Thirdly, this work draws attention to the problematic nature of the boundary between fiction and non-fiction and indeed it raised the speculative question of whether there is not always an element of fiction in both fiction and non-fiction, a question that seems to resound with philosophical implications.

What I have sought to do in the first three chapters of this book is to mention certain interesting aspects of fictional discourse, making use of certain

philosophical signposts to highlight them, including the agon of fictional authorship. In doing so I have not presented a theoretical framework, although I have certainly pointed to the need for one that differs from mainstream pragmatics. It has been my intention to move towards the formulation of such a framework over the course of the last three chapters, one that, it is hoped, can generate explanations for the phenomena that have been identified.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE AGON OF FICTIONAL AUTHORSHIP

What is substantial in fiction?

The Theory of the Novel by Georg Lukács, even while it has been often praised during the century after it was written, has seldom been used as a landmark reference point in discussions of fiction, especially not in what has become known as literary theory, let alone in pragmatics. It is more often associated with philosophy, and indeed it reads very much in the manner of Germanic philosophical discourse of its time, that is, pre-World War I. There are, however, some real nuggets of insight to be found amidst the turgid prose of this work, despite the fact that Lukács more or less disowned it himself at later stages. We will pay some attention to those insights, particularly those concerning the ethical in fiction.

Another work from the same Germanic tradition that can also help us to find a starting point in answering the question posed by the above heading is Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. If it is true that the process of Enlightenment is seen as an emergence from mythical thought, and indeed as a further succession of oppositions, opposition to medieval Christian thought for example, then two related points seem to be important for this study: (a) that fiction, as we have come to know it, emerges as co-extensive in time with the process of Enlightenment; (b) that fiction concerns itself with substantially the same subject matter as rational ethics. Although some attention will need to be paid to the question of "fiction as we have come to know it," we can perhaps make a beginning by considering how the novel is to be distinguished from those narrative genres that appear to have an irreducibly pre-Enlightenment character—even while allowing for Enlightenment as a very long historical process—and also by considering how ethical visions of humanity have been variously presented during this process. To put it simply then, the proposition that is to be explored here concerns the substance of fiction as ethical. This, in its variability, will have implications for form and style, an aspect that will be addressed especially in the next chapter. Let us proceed with some

observations from Lukács, bearing in mind the significance of Enlightenment as mentioned.

"The epic individual, the hero of the novel, is the product of estrangement from the outside world." By contrast, the hero of the epic "is never an individual." (Lukács 1971, 66) This is because "the omnipotence of ethics, which posits every soul as autonomous and incomparable, is still unknown in such a world," although one might add, following Bakhtin, that some of its roots may already be discernible in antiquity, in Hellenistic fiction. I will not attempt to date the emergence of the novel simplistically, by naming "the first novel" for instance, but rather to follow Bakhtin's own thought of *novelisation* as a process. We will also see in due course that this process has its discontents, such as Nietzsche. However, to characterise novelistic fiction as a distinct art form it is perhaps worth looking at it in its more advanced forms, that is, as it appears to us in modernity and especially in contrast to antiquity.

> Art always says 'And yet!' to life. The creation of forms is the most profound confirmation of a dissonance. But in all other genres—even, for reasons we can now understand, in the epic—this affirmation of a dissonance precedes the act of form-giving, whereas in the novel it is the form itself. That is why the relationship between ethics and aesthetics in the creative process of the novel is different from what it is in other kinds of literature. There, ethic is a purely formal pre-condition which, by its depth, allows the form-determined essence to be attained and, by its breadth, renders possible a totality which is likewise determined by the form and which, by its all-embracing nature, establishes a balance between the constituent elements—a balance for which 'justice' is only a term in the language of pure ethics. In the novel on the other hand, ethic—the *ethical intention*—is visible in the creation of every detail and hence is, in its most concrete content, an effective structural element of the work itself. (Lukács 1971, 72 [emphasis added])

One way of approaching this ethical intention, which has the potential to serve as a central concept for the pragmatics of fiction, and for the agon of authorship in general, is through the examination of character. In the later works of Lukács he made some important contributions to this through his notion of the character as *type*, this typifying being an expression of an author's *perspective*. These later works suffered, however, from a simplifying tendency, under the influence of Lukács's hardened political project, in particular his determination to raise to a level of artistic supremacy his own concept of realism in fiction, in which the character as type was overwhelmingly representative of a *class*, and the author in turn was someone who had a "class perspective". Elsewhere I have attempted to go

beyond this notion of characterisation and its role in realism (Wood 2011), by elaborating to a limited extent Lukács's notion of type, and adding certain nuances without thereby departing from it, a project which I would like to take further in this chapter. I think that that begins with some further attention to the ethical as it applies to fiction.

One problem that Lukács already raises in *The Theory of the Novel* concerns the apparently troubling question of the novel as popular literature. His approach to this is to concede that "the novel is the most hazardous genre" and that in fact that "it has been described as only half a genre by many who equate *having a problematic* with *being problematic*." While there is nothing to trouble the philosophical consciousness in having a problematic—this could even be interpreted as the novel's strength—the real problem for Lukács is seen in his claim that the novel, alone among genres, "has a caricatural twin, almost indistinguishable from itself in all inessential formal characteristics–the entertainment novel." (1972, 73) Certainly the novel *is* a hazardous genre if it depends on dividing from itself those which are mere imitations of itself, and especially if the novel is the only one among genres to face this problem. However, it needs to be said that from the point of view of pragmatics this question does not arise in the same way at all. The judgment of whether a text is a novel or a caricature of a novel, on the basis of criteria said to be essential, is of course something that readers do perform. For us this general fact, as a source of empirical data, is more important than the specific judgment that some individual reader (or critic) may arrive at.

Lukács appears as something of an apologist in the way he goes about making this distinction. Perhaps what creates the "hazard" (of potential embarrassment, one suspects) in the genre is the operation of its revelatory function, which is inherent to the novel and no doubt contributes greatly to its entertainment value, through the blockage of disclosure (suspense, etc.) and then its satisfying release. But if that is so, then we do not have a clear distinction amongst fictional works, but rather a continuum from those with a serious ethical purpose to those that have almost none of it. But also, as Bakhtin has shown, the ethical dimension, insofar as it is present, has included the possibility of a bland and uncritical reflection of prevailing ideology since its ancient origins. To be sure, in the modern novel of entertainment and pleasurable diversion it is the revelatory function that dominates, but this does not mean that the ethical dimension is absent, as we have seen in the case of Raymond Chandler. The axiological questions of good and evil, normal and abnormal, attraction and repulsion, respectability and its various opposites, are very much present in all of popular literature,

including those works intended for children, and thus Lukács's solution will on the face of it not do for us. It needs to be shown that the revelatory function and the ethical are always co-present and intertwined in the genre, albeit at different levels of sophistication, effectiveness and seriousness.

What, no doubt, critics such as Lukács deplore in popular literature are the banal value propositions that certain works may advance. However, Lukács has also provided us with the notion via which we may approach this question in a more analytical manner, that of ethical intention. This is a notion that can and should be embraced within pragmatics, although this is not presently the case. What needs to be established is not only the variability of this ethical intention in fiction but also how the formal nature of literary fiction allows for it and is in turn shaped by it. What if it is post-Enlightenment modernity itself that has fostered, through the opening up of private worlds, the diversity of critical intention in fiction, not only in its breadth but also from high to low? This would accord with the demonstrations of ethical homogeneity shown by Bakhtin in the ancient and medieval proto-novelistic genres, and by Lukács himself in regard to epic and tragedy; whereas in fiction "as we have come to know it" on the other hand, this heterogeneity is normalised and adapted to the individualism and the varying forms of curiosity in society. This is what is "problematic" in all senses of the word, and thus the source of substantial interest in fiction, the question being how this ethical heterogeneity is achieved, both generically and in a singular manner.

It is not clear what the author of *The Theory of the Novel* would have made of recent crime fiction, whether or not he would have regarded it as caricatural. What we can observe though is that the genre of detective fiction has, in its own formal methods of presenting private life, a certain predisposition towards ethical judgment. Let us reconsider social types as they appear in the Raymond Chandler novel introduced in the last chapter, *The Long Good-Bye* (*TLG*). We notice that it is possible for character types, as in much popular literature, to be of the nature of stereotypes rather than dynamic or many-sided, but that this does not preclude ethical concerns.

> There is no doubt that many people in reality seem like stereotypes, because conventional patterns do exist and do offer a structure of response to life, but this is not what Chandler has in mind. He is content to offer simple, two-dimensional characters as the reality that Marlowe faces *and judges so firmly*. Neither Marlowe nor Chandler investigates why and how characters may have become stereotypical, nor does the narrative imagination go so far as to discover that each person in fact moulds a different conjuncture of patterns and pressures. (Knight 1980, 146 [emphasis added])

The critical point that is made here by Knight no doubt intersects to some extent with Lukács's concerns about the novel of entertainment as caricatural. What Knight appears to seek in fiction is a notion of the ethical which is less judgmental and more insightful. Let us look at a more venerable philosophical treatment of the same topic from a source that no doubt Lukács would have approved of, a short early essay by Hegel called "Who thinks abstractly?" Let us consider the example given there which concerns a murderer being led to the place of execution. The general populace is outraged that certain ladies witnessing this remark that the man nevertheless looks handsome and interesting. The outrageous nature of these remarks turns around the question of how it is that someone who has murdered could possibly be seen to have these positive qualities. But Hegel goes on to explain:

> One who knows men traces the development of the criminal's mind: he finds in his history, in his education, a bad family relationship between his father and mother, some tremendous harshness after this human being had done some minor wrong, so he became embittered against the social order—a first reaction to this that in effect expelled him and henceforth did not make it possible for him to preserve himself except through crime.—There may be people who will say when they hear such things: he wants to excuse this murderer! After all I remember how in my youth I heard a mayor lament that writers of books were going too far and sought to extirpate Christianity and righteousness altogether; somebody had written a defense of suicide; terrible, really too terrible!—Further questions revealed that *The Sufferings of Werther* were meant.

> This is abstract thinking: to see nothing in the murderer except the abstract fact that he is a murderer, and to annul all other human essence in him with this simple quality. (Hegel 1966, no pag.)

Thinking abstractly here means seeing a person in terms of a single category, such as murder or suicide. Hegel characteristically suggests that more concrete thinking involves seeing greater complexity in an object or person, so that ethical judgments are formed with due consideration of context, in particular the circumstances and history within which the character and behaviour of an individual has been shaped. The "two-dimensional" characters criticised by Knight and alleged to be common in Chandler, as well as in other popular fiction, perhaps receives further explanation here. What is particularly relevant in the Hegel quotation is the reference to Goethe's novel, which suggests a split in perceptions about what is proper as subject matter in fiction, and as ethical stance in regard to such subject matter.

Without ourselves making judgments on this matter, let us accept the data suggesting that authors and readers will have diverse ethical preferences. The question for us concerns how it is that such judgments *can* be made in the first place. Let us consider a statement that goes further than Hegel's, the following from Žižek:

> An ethical act is one that does not comprise or express the entire person, but is a moment of grace, a "miracle" which can occur also in a non-virtuous individual. This is why such acts are difficult to imagine, and why, when they do occur, one often tends to invent a narrative which normalises them. (2013, 122)

There is much in this short snippet of wisdom, concerning as it does the elusive nature of the ethical. The ethical is not straightforward, it is problematic or "difficult to imagine", but precisely therefore it may be the only substantial element that makes fiction worth *serious* consideration. Secondly, the substantiality of the ethical in this view is inseparable from the revelatory function of fiction. Can the ethical in its fully problematic nature be satisfactorily presented to us through any art outside of fictional narrative? This is a question at least worth considering, since the dialectic of concealment and disclosure, over *time*, seems to make fiction so perfectly suited to the problematic nature of the ethical, which, it is suggested, resides at the core of the agon of authorship in those writers that can be considered serious. Consider the following again from Žižek:

> Morality is concerned with the symmetry of my relations to other humans; its zero-level rule is "do not do to me what you do not want me to do to you." Ethics, in contrast, deals with my consistency in relation to myself, my fidelity to my own desire. (2013, 124)

While this might appear to contradict the previous Žižek quotation—fidelity to desire could itself be sporadic rather than consistent—it does set up a nice paradox for us to explore in regard to fiction in the remainder of this chapter. Do we expect consistency from our characters or do we want to be ethically surprised by them? Are the consistently virtuous (moral) characters the more admirable or not? What about practitioners of *immoralist ethics*–are these to be consigned to the roles of villains or can they be our heroes? Such questions abound in considerations of literature. Žižek mentions in this regard Nietzsche's admiration for Bizet's *Carmen*, the heroine of which is "ruthlessly promiscuous, ruining men's lives, destroying families," Nietzsche being "the great philosopher of immoralist ethics" (2013, 124).

A particularly clear statement of immoralist ethics is found near the end of John Fowles's novella, *The Ebony Tower*. The character David has been spending a couple of days with the aging, irascible and plainly immoral artist Henry Breasley in the Brittany retreat that he shares with two young women, who attend to some of his needs and pleasures. David is to write a book about Breasley and his art. But David has been drawn close to one of the young women by a rapid process of mutual attraction. His proposal to sleep with her, however, has been thwarted by scruples of her own, which in the context are baffling to him. When driving back to Paris, where he will meet up with his wife, his reflections approach the point of a personal crisis. His risk-free and domesticated life, as well as his own modernist and tasteful art, seems to him to pale—ethically—in comparison to the life and work of the old man. This bitter realisation is presented mostly in FID:

> Coët had been a mirror, and the existence he was returning to sat mercilessly reflected and dissected in its surface … and how shabby it now looked, how insipid and anodyne, how safe. Riskless, that was the essence of it: was why, for instance, he was driving much faster than usual. Between the towns the roads were comparatively empty, he was making ample time, the wretched plane didn't land till after seven. One killed all risk, one refused all challenge, and so one became an artificial man. The old man's secret, not letting anything stand between self and expression; which wasn't a question of outward artistic aims, mere styles and techniques and themes. But how you did it; how wholly, how bravely you faced up to the. constant recasting of yourself.
>
> Slowly and inexorably it came to David that his failure that previous night was merely the symbol, not the crux of the matter. (1999, 109)

The satisfaction that arises from being led by narrative to some revelation of an unknown corner of the soul, as it were, or to search in fascination for a key to the heroic desiring of "flawed" characters, helps us to explain why there has been such wide and enthusiastic readership of fiction for centuries. Let us note some permutations in passing: a virtuous individual can perform ethically abhorrent acts and a *consistently* virtuous (or consistently evil) person can probably not make a compelling fictional character. Consider why it is that, say, Jay Gatsby or Emma Bovary make such memorable characters, why it is that we are prepared to consider their lives in contemplation and indeed in repeated readings of the works in which they appear?

Can there be a better illustration of this ethical problem than the comparison of *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*, particularly the character of the grotesque mad woman of Brontë, who is also the beautiful and tragic heroine

of Rhys? In *JE* Antoinette is presented as a finished product in her madness, but the product of what? Brontë leaves this matter entirely ambiguous, as if the character is ethically empty, serving only the purposes of gothic-romantic imagination. There are suggestions that she is mad from a moral depravity, which just happened, through bad fortune, to rub off onto Rochester for a time, but from which he is later redeemed through his trial by ordeal. Sometimes there is even a quasi-genetic suggestion, that Antoinette is part of a line of some inherited morbidity, perhaps the sort of thing one encounters as a hazard of travelling to barbaric and faraway places that a Jane and an Emily Brontë know nothing about and are unable to conceive of ethically. People there might simply be other than "we" are, due the nature of their environment.

The contrast between *JE* and *WSS* is stark and central to Rhys's ethical intention. In her portrayal, Rochester is no more admirable than Antoinette, in fact less so, since he appears as an instrument of the very forces that debased both Antoinette and her mother: colonialism, slavery, racism, patriarchy, class snobbery, and the relation of all of these to damaging effects of wealth and status. In her arranged marriage to the aristocratic Rochester, Antoinette's fate is sealed: a girl whose creole background has already made her the social inferior of Rochester and the object also of black people's contempt and occasional hatred, whose intellectual limitations cannot help her to rise above her historical situation, which could only have been brought about through love, exactly what Rochester is incapable of providing her. Our sympathy, as invoked in *WSS*, is a kind of anachronistic criticism of the literary world of Emily Brontë, who had to endure the criticism in her own time of being insufficiently Christian in her negative portrayals of certain moral characters and types. Surely the point here is that once we have become aware as readers of historical phenomena that were unknown to or only very imperfectly grasped by earlier authors, we read them in a different way. And this is surely the way in which Jean Rhys encourages us to return to *JE* and to reread it.

What sort of act is this on her part? Is it not the case that she has performed an act that is only an extreme case—because more explicit—of what happens in all acts of authorship, thereby bringing its ethical nature into sharper focus? If after reading *WSS* we simply cannot regard *JE* in the same way that we did before then this illustrates an ethical point regarding the agon of authorship: the act of the author is not merely the continuation of a tradition, adding to it a new text within the parameters of a received genre, or, in a more revolutionary way to invent some new variation on a genre, a new subgenre, or the like. In other words, the intention cannot be merely

illocutionary. What the author does is perform a retroactive act whereby the works of the past are themselves changed. Their significance is not fixed for all time; a new work changes what came before. To write *now* in the style and sentiment of Brontë would produce a work that takes on an aspect of naivety or kitsch, because the time for that kind of work being regarded as serious fiction has passed, not because Brontë was not original or authentic when she wrote—the nature of some of the criticism she received, and her responses to it, are testament to this—but because we now see her work in the light of what has appeared and happened since. To try to reproduce it now would be seen as an inauthentic act of authorship, lacking in the agonistic aspect that a literary readership might expect. This is a deeply ethical aspect of authorship, not a mere stylistic or technical evolution. Rhys's novel demonstrates to us how it is that "in the dialectical analysis of history … each new 'stage' 'rewrites the past' and retroactively de-legitimises the previous one." (Žižek 2013, 219) It is possible for us now to describe *JE* in ways that its author and its original readership would scarcely have comprehended, as a work that legitimised British colonialism, slavery, the aristocracy and arranged marriages for financial ends. Such a possibility is of course not solely due to Rhys, but her radicality lies in making the nature of such insights more explicit, an entirely overt ethical stance. One might describe it as "meta-fictional".

But now, what sort of ethical stance can be taken in the oeuvre of a popular author such as Raymond Chandler? What one does find in Chandler are instances of social criticism, which are often found in the speech of various characters. This is from Lonnie Morgan, a journalist in *The Long Good-Bye*:

> "Newspapers are owned and published by rich men. Rich men all belong to the same club. Sure there's competition–hard tough competition for circulation, for newsbeats, for exclusive stories. Just so long as it doesn't damage the prestige and privilege and position of the owners. If it does, down comes the lid." (1989, 59)

Similarly, several statements in *TLG* point to an indistinguishability between crime and legitimate business. This is significant in the fact that while it blurs this distinction, it at the same time draws another, between ethics and the practice of law. The first of the following comes from a private detective, George Peters, and the second from the "good cop", Bernie Ohls:

> "That's the difference between crime and business. For business you gotta have capital. Sometimes I think it's the only difference." (1989, 160)

"There ain't no clean way to make a hundred million bucks," Ohls said. "Maybe the head man thinks his hands are clean but somewhere along the line guys got pushed to the wall, nice little businesses got the ground cut from under them and had to sell out for nickels, decent people lost their jobs, stocks got rigged on the market, proxies got bought up like a pennyweight of old gold, and the five per centers and the big law firms got paid hundred grand fees for beating some law the people wanted but the rich guys didn't, on account of it cuts into their profits. Big money is big power and big power gets used wrong. It's the system. Maybe it's the best we can get, but it still ain't my Ivory soap deal."

"You sound like a Red," I said just to needle him.

"I wouldn't know," he said contemptuously. "I ain't been investigated yet." (1989, 234)

The interesting point about all this and many other similar instances in this novel is that they are remarkably similar to one another in tone, style and content. They all represent the point of view of the cynical "small man". Yet they are ostensibly the utterances of a range of different characters, and even the millionaire Harlan Potter is made to say: "The average man is tired and scared, and a tired scared man can't afford ideals." (1989, 198) There is nothing to link any of these utterances to the specific character in each case, nor any indication in the novel why so many of its characters should be social critics. What we seem to have is "the word of another" invading the word of a character and that can only be the word of the author, who then becomes guilty of intermittent, and essentially monologic, *moralising*. Thus, the ethical enters Chandler's prose fiction as pronouncements made in the specific style and register of character speech.

If one is to apply the critique of "two-dimensional" characters to the points just made it would certainly not involve claims that Chandler's fiction is ethically empty. Rather it would turn around the point that the character types are relatively static rather than developing, and that the ethical is *reduced* to moralising that has no inherent connection to the character who is uttering the moral sentiments. This sort of criticism depends to some extent on unfavourable comparison to other sorts of modern novel, particularly those in which the ethical content emerges in the process of character development, and in which it is presented as problematic (in Lukács's sense) rather than presented monologically in the way that I have now described. One could perhaps say that the latter is one way in which the popular novel harks back to the adventure literature of the ancient and medieval periods. Adorno and Horkheimer point out that "Homer has been accused of prating both through his heroes' thoughts and in the narrative

interpolations." (1989, 68) This is clearly a longstanding tendency, and here it is worth a second glance at a piece of the extract from Coetzee that I commented on in Chapter 2:

> "I don't want to argue, Álvaro, but objectively speaking all that I do, all that we dockers do, is move stuff from point A to point B, one bag after another, day after day. If all our sweat were for the sake of some higher cause, it would be a different matter. But eating in order to live and living in order to eat—that is the way of the bacterium, not the …"
>
> "Not the what?"
>
> "Not the human being. Not the pinnacle of creation." (2014, 129)

Here too, in a novel of ideas, we have seen how ethical issues are posed by characters, where the issues raised are not seen as inhering in the character type in any discernible way. And we see it in a case that is even more removed from mimetic realism than the example of Chandler, so that the question of a "two-dimensionality" of the characters can scarcely even arise. What makes this viable in Coetzee's novel is the creation of a whole fictional world that bears no direct relationship to any part of the known world; it is allegorical, "a place of no place".

In order then to deal with the question of the ethical further it is necessary to pose the question of style, that is, the relationships of style to substance in various works. What I will do here is briefly trace certain stylistic developments in the history of the novel in which certain departures occur that take the novel beyond the basic adventure schema that we still see in Chandler. This is so that as we examine the ethical question further, that is, by viewing it in more recognisably modern guises, we do not lose the question of its inherent connection with style. Let us consider the two stylistic lines as discussed by Bakhtin (1988).

The first stylist line proceeds from the "sophistic novel" through the chivalric romance to the baroque novel. Its organising idea is that of the test of the hero, who is therefore static in his or her nobility. The second stylistic line proceeds from the everyday life through Rabelais to the picaresque novel. Its organising idea is that of travel, the path, and its earliest characters are rogues, clowns and fools. It approaches "heteroglossia" from below, so that there is a dialogue between high and low, in which the ennobled literary language of the first stylistic line is only one voice among contending voices. Bakhtin's thesis is that in the modern novel, from the nineteenth century on, the two are combined, with the second stylistic novel in dominance,

as the novel of character development. For example, in the novel of education, the hero may be tested, but he or she must become through travelling the path of life, and engaging, as part of this education with a number of different voices. Perhaps though, Chandler's work is in significant respects dominated by the first stylistic line, and in the light of this its ethical stance, its ideology one might say, is to be understood. Let us consider Bakhtin's remarks on the Baroque novel:

> Baroque novels branch in two directions (the same two branches of development characterise the First Line as a whole): one branch continues the adventure-heroic aspect of the Baroque novel (Lewis, Radcliffe, Walpole and others), while the other branch, the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century novel that is in large part epistolary (La Fayette, Rousseau, Richardson and others), is characterised by psychology and pathos … this latter type … has great stylistic significance for the subsequent history of the novel. (1988, 396)

Characteristics of the latter strand include: "a didactic approach to the moral choices of everyday life;" pathos "associated with the kind of privacy found in one's own room;" literary language that is "brought closer to the conversational norm," but conversation which is "still ordered and subjected to norms from the point of view of 'literariness'" (1988, 396-397). All of these characteristics are abundantly evident in *TLG*. We have seen some examples in Chandler of the moralising mentioned, and Chandler says regarding *TLG*, "I didn't care whether the mystery was fairly obvious, but I cared about the people, about this strange world we live in, and how any man who tried to be honest looks in the end either sentimental or plain foolish" (1988, 233). This is significant because part of the art of the detective thriller is precisely the dialectic of concealment and disclosure of the truth, as "suspense". Chandler appears to be saying that this is in fact subordinate to his ethical intention. Concerning his hero, he says: "If seeing dirt where there is dirt constitutes an inadequate social adjustment, then Phillip Marlowe has inadequate social adjustment" (1988, 232). Taking the two comments together, it becomes clear that the "truth" to be revealed is not merely the truth about the fictional world but about the actual world as well. The pathos in Chandler seems very closely linked to the moralism. Its private and sentimental aspects are abundantly evident in *TLG*. Marlowe's moral principles are revealed in details of his lonely and penniless life, and in the form of his first-person narrative, which takes the place of the inserted letter or diary of the earlier genres mentioned by Bakhtin.

Chandler's language is frequently a carefully wrought stylisation of low and vulgar speech, in which the latter is purged of extreme elements such as

obscenity, something it does *not* have in common with all crime fiction, especially later variants, such as the work of James Ellroy. So even when Bakhtin's second stylistic line is at its strongest in Chandler, in the frequent use of colloquialism, the first stylistic line is at work, converting the language into a consistent literary language, in both the narrator-speech of Marlowe and that of the other characters.

In Chandler the above characteristics are accompanied by a certain "naturalist" realism, a certain narrowing down from "high heroising pathos," as Bakhtin has it, to "the very deliberateness with which petty secondary everyday details are foregrounded," and he remarks that this empiricism "is accounted for by the polemical opposition to a literary style in the process of being rejected" (1988, 397-398). For example, it may be that Chandler reveals his own attitude to another popular genre, the historical romance through the rueful voice of his character, the writer, Roger Wade:

> He looked up at me and sneered. 'You know something? I'm a liar. My heroes are eight feet tall and my heroines have callouses on their bottoms from lying in bed with their knees up. Lace and ruffles, swords and coaches, elegance and leisure, duels and gallant death. All lies. They used perfume instead of soap, their teeth rotted because they never cleaned them, their fingernails smelled of stale gravy. The nobility of France urinated against the walls in the marble corridors of Versailles, and when you finally got several sets of underclothes off the lovely marquise the first thing you noticed was that she needed a bath. I ought to write it that way. (*TLG* 1989, 212)

Here we see the carefully controlled vulgarity and the concern with empirical detail combined. It would seem then the Chandler regards his Roger Wade's characters as false social types. What about his own? We have the shabby doctor (Vukanich), the psychotic homosexual (Earl), the phony rich (Eileen Wade) and various other social types that are more or less repugnant to Marlowe. Perhaps these typifications are some indication of the author's socio-ethical perspective: the narrower this ethical vision, the more stereotyped the character. In his portrayals of the isolation of the principled individual in a world gone wrong, Chandler appears as deeply disturbed by the evolution of his own social environment. The reputation that Chandler has enjoyed no doubt can be attributed to the way he has succeeded in grafting his ethical concerns onto the traditional adventure schema and the "stylistic lines" of the past. Insofar as Chandler succeeds in portraying through his melodrama and the typicality of his characters the generalised corruption that he sees in society, one might suggest that he

attains a weak critical realism in addition to providing popular fictional entertainment. This is in contrast to a genre such as the chivalric romance where the presence of evil receives a magical or occult explanation, or those adventure novels where the social evil is located purely in stereotypical *outsiders*, such as foreign agents, criminals and deviants. In Chandler's world, the principled individual (Marlowe) is the outsider.

An anatomy of the act

Social reality does not consist merely of character types, especially not only of stereotypes, but also of the conditions which have given rise to them. Authors themselves are conditioned by social milieux, and so are their readers; therefore, there is a natural basis for an interest in characters. Let us consider then the following fundamental proposition: *the ethical substance of a work arises in an author's relation to a milieu*, where milieu is an actual (not fictional) institution, culture, subculture or association of any kind. While it may be claimed that this notion does not adequately capture all the relations that make up an author's ethical stance in a work— what about the relationship of the author's work to other authors and their works, for example?—it may become clear how those other relations are to be addressed if it can be shown that the author-milieu relation is the dominant case. This seems at least to be a reasonable hypothesis to be explored.

In pursuing this line of thought it is necessary to show how the various dimensions of a work are brought together in acts of authorship and readership. How are we to understand the familiar (and somewhat hackneyed) dualisms that one finds in the study of literature, of form vs. content, style vs. substance, innovation vs. tradition, and so on? From the point of view of pragmatics and its concern with agency and the acts of agents, how to make sense of these various terms? As an attempt to do this, let us consider, a schematic "anatomy of the act", a possible way of engaging with familiar terms such as these, so as not to engage in terminological innovation where it is not needed. The idea is that existing terms can be used in a scientific way if their use is controlled in such a way that they are not vague, so that their interrelations are clarified, yet their meaning is not so far from common understanding as to create confusion. The following is a preliminary set of indications concerning this in categorial form—there is a way to go—and further clarifications will need to follow:

> *Content*—character, incident, milieu, situation
> *Style*—technique, dialect & register, lexis, prosody
> *Substance*—ethic, perspective, axiology
> *Form*—convention, genre, sub-genre, organisation of content, "chronotope"

What one notices in perusing these familiar topics, when they are arranged in this way, is that some of them have an overt or "surface" nature, whereas others seem to emerge only through reflection on the work at hand. At the overt level a reading tends to be focused in an immediate way on the *content* factors and the *style* of writing, not as objects of reflection, but as objects of cognitive processing needed for any reading comprehension at all to take place. It is not possible that one should begin reading without engaging with these aspects in some way; this is part of what we commonly mean by "reading". To read at all means engaging with the linguistic code.

This phenomenology of the surface contrasts with the way that the other dimensions are brought into focus. The literary *form*, in its generic and conventional aspects, may well be recognised fairly early by the literary specialist, but it is far from likely that this could apply to all readers. Indeed, an author's own appropriation of conventional narrative schemas may be more instinctive than conscious, especially when it comes to popular forms. It may also be that for certain readers an entrenched literary form has taken on the status of an expectation, that "this is how a narrative is naturally structured" and any thwarting of that expectation is experienced as bewildering or disorientating. The fact that *Jane Eyre*, as the story of a young woman's education, is based on a substrate of conventional romance and adventure schemas, in which the lovers are tested by trials and ordeals before finally being happily united in marriage, may not be a completely conscious perception for all readers, who might simply find the work satisfying, heartwarming, uplifting, etc., without reflecting on how exactly this effect was achieved.

The axiological substance of the work, which is my main concern in this chapter, and which I regard as key to a true pragmatics of fiction, may be the least immediate and the most open to variation in the reflective judgments of a readership. Yet it is precisely its undecidability that makes this dimension so interesting to critical readers, and it could be argued, again following Lukács, that it is this that makes the work enduringly worthwhile, in contrast to the "caricatural" novel of entertainment and diversion that he described. Hence my choice of the term *substance*. Content without

axiological substance—if this is possible—would then be literally insubstantial.

While these concepts are more elusive in their relationships with one another than is normally supposed, the following matrix may help to clarify:

	A	B
1	Content	Style
2	Substance	Form

As a preliminary approach to understanding this matrix and its workings, let us consider the following two speculative principles:

First principle (composition): A tends to select B in the composition of text. A represents subject matter, while B represents structure, or the ways in which subject matter is realised in the work.

Second principle (reading): no. 1 is a surface phenomenon that begins to present itself immediately in the very act of reading, while no. 2 is contingent upon a certain delay for further reading and reflection.

According to the first principle, it suggests that content, as character, incident and milieu, requires speech of a certain *style*. As we saw with the Ellroy extract in Chapter 2, this style can extend to the third person narrative itself as part of FID, an important stylistic innovation. It is also likely that the substance of a work—axiology, ethical and other authorial values—requires a certain *form*. As we saw with *Jane Eyre* the romantic nature of this work required an adventure schema that would unite the lovers once they had been sufficiently tested. At a more general level, one should allow for the possibility that A as a whole, both content and substance, has requirements for B as a whole, both style and form.

In what way does 2 represent a deeper level of the work, so that it is apprehended more slowly than the "surface" level 1? The simplest, most incontrovertible answer is that the novel is read in time and its overall shape and substance come gradually into view in the act of reading. But we should perhaps bear in mind that there may be a less obvious factor, one that is more historic and intertextual, namely that the substance and its underlying form is more generic in nature than the specific content and style encountered in a work. This is at least a hypothesis to be borne in mind: the

idea here that axiological substance as a whole is not created completely anew in any novel, but in all manner of intertextual relations, for example as "ideology". Thus, the model also suggests that substance and form, lying beside each other in the matrix, become associated with each other in special ways. We saw how in Bakhtin's treatment the major genre schemas, especially of adventure and romance, were associated with the axiological visions of humanity in their times.

Another implication of the model is that A and B can each be regarded as a unity despite the distinction made within each. The relationship between A1 and A2, as well as between B1 and B2, can be a relationship of domination or of diminution. A reader for example may collapse A2 into A1, so that the content is relatively "value-free" and ethical intention is not clearly discerned by such a reader, even when a high degree of comprehension has been achieved. Conversely, an author's concern may be predominantly concerned with ideas of an ethical nature and many areas of content, such as character, milieu and location are reduced purely to serving that ethical concern, so that A2 dominates A1. Coetzee's *Jesus* novels and Kafka's *Metamorphosis* appear to exhibit this sort of tendency. As suggested earlier, this may represent a diminution of realism in favour of a more direct presentation of ideas, as in allegory.

So, complicating these familiar concepts and defining them in this way, one arrives at the quadratic model in which various permutations are possible and are proposed for investigation. Fiction could not attract a readership without a dialectic between the unfamiliar and the familiar, and a lack of balance between the two would cancel any possibility of a readership. Let us consider briefly the dynamisms involved starting with leve1 1:

A1 *Content*: new and unusual character types and milieux emerge, but they cannot lose all typicality if they are to remain interesting. Nevertheless, it should be noted that originality and uniqueness of character is an inherent part of the interest of the novel and one would not expect characters or their lives to be generic if the work was to attain and sustain any interest.

A2 *Substance*: the ethical stance and aesthetic values of an author, as manifested to a given reader, may be either conventional or surprising, perhaps even shocking. But a thorough "transvaluation" is extremely rare, so much so that it is more or less epoch-making when it does occur, such as in Sade or in Rabelais. This matter will be discussed further below.

B1 *Style*: variation in linguistic style occurs both diachronically and synchronically (from one author to another). Style varies as much as dialects and idiolects do in other domains of discourse. However, an author's use of language could not be so original and unique as to be incomprehensible to a reader. This will be examined further in the next chapter.

B2 *Form*: (sub-)genres may have a long lifespan but they cannot be exempt from innovation as society changes and new interests emerge. The novel itself emerges from earlier genres. The genre schemas or chronotopes discussed by Bakhtin are extremely resilient and, although frequently deformed in creative ways, nevertheless appear to have been sustained for millennia. One of the formal features that it is difficult to imagine fiction departing from is the very fact of *ending*. In Bakhtin's early work he explored this question, how it is that an ending in the narrative artwork is the definitive difference between it and actual life.

There are works in which it seems clear that the author has intended to innovate across all four of these categories, e.g. *Finnegan's Wake*. A somewhat more moderate case has been discussed in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. The gothic-romantic character of the madwoman is transformed in Rhys's novel into a figure of a radically different type, modern and tragic, thereby bringing into view the historical issues that had troubled Rhys throughout her life. The differences between the novels of Brontë and Rhys constitute a marked axiological shift, with a consequent change in form. Then, in regard to style, I have mentioned how just a few decades after Chandler we find in popular crime fiction an extremity of violence and obscenity in language, such as that of James Ellroy. These extremes have an especially close bearing on characterisation and milieu, and are quite foreign to Chandler's style.

Let us now consider an example to demonstrate some aspects of the model. Ian McEwan's novel, *Solar,* begins thus:

> He belonged to that class of men—vaguely unprepossessing, often bald, short, fat, clever—who were unaccountably attractive to certain beautiful women. Or he believed he was, and thinking seemed to make it so. And it helped that some women believed he was a genius in need of rescue. But the Michael Beard of this time was a man of narrowed mental condition, anhedonistic, monothematic, stricken. His fifth marriage was disintegrating and he should have known how to behave, how to take the long view, how to take the blame. Weren't marriages, his marriages, tidal, with one rolling out just before another rolled in? But this one was different. He did not know

> how to behave, long views pained him, and for once there was no blame for
> him to assume, as he saw it. (2010, 3)

In this opening passage, significant content regarding the central character, his appearance, personality and current situation are presented concisely. We do not yet have an idea of what ethical points of a general nature are going to be presented of this character, or even whether there will be any. But soon we will learn that he is a Nobel-winning physicist, who also manages to be, not only a womaniser, but also a lover of the junk food and other excesses that will later lead to his physical decline and demise. We are told that there is "class of men" like this. In other words, we are invited from the outset to see Beard as a *type*. But what sort of type? We are told that he is a man of "narrowed mental condition," yet we will soon learn that he is a Nobel laureate. Then we get perhaps, the most unusual concatenation of adjectives imaginable, "anhedonistic, monothematic, stricken". So, from the beginning we engage with both the linguistic style and the character named and his current situation; we have content as well as style. We do not learn from this opening paragraph the form that the narrative will take—that would be self-defeating in a novel—and similarly we do not know what substantial ethical points are to be made. This delay goes to the heart of fiction and its revelatory function.

 If Beard is a type, as a member of "a class of men", and then described in this way, it would seem to be a relatively unfamiliar type to many readers. There are two possibilities here: firstly, it may be that the use of such descriptive terms for a member of a class is intended ironically, for faintly humorous or intriguing effect. But, secondly, there is another altogether more serious point to be made here about types. Earlier we saw that Chandler was accused of creating merely stereotypical characters. This cannot be the only notion of type that we possess; we must allow for surprising or unusual combinations of characteristics. This notion of type must thus be one in which social dynamics, conflicts and paradoxes manifest themselves in the character and the life of the character, and it is one that is manifested in the character of Michael Beard. He is indeed a character with a comic dimension, but Beard turns out to be a vehicle for satire rather than comedy as such, and the novel has important themes relating to gender, environmental issues and intellectual life in general. The comic aspects of Beard's character serve these more serious concerns, while serving to make the novel highly readable at the same time. Beard's life, which is described virtually from the cradle to the grave, embraces and illuminates a number of social milieux, which are the objects of the satire. Among the most important of these are British universities and youth

culture of the late 1960s; the scientific establishment in Blair's Britain in the universities and in research institutes; academic feminism; social constructivist politics; the English paparazzi. These are all observed from Beard's point of view and experiences, through FID and related techniques.

In terms of novelistic form, there is something of the picaresque in the account of Beard's life and career, as a series of adventures and misadventures, some of them being barely plausible in nature. However, the overall shape is one of the rise and rise of the brilliant and dedicated scientist, to winning the Nobel prize and then becoming head of a key environmental institute, all followed by a plummet into ignominy and disaster as a result of his various indiscretions during the time of his rise. These risible indiscretions include: his framing of his fifth wife's lover for the murder of another of her lovers; his subsequent appropriation of the latter's scientific work to advance his own career; his monumental indulgence of his appetites, scarcely believable in a man of scientific understanding. This is a "karmic" schema of course, of the kind that is familiar from much of world folk wisdom.

But in a modern novel, one suspects, the matter should not be just so simple. Consider Žižek's remark on Coetzee's novel, *Disgrace*, that "… a reading of David as a 'tragic' character who gets his comeuppance in his final humiliation still relies on a kind of moral balance or justice being established at the end, and thus avoids the deeply disturbing fact that the novel in fact has no clear moral compass" (2013, 325). Is this not, however, the dilemma faced in many modern novels that manage to avoid the moralism of earlier epochs (in which the evil perish and the good prosper in the end)? *Solar*, being satirical, is a very different sort of novel to *Disgrace*, and while Beard doubtless gets his comeuppance as a result of his own actions, the ethical standpoint of the narrative is not simple; like *Disgrace* it is not moralistic, yet does seem to offer an ethical standpoint. What then is McEwan up to? Let us consider certain episodes.

The turning point in the novel comes when Beard finds his life much complicated after being asked to chair a meeting on the promotion of science studies, the committee meeting to be followed by a press conference. He is asked by a woman journalist why so few women enter the field of physics. His answer that, statistically, women tend to be less interested in physics than men, is catastrophic. To make matters worse, and in complete naivety regarding some of the more recent tendencies of thought within the academic world, he goes on to suggest that differences in brain structure between men and women might be a factor in this, pointing out that women do dominate in certain *other* sciences. In the uproar

following these remarks the only woman member of Beard's committee, Nancy Temple, who is of a decidedly social-constructivist orientation, storms out announcing her resignation from the committee. It is the events that follow and the way they are presented that are illuminating. Beard leaves the building amid a scene that has clearly got the journalists, now surrounding Nancy Temple outside, excited about the possibility of exposing "another Blair failure", but

> Beard ignored the voices calling out his first name as he crossed the road. Never help feed a press story about yourself. But the next day he wondered if he should have turned back when he read himself 'scuttling away in shame' under the headline 'Nobel Prof Says No to Lab Chicks'. (2010, 136)

Subsequent to this debacle, he is invited to a public debate with Nancy Temple and others on the same issue. He has become known as the "'Neo-Nazi' Professor". Nancy Temple does not arrive and is replaced by a female colleague. The other participants are all men from the humanities, "all hostile" to Beard's point of view. He becomes bewildered and lost in the debate.

> When later he irritably demanded of the meeting if it thought that gravity too was a social construct, he was booed, and a woman in the audience stood to propose in stern, headmistressly tones that he reflect on the 'hegemonic arrogance' of his question. What gave him the right? By what invisible dispensation of power in the current social arrangement did he think that he was entitled to set the question in these terms? He was baffled, he had no answer. 'Hegemonic' was a frequent term of abuse. Another was 'reductionist'. In exasperation, Beard said that without reductionism there could be no science. There was prolonged laughter when someone from the floor shouted 'Exactly!' (210, 138)

The irony in the above is obvious. But one is reminded of this anecdote from Žižek: "when Foucault was asked from what position he was speaking, he employed the cheap rhetorical trick of claiming that this was a 'police' question, 'who are you to say that'" (2013: 333). The rhetoric of the social-constructivist audience above is of the same type. In this and the immediately surrounding passages the satirised figure is no longer Beard but his antagonists. And, at a deeper level, one begins to detect the serious substantial point. It has to do with alterity and with the clash of milieux and subcultures. Beard's point about reductionism is entirely valid for physical science, but it is not clear whether or how the same point holds for the humanities. There is a deep non-recognition between the two academic cultures, which is obviously disturbing from the general point of view of the promotion of knowledge and understanding. What happens next is an

unexpected twist. Nancy Temple's replacement, Susan Applebaum, who speaks after Beard, turns out to be a cognitive psychologist with an empirical bent:

> From the point of view of the audience, which seemed to be of one mind in all things, she had points in her favour and points against. As a woman she was a poor hegemon, and being unconfident, poorer still (Beard thought he was getting the hang of this term). Also after a few minutes it was clear she was speaking against Beard. On the other hand she was Jew, an Israeli and by association, an oppressor of Palestinians. Perhaps she was a Zionist, perhaps she had served in the army. And once she got under way, the hostility in the room began to grow. This was a postmodern crowd with well-developed antennae for the unacceptable line. (2010, 138-139)

It turns out that her criticisms of Beard are complex and statistically nuanced, that in fact she herself had conducted some of the studies cited by Beard himself. Her presentation goes over the heads of the audience.

> She sat down to no applause. But there was general relief that she was finally done. Ten minutes later the meeting broke up. Beard headed straight for the exit, feeling reprieved. Some might have said that he had just taken a good kicking, others that he had triumphed. What did he know? He was a physicist not a cognitive psychologist. But pleasingly, here at the ICA, he was hated no more than he had been at the start. These people were not going to take their lead from an Israeli. (2010, 140-141)

However, outside the building, the already ludicrous turns to farce. There are protestors with placards: "No to Eugenics! Nazi Professor Out!" There are also members of the press, especially cameramen. One of the older women demonstrators produces a rotting tomato which she hurls at Beard, which he catches and tosses back to her. She sinks to her knees.

> In colour it made a dramatic photograph. Taken from behind Beard, it showed him looming over a woman cowering on the ground, the victim of a gory assault. In Germany it was on the cover of a magazine with the headline 'Protestor Felled by "Neo-Nazi" Professor'. (210, 142)

It would be easy to read these passages as being simply a ridiculing criticism of academic feminism and postmodernism (as well as the paparazzi) when taken out of context. But it should be borne in mind that throughout the novel we are placed in the position of seeing the world from Beard's perspective, particularly in the FID passages. And Beard is a deeply flawed character. Yet it doesn't stop there. Later in the novel we learn how Beard's first marriage ended. While lying in bed one night, Maisie tells him that she is leaving him. Again, the account is satirical.

> She had thought this through, and did not want an argument. There was a commune forming in the sodden hills of mid Wales and she intended to join it and did not think she would ever return. She knew in *ways he could never understand*, that this must be her course now. There were issues of her self-realisation, her past and her identity as a woman that she felt bound to examine. It was her duty. At his point, Beard felt himself overtaken by a powerful and unfamiliar emotion that tightened his throat and forced from his chest a sob he was powerless to contain. (2010, 208 [emphasis added])

It turns out that to be a sob of extreme joy on Beard's part at this glimpse of his imminent freedom, but:

> Hearing his sob she had reached for the bedside light and leaning over to look into his face, she saw the dampness around his eyes. Firmly and deliberately she whispered, I will not be blackmailed, Michael. I will not, repeat *not*, be emotionally manipulated by you into staying.' (2010, 208-209)

The era in which this scene takes place is presumably the early 1970s and the issues between the male and female characters have to do with communes and self-realisation rather than hegemonies and social-constructivism. But even at this earlier stage the issues of alterity and lack of common understanding are seen to be substantially the same. Again, such satirical passages taken out of context might indicate an unsympathetic view on the part of the author towards, not only feminism, but women's issues *tout court*. The position changes though when one reflects that all of this is being presented with reference only to the experience of Beard, and Beard is a character whose dishonesty is not confined to his philandering, but also includes plagiarism and framing of a love rival for another man's murder, the very man from whom he has plagiarised and who in fact has died by an accident witnessed by Beard himself.

Beard is an illuminating character in the obvious sense that he appears as a man of extremely distorted intellect—a physicist renowned for amending Einstein, yet totally insensitive in regard to gender relations and virtually every other interpersonal aspect of his own life—but also because he illustrates *both* of the ethical tendencies mentioned in the Žižek quotations earlier. On the one hand he is incorrigible in the immorality of his personal ethics, staying consistent throughout in the pursuit of his desire, apparently without regard to the inner lives of others, to which he seems oblivious. On the other hand, he is capable of "uncharacteristically" virtuous and admirable behaviour at isolated moments in his life, for example in his words to his mother when she is dying of breast cancer. On one of his hospital visits she

has apologised to him for neglecting him as a child and for her numerous extra-marital affairs.

> He went back to the hospital the next day, and while she sweatily clung to his hand, told her that his childhood had been the happiest and most secure imaginable, that he had never felt neglected or doubted her love or eaten so well and that he was proud of what he called her appetite for life and hoped to inherit it. It was the first time he had given a speech. These half- and quarter-truths were the best words he had ever spoken Six weeks later she was dead. (2010, 196)

What is important is that the apparently consistent immoralist is capable of a moment of virtue. There is also perhaps some admiration to be had for his single-minded belief in the rationality of science, and there is little doubt that the author intends a certain degree of sympathy for his character when he tries to stand up for what he *believes* to be reasonable in the face of social-constructivist feminism, a consensus in a part of academia which is entirely incomprehensible to him. But this does not mean that there is no sympathy for women's issues to be gained in the novel. Rather the fact is that in these confrontations there are no heroes as such to be found. The only consistently admirable or endearing characters are certain of the women in Beard's life, and perhaps, in a different way, his war-hero father—perhaps Susan Appelbaum too—but it is surely for this reason precisely that all of these are relatively minor characters. They do not exhibit the ethical interest raised by Beard himself.

A love letter from an author

What I intend to do in this section is to examine the relationship of a specific novelist to a milieu, to which he, the author, is an insider, a case without the social distancing of the last example that afforded so much scope for satire. But there is still a reflective distance in this example, in that the author is writing retrospectively from the position of middle age about the milieu that shaped the course of his own life. It is generally thought that Roberto Bolaño was by the time of writing *The Savage Detectives* seriously ill and probably aware of his imminent demise. This work raises ethical concerns of a nuanced and complex nature, and offers a fictionalised account of the perspectives of many characters and character types that he has known in his life, including the views that some of them have held of him personally. Naturally these inner subjective lives of others are impossible to know, and the boldness of the work lies in the presentation of such impossible

knowledge of a known social milieu. It is a superb example of how the boldness of the ethical stance needs to a boldness of form.

Bolaño has been very much quoted as describing his novel *The Savage Detectives* as a "love letter to his generation." In discussing this novel, I propose to take him at his word and attempt to show what such an authorial act, described in this way by the author himself, might consist of. The entire work is dedicated to a group of young avant-garde poets, their friends and their antagonists. It is remarkable that this long and engaging work deals almost entirely with a single milieu, and the ethical and aesthetic attitudes that constitute it, in obvious parallels with the author's own life. Bolaño is possibly also one of the most clearly agonistic authors of all:

> "Bolaño lived through and for literature," one of his best friends, Antoni García Porta, wrote. He read and wrote fanatically, and if he liked to toss bombs, his targets were usually literary. (Valdes 2008, no pag.)

And, as Valdes goes on to mention, during his relatively short life Bolaño was himself alternately hated and loved: hated by many other Chilean writers, especially those with a history of passive collaboration with the dictatorship; loved as a cult figure even before the international publication of *The Savage Detectives* (*TSD*), and also after his death as perhaps the most revered of Chilean and Latin American novelists. But *The Savage Detectives*, like his other equally complex and monumental work, *2666*, is mainly set in Mexico, where Bolaño came of age and first started writing, beginning with poetry. It is the country most associated with his youth, before his move to Spain, where he went on to write the works for which he was eventually to become famous. The English translation of *TSD* is by Natasha Wimmer (1998).

The milieu in *TSD* is a group of rebellious young poets and their various adventures and misadventures, while its substantial ethic has its basis in the author's own relationship to this milieu. Let us bear in mind that it is the author's relationship to an actual milieu, rather than a purely fictional milieu, I hypothesise, that is the source of a work's ethical standpoint. I offer this as a kind of realist premise that differs in certain key respects from mere "reflection" theory, where the author is said to be "holding up a mirror to society" and the like. The philosophical naivety in such notions of realism consists in the objectivism that is attributed to the author: the more "objective" (and the less "subjective") the author the more realistic the work and, by implication, the sounder it might be adjudged to be. The realism that is required by pragmatics is of a different nature; it is a realist treatment of the question of authorship itself. What is required is a notion of the agon of

authorship whereby the author is engaged with his or her world in such a way that he/she adopts a stance towards the represented reality. What is needed is to understand the substance of the author's ethical act, but to do this, far from being naively objectivist, is to suggest that fictional authorship might always be autobiographical to a greater or lesser degree. In certain genres, such as fantasy, it may seem that the author's own perspective on actuality is seen as tending towards a vanishing point, but it is highly doubtful as to whether this tendency works towards eliminating value propositions from the author's purposes entirely. Realism in the sense that I use it here does not imply that a "correct" authorial perspective is in any way possible or desirable.

TSD is an autobiographical novel in quite the same sense as Coetzee's *Summertime,* mentioned in Chapter 3, even though it differs in certain respects of all four of the categories in my anatomy of the act. Rather than naming himself in the novel, Bolaño has a central character, one Arturo Belano, who is clearly revealed as his alter-ego once the facts of Bolaño's life are compared with the account of the fictional Arturo's life. However, the latter is not *the* central character; there are very large parts of the work which exclude him and which focus on other important characters. It is fair to say that this focus on various characters alternately, most of them as narrators, is part of the narrative technique that creates the sense of milieu as vividly as it does. Arturo makes his various entrances and exits, but always as observed from the points of view of various others. Secondly, the novel is about his friendship with Ulises Lima, who is the alter-ego for Bolaño's friend, the actual poet Mario Santiago. As Bolaño declared in a short essay published in the last year of his life, the novel is "a response, one of many" to *Huckleberry Finn*, and it is also "the more or less faithful transcription of a segment of the life of the Mexican poet, Mario Santiago, whose friend I was lucky enough to be." (2011, 353)

The form of the novel has some unusual aspects that perplex and intrigue. For one thing there are many narrators, all of them characters who are either part of the milieu or who report on their contact with it. Secondly, the manner of delivery of the narration of each is left unclear, except in the case of the journal entries of young Juan García Madero, which make up the first and last sections of the novel. The other narrators usually appear to be addressing someone in a conversational way, yet it is unclear, in most cases whom they may be addressing, or even whether one should imagine them as speaking or writing.

Occasionally there is some cross reference between narrators, but this is exceptional. Mostly the function of the various narrators seems to be to provide a set of contrasting and consistently shifting perspectives on the same milieu, without reference to one another's narratives. So, there are four overlapping time sequences: the chronology of events; the order of the presentation of events; the chronology of the narratives; the order of the presentation of the narratives. These are often radically out of alignment with one another, a fact that requires some vigilance or repeated reading to fully appreciate. I will come back to this matter in the next chapter, relating as it does to the question of technique, whereby disclosures to the reader (as well as to various characters themselves) are timed and brought about.

There is no doubt *love* in Bolaño's work, as he says, but *TSD* is by no means a romantic work in the sense of this word that we have discussed so far, although Bolaño has on occasion been regarded as a "romantic anarchist" (Andrews 2014). The novel could even be described as mostly "dirty realism" in its content and style, and there are no definitively "happy endings" for any of the major characters. However, three traditional genre schemas can be detected, albeit obliquely and in some unusual permutations. There is adventure, mostly the adventure of everyday life, in Bakhtin's sense of this term, especially incidents in the lives of young characters who are determined to experience as much as possible through rebellion and transgression. There is also the adventure of the *quest*, especially in the obsessive mission of Arturo and his sidekick Ulises to track down the legendary poet of the 1920s Cesárea Tinajero, which frames much, although not all, of the narrative. These two male characters are adventurers per se, just as much as any hero of a chivalric romance. At a more abstract level there is also the quest of the central characters to somehow find and support "the revolution", whatever, and wherever, this may turn out to be, in Mexico, in Chile, Nicaragua or Spain. In this way there is more than a passing resemblance to the "on the road" generation of Jack Kerouac and the beats—mentioned once by a narrator—albeit in a more leftwing guise. Thirdly, and closely related to the adventure and quest schemas, there is an education schema, reflected in a hunger for travelling "the path of life" of experience, learning and reading. Ultimately, however, there is the *abyss* (one of Bolaño's favourite words) in the shape of madness and death, and the love expressed by Bolaño for his generation seems a rather sad love for his comrades-in-arms, who march forward to meet such fates in unconventionally heroic ways.

Three intersecting thematic concerns run throughout the novel: poetry, politics and sex. All of these are introduced in the journal entries of the

seventeen-year-old Juan García Madero, which make up the first 140 pages of the 648-page novel. He describes his induction into the band of "visceral realists", who are an extremely marginal group of young poets of a militant political attitude, whose activities include disrupting the poetry readings of poets they despise as establishment figures. Its leading lights are Ulises Lima and Arturo Belano. We know that the visceral realists are based on Bolaño and Santiago's actual *infra-realist* poetry movement. (Many of the other visceral-realist characters in the novel are also based on actual members of the infra-realists.)

The countercultural nature of the visceral realists is apparent in García Madero's account of the days in November 1975 in which he joined them and in the same period had his first sexual experiences. At one of the cafes where the group commonly met:

> Other poets showed up later on. Some were visceral realists, others weren't. At first I worried that Belano and Lima were so busy talking to every freak who came up to our table that they'd forgotten all about me, but as day began to dawn, they asked me to join the gang. They didn't say "group" or "movement," they said "gang." I liked that. I said yes of course. It was all very simple. Belano shook my hand and told me that I was one of them now, and then we sang a *ranchera*. That was all. The song was about the lost towns of the north and a woman's eyes. Before I went outside to throw up, I asked them whether the eyes were Cesárea Tinajero's. Belano and Lima looked at me and said that I was clearly a visceral realist already and that together we would change Latin American poetry. (1998, 7-8)

In this extract we have in outline the whole of this vast rambling novel: the cafe culture; the poets; the all-night drinking and literary discussions; the "gang"; the poetic activism; Bolaño's own fascination with the lawless towns of northern Mexico—where we will end up together with García Madero and discover the end of the legendary Cesárea Tinajero. What remains in store for the reader is the fascination of following the ways in which all these elements are played out, and of course discovering the ethic that shapes the author's attitude towards them. Or is it perhaps more correct to say that it is the author's ethic that was formed through precisely experiences just like the ones he details in this novel?

To embrace the lifestyle fully it only remains for García Madero to begin his sexual education and to drop out of college, both of which follow promptly after his joining the visceral realists. Within a week he has had oral sex performed on him by one waitress (his head wildly filled with poetry) and is about to start a relationship with another. His education is

sexual, literary and political. He is starting to understand the politics of poetry, particularly during another epic discussion until three in the morning at a Chinese cafe:

> We were all in complete agreement that Mexican poetry must be transformed. Our situation (as far as I could understand) is unsustainable, trapped as we are between the reign of Octavio Paz and the reign of Pablo Neruda. In other words, between a rock and a hard place. (1998, 21)

The Nobel laureate Octavio Paz is the figure that above all represents the Mexican establishment in poetry, while Chilean Pablo Neruda represents the Stalinist alternative. The idea is that the visceral realists, in their own view, represent the third alternative.

García Madero's sexual education proceeds apace when he befriends the Font family—whose home is the site of many incidents in the novel— particularly the exotic Maria Font, with whom he also begins a relationship, and her sister Angelica, both of them also poets. One day he visits them to find something secretive going on. He is then allowed to look at a set of photographs that are the object of attention for the Font sisters and Ernesto San Epifanio, another member of the group. He looks at the photographs, a series of sixty that are meant to be viewed in order. It turns out that they feature Epifanio and a fifteen-year-old boy and his sister. After various undressing and dressing procedures Epifanio is shown having sex with the boy, while the latter's older sister watches. The final photograph shows the three lolling together in the bed. One is led to believe by little hints that the photographer may be Angelica. García Madero grapples with his feelings at being thus inducted into what is clearly a transgressive and immoralist ethic within the group. Soon after this he reports formative sexual experiences of his own with Maria:

> Soon she began to moan (I can't think of another word for it now), as she guided my hand to places it hadn't reached, whether out of ignorance or negligence. So that was how I learned, in fewer than ten minutes, where a woman's clitoris is and how to massage or fondle or press it, always within the bounds of gentleness, of course, bounds that Maria, on the other hand, was constantly transgressing … (1998, 59)

On another subsequent occasion he is smoking marijuana with two others, "Luscious Skin" (*Piel Divina*) and Pancho Moctezuma, when he is told of an incident that occurred at the Fonts' house and which led to Luscious Skin being banned from the house. Mrs Font is entertaining a Spanish writer with a party. During the party she spontaneously decides to take the honoured

guest outside to the sisters' "little house" to meet Maria. In Pancho's narrative:

> When they got to the little house it was dark and from inside they could hear a noise like blows: loud, rhythmic blows. Mrs Font surely wasn't thinking … and she turned on the light. There, to her horror, was Maria, at the other end of the little house, dressed only in a shirt, her pants down, sucking Luscious Skin's dick as he slapped her on the ass and cunt.

> "Really hard slaps," said Luscious Skin. "When they turned on the light I saw her ass and it was all red. I actually got scared."

> "But why were you hitting her?" I said angrily, afraid I would blush.

> "Isn't he an innocent. Because she asked for it," said Pancho.

> "I find that hard to believe," I said.

> "Stranger things have happened," said Luscious Skin. (1998, 67)

There is multi-functionality in this vignette. The sexual education of the young character is pre-eminent, not only in what is being related to him, but also in his reaction to what he is being told. In this description of his further induction into the ethic and culture of the group, his initial reaction to the story is in a mode that the group would normally consider conservative or naive, a "chivalric" mode, in defence of his "girlfriend".

Then, in the discussion that follows the other two boys attribute the girl's predilection for this kind of behaviour to "feminism" and also to the influence of a French girl named Simone, who, we are told, is a friend of Arturo Belano (she later turns up as a narrator and as Ulises Lima's contact when arriving in Paris). In this way a line can be drawn by a reader from Maria's exotic behaviour to feminism, and then from there to a character, Simone, and from Simone to the author's alter-ego, Arturo. There is thus a cosmopolitan touch lent to this characterisation of a young Mexican woman, via her French friend's internationalist feminism and sadomasochism and her friend, Arturo, who is (like the author himself, of course) Chilean. Thus Maria, as immoralist and cosmopolitan, is doubly exotic to the young initiate. Only a page later we learn that Pancho has also had sex with her, saying though that he doesn't like that "weird stuff" (sadomasochism) himself, but that he "knows for a fact that she does." Luscious Skin mentions that Maria had been reading the Marquis de Sade and that "she wanted to try the spanking thing," and Pancho quips, "she takes her reading seriously." (1998, 68) Luscious Skin goes on to provide much more detail of the

encounter, of what continued to happen after the shocked withdrawal of Maria's mother and her guest, in such graphic detail that even Pancho has to protest.

So, from a description of the sexual education of a teenage boy, other functions emerge, such as the establishment of a link been sex and literature. The linking of transgressive sexual practice with reading is deeply constitutive of the central milieu in this novel, and it relates to the question of immoralist ethics among youth internationally, as well as the further link between this and politics. The affiliations or political inclinations of the characters making up the milieu are in fact diverse and they are detailed in several parts of the novel, but they all have a rebellious aspect and relate to marginal and hopelessly small political groups (within Mexico of the time): radical feminist, gay liberationist, communist and anarchist. Arturo, we are told, used to be a Trotskyite and Ulises once tried to form an anarchist group, having written a manifesto for it. These are part of their backgrounds before we observe them becoming more immersed in their no less political and equally marginal visceral realist project.

The next (and final, in novelistic terms) episode in García Madero's sexual education is one that provides a link between his journal entries that begin the novel and his journal entries that close the novel later, but not later chronologically. What separates them are 450 pages of other narrations. So, while the novel ends with García Madero's journal entry for 15 November 1976, the reader already knows by then of events that have occurred as late as the 1990s, almost the period in which Bolaño was writing the novel itself.

García Madero's sexual education as described has already begun in the initial set of journal entries, which break off after the events of New Year's Eve 1975. Earlier, while out walking with Maria, he has been introduced to Lupe. Lupe is a skinny, short-haired, teenage sex worker and she is Maria's good friend. She may also be intended as the most endearing character in the novel (it seems so to this reader). Lupe has a boyfriend/pimp called Alberto, who is of a violent disposition, although at first Lupe seems comfortable enough with him. But she later flees from him and takes refuge in the house of the Font family. Alberto and his thug friends lay siege in the street outside in a yellow Camaro.

Both Lupe and García Madero find themselves thus besieged at the Fonts' house on New Year's Eve at the end of 1975. Maria and Lupe are in the main house talking. In an aside García Madero indicates to Maria that he

would like to sleep with her but she gives him no direct answer, telling him only that he has "a good heart", and he says:

> I soon realised that my presence was unwelcome. Maria and Lupe had a lot to say to each other and none of it made any sense to me. For an instant it might seem as if they were talking about the weather and the next instant about Alberto, the evil pimp. (1998, 131)

(We are left free to wonder whether what the two girls want is perhaps to discuss him at this point.) He goes to the girls' little house, falls on Maria's bed in the dark and goes to sleep. But he awakes to find that a woman is caressing him.

> It took me a while to realise that it wasn't Maria. For a few seconds I thought I was dreaming or that I was hopelessly lost in the tenement, with Rosario [his waitress lover]. I pulled whoever it was to me and searched for her face in the dark. It was Lupe and she was smiling like a spider. (1998, 132)

The "spider smile" is most intriguing in context. Its meaning is undecidable, but what it does is raise possibilities. If there is one thing that is difficult to visualise it is the smile of a spider. One imagines that the smile was enigmatic, unfathomable to García Madero. We are not told exactly what happened next; the journal entry of 15 December ends there, all of which serves to put more emphasis on Lupe's presence with her spidery smile. But in due course we learn that the two have become a couple as they embark on an adventurous journey. They manage to escape from the Fonts' house, together with Arturo and Ulises, in Mr Font's Impala, in a dramatic getaway from the thugs:

> I saw that Lupe was looking at me from inside the car and that she was opening the door. I realised that I'd always wanted to leave. Ulises stepped on the gas … in less than two seconds we were on the Avenida Oaxaca heading north out of the city. (1998, 139)

So ends the first of García Madero's narrative contributions. Some 450 pages later we return to his journal—as if there had been no break—when Mr Font's Impala and its four fugitives are heading for the badlands of the north and the Sonora desert. We are kept aware of the potential menace, that the yellow Camaro might appear at some point in pursuit of them. In the desert landscape they take up the search for the poet Cesárea Tinajero, crisscrossing from one desert town to another in a way that seems endless and futile. (But note: at this point in the novel we already know from the intervening narratives the future fates of Arturo and Ulises: that Arturo will go off to a likely death in Liberia and that Ulises will go half-mad.)

We see them find Cesárea. But it is not long before she is killed, when
Alberto, accompanied by a crooked policeman, does eventually catch up
with them. A gun and knife fight ensues. Alberto and his policeman
henchman are both killed, as is Cesárea. Arturo and Ulises (with a broken
arm) decide to bury the bodies and separate from García Madero and Lupe.
The former pair go off to have the adventures that we, who have read the
intervening narratives, already know of, while the latter pair decide to stay
and live in Cesárea's house. These two pairs do not meet up again although
they have promised to meet again in Mexico City.

In this order of narrative, the logic of revelation (to the reader) clearly
overrides the chronology of events. We finally witness a kind of denouement
that has occurred twenty years *before* the later events that we have already
been following in the other narrations. One consequence is that we find
belatedly that we do have a love story after all. We do not find out what
happened to García Madero and Lupita after 1976, as we do with other
characters, but we see them living together in the legendary poet's home,
hardly noticed by the locals, as the novel ends. This rather muted love story
is thus embedded in a much larger narrative. García Madero and Lupe's
story appears in only less than one third of the novel, and there as a sub-
plot.

Lupe, although barely literate, has shown herself to be of lively mind and a
"good sport" with these strange literary young men, participating with them
in all manner of word and spelling games, riddles and quizzes, even turning
them, to her advantage, away from arcane literary examples to questions
about street slang, at which she unsurprisingly excels. How do we think
back to her spider's smile once we reach the end of the novel? What if it is
some kind of ethical cipher? The author has in this novel presented an
almost unrelentingly immoralist ethic, yet love is not absent from it. What
if Lupe's spider smile, as an apparently inscrutable symbol, represents some
kind of ethical centre of this novel—the fulcrum between the immoralist
experimentation of the milieu and the "real" quest for something beyond it?
Such an interpretation fits with the facts of the novel as a whole. Lupe, the
prostitute, survives where Cesárea the poet, and ostensibly the goal of the
quest, has died and even goes to live in the latter's house. Four pages from
the end of the novel:

> Lupe told me that we're the last visceral realists left in Mexico. I was lying
> on the floor smoking, and I looked at her. Give me a break, I said. (1998,
> 644)

This unsentimental exchange is again ethically inscrutable and leaves the questions of love and poetry open for the reader to ponder. Bolaño's novel is not a romance, but, as proclaimed "love letter", it is not anything like the altogether colder writing of Sade, or of Nietzsche either, although there is no doubt a "transvaluation" within it of the kind discussed by Adorno and Horkheimer in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1979, 81-119). In its immoralism there remains a deeply humanist ethical concern. If Lupe represents, even more than poetry perhaps, what the author loved in his "generation"— amongst the rebellious and the poor of Mexico—then this must contrast with the portrayal of the characters that do *not* earn his love. I would like to mention two examples to illustrate. Here we will discover satire once more, in a way that is highly revealing of Bolaño's notorious animus towards establishment figures of almost any kind.

In the wake of the ascendency of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, a plan is put into operation for a group of various left-leaning Latin American writers to visit that country to show their support for the revolutionary movement. This episode is narrated by one Hugo Montero, who has been given responsibility for organising the Mexican delegation. He has the idea of including his friend Ulises Lima in the group, which turns out to be an embarrassing mistake. Ulises is already at this stage showing some signs of being emotionally disturbed (bearing in mind again that this is chronologically later than the deadly fight in the desert, which we the readers will only learn about much later). What transpires in Nicaragua is that Ulises immediately goes missing without participating in any of the proceedings in Managua. He is not located and does not turn up in Mexico again for another two years after this event. It falls to Hugo and the leader of the Mexican delegation, Alamo, together with a leading "peasant poet", Julio Labarca, to report the missing person and to deal with the Sandinista police (as opposed to the Somocista police).

The police arrive and the Mexicans deal with one of them "who called himself an inspector and whom Labarca immediately began to address as 'comrade' this and 'comrade' that'." (1998, 356) This comradely exchange continues with the inspector asking about the missing "comrade writer" and his *habits* (the reader's mind perhaps boggles at this thought) in a friendly enough manner, although clearly ignorant of the world of writers, and only interested in them to the extent that they support the Nicaraguan revolution (or not). So, after a few inconsequential questions and answers along these lines, it becomes time for a cigarette.

Alamo took out his pack of Delicados and offered it around. Labarca and I
each took one, but the inspector waved them away and lit a Cuban cigarette.
These are stronger, he said with a clear hint of irony. It was as if he were
saying: we revolutionaries smoke strong tobacco, real men smoke strong
tobacco, those of us with a stake in objective reality smoke real tobacco.
Stronger than a Delicados? Said Labarca. Black tobacco, comrades, genuine
tobacco. Alamo laughed under his breath and said: it's hard to believe we've
lost a poet, but what he really meant was: what do you know about tobacco,
you stupid son of a bitch? You can kiss my ass with your Cuban tobacco,
said Labarca almost without batting an eye. What did you say comrade? Said
the inspector. That I don't give a shit about your Cuban tobacco. Where
Delicados are lit, let the rest be put out. Alamo laughed again and the
inspector seemed to hesitate between turning pale with rage and looking
confused. I assume, comrade, that you mean what I think you mean, he said.
That's right I do, you heard me. No one turns up his nose at a Delicados,
said Labarca. Oh, Julio's a bad boy, murmured Alamo, looking at me to hide
his barely suppressed laughter from the inspector. (1998, 358)

This rare moment of outright comedy in Bolaño has its satiric purposes of
course. There is something very much like the confrontation between low
and high speech so beloved of Bakhtin, which always has the purpose of
ridiculing or debunking the officious and the pretentious. The earthy and
Rabelaisian humour here is particularly enabled by the character of the
peasant poet, the perfect vehicle for it. These characters, Alamo and
Labarca, are not associated with the visceral realists—Alamo was in fact
furious when he discovered that Ulises had been invited on the trip— and
they have on occasion been ridiculed by the visceral realists for steering too
close to the official and to the literary establishment themselves, but it is
crystal clear who Bolaño's target is on this occasion.

The other satirical example that I would like to mention in regard to
Bolaño's ethical intention is somewhat different in that the satire is
combined with an element of allegory of the kind that occasionally surfaces
in Bolaño. It concerns a pretentious Spanish lawyer, Xosé Lendoiro, who is
also a poet and owner of a poetry magazine. His story forms a substantial
episode of *TSD*, of which Lendoiro is himself the narrator. The lawyer's
pretentions and conservatism are satirised via his habit of switching to Latin
very frequently in his narration and quoting various classical authors. He is
a man puffed up with pride in his social station, and he imagines himself
also as a man of substance in the world of Spanish-language literature. He
meets Arturo Belano in the course of a peculiar incident.

He is travelling around Spain after his divorce, and finds himself at a
country campsite in Galicia. A young boy has fallen down a dark and

cavernous hole in the ground and the fearful relatives and friends have gathered around not knowing what to do. Attempts are made to reach the boy and also to call the authorities, all without success. A young man lowered down by rope does not see the boy, but his youth claims to have seen the devil down there. This is all observed by Lendoiro:

> Most asked what the devil was like, whether the youth had seen all of him or just his face, what he looked like, what colour he was, etc. *Rumores fuge*, I said to myself and gazed out at the surrounding countryside. Then the camp watchman and the bulk of the women appeared with another group from the campground, among them the mother of the vanished boy … Who's down there? Asked the watchman. In silence someone pointed out the youth, who was still lying in the grass. The mother, helpless, went up to the mouth of the cave and shouted her son's name. No one answered. She shouted again. Then the cave howled and it was as if it were answering back.
>
> Some people turned pale. Most backed away from the hole, afraid that a foggy hand might suddenly shoot out and drag them down into the depths. (1998, 456)

One begins to recognise here the trope of the *abyss*, which forms part of the allegorical meaning of this episode as a whole. The watchman is Arturo Belano (the author Bolaño of course served as a campsite watchman himself at just this time) and he prepares to lower himself into the hole, tying a rope around his waist. The lawyer is impressed by the sight of this and goes over to congratulate him:

> Xosé Lendoiro, lawyer and poet, I said as I shook his hand effusively. He looked at me and smiled as if we'd met before. Then amid general expectation, he started down into that terrible pit. (1998, 456)

Arturo rescues the child and there is much celebration that night, and over the next two days Lendoiro has the chance to discuss literary topics with him. Two years later, Arturo shows up at the lawyer's office in Barcelona looking for some kind of literary work. Lendoiro decides to offer him some very limited reviewing jobs. The relationship thereafter takes an unexpected turn.

Lendoiro had, subsequent to his divorce, given the former family apartment to his older daughter (also a poet), while saving a key for himself. Entering the flat one time, he discovers Arturo having extremely abandoned sex with his daughter. This shakes his complacent world. Unknown to them he returns to observe them on four later occasions, filled with thoughts of revenge. It is as if the sight of them is a peering into an abyss of his own.

He even surprises himself with the thought that he is behaving more like a jealous lover than a parent.

A series of strange turns occur after he finds out to his increasing horror that his daughter is in love with the Chilean. Later in his office, he begins to try out an obscure stratagem with Arturo, who is seated in a low chair, "crushed beneath the legal heft of my diplomas and the burnished weight of the silver-framed photographs of great poets that adorned my sturdy ten-by-five-foot oak table." (1998, 463). He offers Arturo more responsibility with the magazine. He makes it clear to Arturo that he is not offering a salary as such, and Arturo leaves, promising to think it over. And then, surprisingly:

> When he closed the door I buried my head in my hands and remained like that for a while, thinking. Deep down I didn't want to hurt him. (1998, 464)

What he does do for a time though is discover a new sense of confidence in himself, which he seems to regard as his personal victory over Arturo:

> I stopped spying on my daughter and her wretched lover. *Odero, si potero. Si non, invitus amabo*. And yet I felt the full weight of my authority fall against Belano. I was at peace again. It was the best time of my life. (1998, 465)

He talks about how his money has been enough to make poets "follow" him (he also mentions paying the publication costs of his own poetry), but not Belano, "who buried himself in a world where everything stank of shit and urine and rot and poverty and sickness, a world where the skin was suffocating and numbing and where the only thing that didn't stink was my daughter's body" (1998, 467). Yet he does nothing further and bides his time. Then suddenly a bad smell starts to emanate from his daughter's mouth, so badly that it permeates the whole apartment, and nothing seemingly can reverse this awful development. She says that it is her wisdom teeth. But it also starts to repel Arturo from her, Lendoiro reports. Eventually the couple part company and to her father's pride and joy she also advises him to drop Arturo from the magazine.

Some time after Arturo has disappeared from their lives, when waking in the middle of the night Lendoiro takes a story called "The Chasm" and reads it twice before dawn. He reads it over and over. He reports having "shrunk" by ten inches. And then he starts going over in his mind the affair at the campsite and starts losing his sure sense of self:

> I soon understood how vain all my ambitions had been, the ambitions that trundled the golden labyrinth of the law as well as those I set spinning along

the edge of the cliff of literature. *Interdum lacrimal pondera vocis habent.* I realised what Arturo Belano had known from the moment he saw me. I was a terrible poet. (1998, 469)

What follows is a form of dementia. Lendoiro is haunted by a wolf howl, which is what some of the Galician women thought they had heard in the campsite chasm, and he reads the story "The Chasm" over and over. He sleeps with many prostitutes. He tries to trace Arturo without success. He becomes very ill and he ends his narration with an ironic Galician joke. But the reader may well wonder if even at this late stage he understands the Arturo that he earlier described sitting in his office:

> Then I was silent and we watched each other for a while, or rather I watched him, searching his face for any sign that would give away what was going on inside his head, and Belano looked at my pictures, my objets d'art, my diplomas, my paintings, my collection of handcuffs and shackles mostly dating from before 1940 (it was a collection to which my clients usually reacted with interest and a tinge of fear, my legal colleagues with some tasteless joke or remark, and the poets who visited me with admiring fascination), the spines of the few carefully chosen books that I keep in my office, most of them first editions of the nineteenth-century Spanish Romantics. (1998, 463-464)

While it is perhaps unlikely that Lendoiro has come to an understanding of Arturo, no such lack should exist on the part of a reader at this advanced point in the novel. We know that each thing in the lawyer's office described above would have been contemptible to him, together with the poets who admired the handcuffs and shackles. Arturo Belano, youthful stealer of books and friend to Ulises Lima (a reader of poetry books in the shower), would have understood the lawyer perfectly. The same is surely true of Roberto Bolaño.

The last episode that I would like to discuss from the ethical point of view is the episode of Arturo's sojourn and probable death in Africa, which is of course a departure from Bolaño's own biography. The episode is narrated by Jacobo Urenda, supposedly from a location in Paris, who begins with the statement: "This is a hard story to tell." (1998, 558). Jacobo, an Argentinian and a regular traveler to Africa as a journalist, meets Arturo in Angola in the Luanda post office. Arturo has left Spain for reasons that are perhaps unclear, but he is also working as a journalist, a poorly paid stringer. Jacobo says: "Basically we were the typical forty-something Latin American guys who find themselves in an African country on the edge of the abyss or the edge of collapse, whichever you want to call it." (1998, 558-559) One

wonders if there is some irony in the *typical* here. And once again we have the *abyss*.

Roberto Bolaño was settled down with a family by the time he was writing *TSD*, and was suffering from very severe liver disease. In this there may be curious parallel with Arturo. If Bolaño had not settled down would he perhaps have gone to Africa too in search of … who knows what? But let us consider what Jacobo says about Arturo, who we already know at this stage has quit drinking:

> Each morning he'd have his little chamomile tea and when there wasn't any chamomile he'd order linden or mint or whatever herbal tea they had, he never touched coffee or black tea and he didn't eat anything fried. He was like a Muslim, he wouldn't touch pork or drink alcohol and he always carried around a lot of pills. (1998, 560)

Jacobo also reports on Arturo's apparent lack of interest in women at this stage. When Jacobo returns to Paris, Arturo heads off into the reportedly dangerous Angolan interior. Jacobo professes not to understand Arturo's attraction to danger and likely death, when he is simultaneously so meticulous about his medication and diet. He sends Arturo medicine from Paris and months later they meet again in Kigali, Arturo too broke to return to Catalonia. Arturo now claims to have gotten over his death quest. Jacobo does not see him on his next few trips to Africa, until he ends up in Liberia, mired in civil war and one of the most dangerous places in the world at the time. Most journalists are already trying to leave or seeking refuge at the American embassy. Jacobo asks around about Arturo amongst the journalists without finding him.

Jacobo undertakes a very dangerous car trip into the interior. The car comes under gunfire, an Italian journalist is killed and Jacobo is stranded with a French journalist and the driver of the now damaged car. It takes them a little further before breaking down irreparably. They are stranded near a house where there are some armed men around who are friendly. Then, Jacobo reports:

> I looked towards the long house and I saw six or seven armed men and among them I saw two white guys walking toward us. One of them had a beard and was carrying two cameras bandolier-style, a fellow photographer, that much was obvious, though at that moment, while he was still at a distance, I was unaware of the fame that preceded him everywhere he went, by which I mean that I knew his name and his work, like everyone in the business, but I had never seen him in person, not even in a photograph. The other was Arturo Belano. (1998, 573)

The narrative becomes complicated as this point, but it concerns the advance of the hostile Krahn forces towards the area where the journalists have fetched up. The Mandingo soldiers with them have a desperate plan to link up with their side and one of Taylor's generals at Thomas Creek, which Jacobo and Arturo regard as unworkable. The alternative was to leave with a group of civilians instead:

> A ten-mile walk through old rubber plantations and tropical jungle lay ahead of us, not to mention the river crossing, but when we made it to the road we would only be five miles from Brewerville and then it was only fifteen miles to Monrovia along a road that was surely still in the hands of Taylor's soldiers. We would leave the next morning, shortly after the Mandingo soldiers went off in the opposite direction to face certain death.
>
> I didn't sleep that night. (1998, 575)

Jacobo lies awake listening to the famous photographer, Lopez Lobo, and Arturo talking during the night. Arturo does most of the talking. At one point he talks about his death wish and Lobo asks him about it, to which Arturo attributes this as a loss of some kind that he has suffered. This remains an unsolved mystery for the reader. We know from the narrative delivered by Susana Puig as late as 1994 in Catalonia that he has an ex-wife and a son, but Arturo has had many lovers and we do not know who the wife is. He has called Susana to try to get her to come and see him one last time before he leaves Spain. It turns out that he has persuaded her so that she may witness an absurd duel that he fights on the beach over a putative bad review (the curious nature of this duel increases for the reader, who later learns that Arturo's antagonist in the duel has gone on to send him medicine in Africa). Does he want Susana to see him die in this duel, and is the idea of leaving Spain for Africa merely his plan B? This we don't know. On the phone she advises him to go back to his ex-wife so that she can look after him.

> This seemed to strike him as funny. I heard him laugh, then he said that his wife (he didn't say ex-wife, he said wife) was doing fine now and he didn't want to be the one who ruin things for her. You're too thoughtful, I said. She isn't the one who broke my heart, he said. So sappy! So sentimental! Of course I knew the story by heart. (1998, 491)

Now in this desperate situation in a house in the Liberian bush he is even heard laughing at his "loss". Is it Susana? His wife? Someone or something else? Lobo speaks about his family, his own ex-wife and two children and his own life story, including the death of one of his children and then his divorce. Suddenly, while Arturo again starts talking about his life and his death wish, the listening Jacobo has this realisation: "Only then did I fully

understand that Lopez Lobo was going to go with the soldiers the next day, not the civilians, and that Belano wasn't going to let him die alone." (1998, 580) The parting in the morning is the last that we know of Arturo's life:

> The soldiers were already beginning to head off and we said goodbye to him right there. Jean-Pierre shook his hand and I hugged him. Lopez Lobo had gone on ahead and Jean-Pierre and I realised that he didn't want to say goodbye to us. Then Belano started to run, as if the last moment he thought the column would leave without him. He caught up with Lopez Lobo, and it looked to me as if they started to talk, as if they were laughing, as if they were off on an excursion, and then they crossed the clearing and were lost in the underbrush. (1998, 581)

This apparent death pact is a profoundly ethical act on Arturo's part. Arturo has prolonged his life through medications and diet that have been detailed in this same episode by Jacobo. It is not as if he is merely looking for death, any kind of death. We have even been told that he looks healthier than the earlier occasions when Jacobo has seen him, although he is very thin. He has managed to support himself in his African travels through journalistic work. We are told that he does not stay in hotels like the other journalists, but in spare rooms or spare beds of local people. His hedonistic days are long past. His clothes are the same as Jacobo saw earlier in Kigali, although much deteriorated. He has obviously been cutting his own hair. These facts seem to reflect a dignified reconciliation with fate. The manner of his (presumed) death is one chosen in accordance with the life that he has been living since his departure from Spain and the seemingly absurd duel that ended his time in that country. But perhaps this end is also in accordance with some sense of mission he has pursued throughout. Jacobo describes his demeanour shortly before leaving with the soldiers: "… like the face of a madman: in a matter of seconds, terrible fear and fierce happiness coursed across it." (1998, 580-581) Is this not the face of someone determined to take his lifelong rebellion through to the ultimate conclusion?

Arturo's life is modelled on that of the author himself. Obviously, the endings of their lives are different. Bolaño was living in Catalonia at the time he was writing, and was dying of liver disease. And he had his alter-ego Arturo leave Catalonia to go and presumably die in Africa. Yet it seems that we see quite clearly even here the contours of Bolaño's ethical act of writing. He knew while describing Arturo's end that he was suffering from a similar disease as his character Arturo and that his time was short. He surely gave much thought to what he would do with the time he had left. We know that he did two things: He devoted himself to his wife and two children while simultaneously drafting his final, gargantuan novel, *2666*,

which can be read as a homage to the murdered women and the poor of Mexico, and he left his drafts in good order so that it could be published posthumously, which it was.

In his book on Bolaño, Chris Andrews (2014) has included a useful section on Bolaño's ethical standpoint, but at least one difference between Andrews's observations and my own needs to be registered. It relates to the difference between a work of literary criticism, which Andrews announces his book to be in its first sentence, and one that falls within the more descriptive and analytical framework of pragmatics. Andrews is concerned to show that there is no positive hero in the *TSD*. Arturo Belano and Ulises Lima are both deeply flawed characters, despite their bravery and generosity, two qualities mentioned repeatedly by Andrews about Bolaño himself. Both characters are drug dealers and both carry knives. Arturo uses his knife to kill Alberto, Lupe's one-time pimp and boyfriend in the desert brawl. Ulises even resorts in one episode to mugging as a means of making money in the company of an apparently psychotic Austrian in Vienna. Both of them descend into irrationality at times and Arturo engages a critic in a duel about a book review that has not even been written.

More heroic, in the view of Andrews and according to specific criteria, are two of the women characters: Auxilio, who spends twelve days in a university toilet in 1968, determined not to be arrested by the Mexican soldiers who have taken control of the campus; and Cesárea Tinajero herself, object of the quest, who dies in the desert brawl while saving the life of Ulises with her bulky body. Both of these women also exhibit the characteristics that are very important to the ethical intention animating *TSD*: a disdain for careerism, wealth, power and fame, which is sometimes expressed in satire, at other times as rebellious immoralism. In this matter there is no doubt that Arturo and Ulises are exemplary, despite their other failings. The problem, from an analytical point of view, is that Andrews compares the latter two against ethical standards that have been defined by moral philosophers and even, at some points, the standards of conventional respectability. These conventional standards are imported into Andrews's criticism for purposes of comparison. In other words, external standards of behaviour are brought to bear seemingly to demonstrate the absence of a hero.

But this is to ignore the frequent immoralism in the behaviour of almost all of the more intriguing characters in the book, to ignore in fact the kind of "transvaluation" that Bolaño is engaging in, as signaled by occasional references to Nietzsche and Sade. Let us try to paraphrase the ways in which

Bolaño's ethical intention appears via the novel's characters: these characters are *bad in regard to almost all of the standards of respectable society*, yet they have *certain admirable qualities*. These are the same admirable qualities that are notably lacking in the other characters that are clearly despised in the *author's* worldview. The question of heroism does not seem to arise, unless, that is, one is determined as a reader to look for it. I suggest that this is the agon of Bolaño's authorship, to express, somewhat defiantly perhaps, his affection for the life and times that he shared with the others as a younger and more romantically anarchist self. It is not a question of whether his "minimal ethics" are enough to satisfy the critic, which must remain a subjective judgment of the critic as an individual reader.

There is an aspect to this that is surprising to find unmentioned by Andrews. It seems that the real ethical question that this book poses must be related to the passage of time, in particular the timespan separating the youth of Arturo in the early 1970s when he, like Bolaño at that time, is barely twenty, and Bolaño's time of writing in the mid to late 1990s, when he was in his mid-forties. The real ethical conundrum which is posed by Bolaño —he does refer to this novel as being in part a "game"—is one that he does not explicitly help us to answer on the basis of the text itself. It is the question of how Bolaño looks back, from his mid-forties in Spain, on his own early twenties in Mexico and the recklessness of youth. It can be argued on the basis of abundant textual evidence, not least the way in which Arturo is viewed "warts and all" by a wide range of other characters, that Bolaño is not intent on identifying his young self exactly with the ethical stance of his more mature self. It seems that this provides some explanation for the episodes that seem to be the last in Arturo's life. The absurd duel on its own is enough to prevent Arturo (and in some measure Bolaño himself) from being an over-romanticised hero. It is as if he says through this episode: "this is the kind of crazed quixotic thing I *might* have done at that period of my life." But then this episode is followed by the trip to Africa, and it is this that shows most of all the end that Bolaño *might* also have wished for himself. It is a celebration of both recklessness and courage, accompanied by strong elements of renunciation of hedonism and reconciliation with fate. Here we see Arturo's change from his younger hedonistic self that perhaps parallels Bolaño's own *Bildung*.

Bolaño's "love letter to his generation" does not seem to sound any note of regret, despite the fact that his mature self might have become a rather different self since his youth. It rather celebrates the rebellion, as futile as it may seem, of the youthful milieu and its associated behaviours that make up almost all of the content of this novel. It is in the non-apologetic relation

of the author to this social milieu that the novel becomes substantial, conveying "a sense of what matters," in the words of Andrews. What matters most it seems is a dissociation of Roberto Bolaño from those literary figures that he least admires, and this is surely a key to the agon of his authorship.

CHAPTER FIVE

STYLE AND AESTHETICS IN FICTION

Foundations of aesthetics in prose

I began the last chapter with some brief observations on Lukác's *The Theory of the Novel*. I will begin the present chapter similarly, with some brief observations on Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*. There are remarkable parallels between these two books. Both were written at very early stages of the authors' careers and both were disowned in a sense by the authors themselves, who wrote critical prefaces to the texts in question on occasions of their later publication. Both Lukács and Nietzsche were to make significant intellectual shifts and changes of allegiance in their later work. In both cases I have found some genuine nuggets amongst rather turgid prose. Fortunately, in the case of *The Birth of Tragedy* (*TBOT*) these are almost all discovered in the very first paragraph, in which the kernel of Nietzsche's argument concerning aesthetics is presented:

> We shall have gained much for the science of æsthetics, when once we have perceived not only by logical inference, but by the immediate certainty of intuition, that the continuous development of art is bound up with the duplexity of the Apollonian and the Dionysian: in like manner as procreation is dependent on the duality of the sexes, involving perpetual conflicts with only periodically intervening reconciliations. These names we borrow from the Greeks, who disclose to the intelligent observer the profound mysteries of their view of art, not indeed in concepts, but in the impressively clear figures of their world of deities. It is in connection with Apollo and Dionysus, the two art-deities of the Greeks, that we learn that there existed in the Grecian world a wide antithesis, in origin and aims, between the art of the shaper, the Apollonian, and the non-plastic art of music, that of Dionysus: both these so heterogeneous tendencies run parallel to each other, for the most part openly at variance, and continually inciting each other to new and more powerful births, to perpetuate in them the strife of this antithesis, which is but seemingly bridged over by their mutual term "Art"; till at last, by a metaphysical miracle of the Hellenic will, they appear paired with each other, and through this pairing eventually generate the equally Dionysian and Apollonian art-work of Attic tragedy. (*TBOT* 1910, no pag.)

To use a word that Nietzsche himself would perhaps not have used in this connection, let us consider that a *dialectic* between Apollo and Dionysus has defined the nature and variation of narrative literature since antiquity. Whereas Nietzsche uses the relationship of these two deities as an evaluative criterion, I adopt instead a more descriptive approach in keeping with what I regard as a (post-Enlightenment) scientific pragmatics. Where Nietzsche sees Dionysus and Apollo as being at times an antithesis of each other, "openly at variance", and only occasionally "pairing" in reconciliation with each other, one might instead look at this relationship as being more variegated and its dialectic more enduring in nature, particularly in modernity, than Nietzsche's polemic allows.

To put it simply, when Apollo is in dominance in art then it is the pictorial and plastic arts (and the images of dreams, according to Nietzsche) that predominate. When Dionysus is ascendant then music and dance become predominant. From the point of view of purely Apollonian art, however, the Dionysian is seen as barbaric and uncultivated. For Nietzsche, the Dionysian is the suppressed substrate of poetry, while the Apollonian consists in the overt presence of image and concept. As we see from the above quotation Nietzsche sees a rare balance in those forms of tragedy where the *chorus*, that is the spirit of music, has infused the drama. But what of prose fiction of the kinds that were not known to antiquity? Some idea of Nietzsche's general attitude can be gleaned from the following:

> If tragedy absorbed into itself all the earlier varieties of art, the same could again be said in an unusual sense of Platonic dialogue, which, engendered by a mixture of all the then existing forms and styles, hovers midway between narrative, lyric and drama, between prose and poetry, and has also thereby broken loose from the older strict law of unity of linguistic form; a movement which was carried still farther by the *cynic* writers, who in the most promiscuous style, oscillating to and fro betwixt prose and metrical forms, realised also the literary picture of the "raving Socrates" whom they were wont to represent in life. Platonic dialogue was as it were the boat in which the shipwrecked ancient poetry saved herself together with all her children: crowded into a narrow space and timidly obsequious to the one steersman, Socrates, they now launched into a new world, which never tired of looking at the fantastic spectacle of this procession. In very truth, Plato has given to all posterity the prototype of a new form of art, the prototype of the *novel* which must be designated as the infinitely evolved Æsopian fable, in which poetry holds the same rank with reference to dialectic philosophy as this same philosophy held for many centuries with reference to theology: namely, the rank of *ancilla.* This was the new position of poetry into which Plato forced it under the pressure of the demon-inspired Socrates. (*TBOT* 1910, no pag.)

Despite this surprising source of the novel—Socrates and his personal demon—there is in fact a similarity with Bakhtin's account of the ancient origins of the novel, although here in Nietzsche with much more of a negative evaluative slant. Like Bakhtin, Nietzsche sees the novel as that generic form into which all other existing linguistic and literary genres could be amalgamated and incorporated. Whereas Bakhtin on occasion refers to poetry as becoming "novelised", that is, taking on a dialogical character, Nietzsche sees poetry as becoming disastrously ancillary to "dialectic philosophy" as both of them become incorporated into the novel. Consequently, the latter becomes the dominant form of literature, and one that is overwhelmingly Apollonian in nature, in other words in violation of Nietzsche's most basic aesthetic tenet. But is he right in all this? Let us consider another view:

> What we seem mainly to have learned is that a reader familiar with music may discover analogies between literary and musical structures especially in narrative developments which suggest that memories of musical forms enhance his awareness of his literary experience with esthetic structure. It appears to be clear enough that musical forms occur in fiction; but it is less convincing that musical compositions depend on narrative analogies. (Reaver 1985, 8)

The question of analogy is important here. It applies especially to questions of tone and harmony; these concepts can only be applied to artistic prose as analogy. However, in the case of rhythm it is less clear that we are dealing with pure analogy. I will make the case that there are rhythms to be found in prose fiction at two different levels: at the level of discourse, or at a more micro level of syntax. Yet another analogy is offered in this description of Jane Bowles's novel *Two Serious Ladies*:

> Like a classical symphony *Two Serious Ladies* in written in three movements. The first and last sections focus on Miss Christina Goering and her journeys into the local world beyond her ancestral home. The middle section, the minuet, follows her friend, Mrs. Frieda Copperfield, as she discovers her sense of volition in the jungle and brothels of colonial Panama. (Sivan undated, no pag.)

Such analogies with music are inevitable with an art form that like music is temporal in its organisation. If we adopt an unashamedly modern and dialectical view of the relationship between Apollo and Dionysus in art and literature, we might expect to recover this dialectic in prose fiction, as a matter of course. After all, like poetry, drama, dance and music, literary fiction is unfolded in time, unlike the plastic and pictorial arts, which no doubt only achieve movement and change with difficulty, just as absolute

music, such as the symphony, must struggle to present us with dreamlike *images*.

Bolaño's *The Savage Detectives* is again an interesting case in which to examine such problems. Let me mention two paradoxical facts that make it promising and intriguing in countering the excesses of Nietzsche's (still rather immature) polemic. For one thing *TSD* is almost entirely devoted to poets and poetry in its subject matter (including its lifestyle axiology), yet almost no poetry appears in it. Secondly, and even more unusually, it incorporates certain diagrams and pictorial images into the text, including one enigmatic example that ends the novel. The only "poem" of Cesárea Tinajero, the poet at the ethical and thematic centre of the novel, that appears in it is in fact one of these diagrams, rather than what we would normally consider a poem. And perhaps one additional fact that makes this text a good case in posing an alternative to Nietzsche is that he himself is mentioned in it several times. So, returning to *TSD*, what we may perhaps see is that artistic prose has effects that are analogous to those of music, and that these may be regarded as central to its aesthetics.

The temporal organisation of content

A basic thesis here is that literary fiction has come to realise a degree of what I will term rhythm of discourse as fundamental to its aesthetics. There are forms of storytelling that hardly appear to have this at all. In such a story, what happens is that the order in which matters are revealed to the reader or hearer is exactly the same order in which they have occurred. If there is a process leading to a denouement and a resolution then it is a unitary process of both revelation *and* chronological occurrence. This is not what we have come to expect from the novel, where scene and time shifts commonly interact with one another to create a more complex rhythm, and in which it is even possible for the "denouement of revelation" to occur at a much earlier time than other events, even if it comes at the end of the novel and indeed leads to some sort of resolution. This is the case with *The Savage Detectives*, where the death of the "bad guys" and the living-happily-ever-after of the "good guys" (García Madero and Lupe) bring the novel to an end even while these are chronologically among the earlier events of the novel (by twenty years). But as we shall see its narrative rhythms are more complex even than this.

We can contrast this with Behr's *Embrace*, discussed earlier, where the rhythm of the discourse is much simpler. In the latter case there is a rhythm of back and forth between two different time periods, each of which

corresponds with a social and spatial setting, the main character's idyllic childhood at home, on the one hand, and the years of school and sexual experience on the other. As I pointed out, this is rather like a very simple piece of music which alternates between two chords, each of which has more or less the same number of bars. There are only slight variations to be found in this rhythm, so that one might say that it is hardly polyrhythmic. In *The Savage Detectives*, the question of time is a much more complex one. It is justifiably described as a polyrhythmic work in that its rhythm of discourse is unusually complex in this way. In the last chapter I mentioned that there were four overlapping time sequences in *TSD*: the chronology of events; the order of the presentation of events; the chronology of the narratives; the order of the presentation of the narratives. Let us look at these a little more closely now.

While a *chronology of events* is the basis of all narrative and storytelling, when it is taken on its own in prose it tends towards the monotonous and unaesthetic. Nevertheless the, chronology of events revealed in the order in which the events occurred serves as a point of departure for fiction, a kind of a priori from which the development of fiction must depart. In most cases, even when there are radical departures from this rhythm, one assumes that the chronology of events can be retrieved or reconstructed, with the appropriate degree of attention and effort. In the case of *TSD* that may require some careful rereading to accomplish. In the *order of the presentation of events*, earlier events can be revealed to the reader later than subsequent events, a technique that has become fairly common in novels, for example with the "flashback" technique. But the author of *TSD* employs two more radical departures.

The first of these radical departures is in *the chronology of the narratives*. With over fifty narrators, there needs to be some way in which these are ordered and thereby rendered intelligible. The technique used is to specify when the narratives were delivered, with the date and place supplied in a subheading of each. The places are mostly urban locations such as a street, a café, an office and so forth. The gap between this time of narration and the time of the events being narrated varies from one narrator to another. The narrations themselves range over approximately twenty years, from 1976 to 1996.

However, there is a further complication in the *order of the presentation of the narratives*. The order in which the reader encounters the narrators and their narratives may not be chronological, although it is in most cases. But there is one narrative event that is privileged over the others. It is the single

narrative of Amadeo Salvatierra, which is dated 1976 and the reader is returned to it at fairly regular intervals. Even while the other narrations continue to progress chronologically, Amadeo's narrative concerning a night he spent in conversation with Arturo and Ulises is serialised, so to speak, appearing intermittently amongst the narratives of other later and later narrations. This can be contrasted with the narrations of Joaquin Font, father of Angelica and Maria, for example, which have various dates and places, including an asylum in which he spends a period as an inmate.

These last two departures make this novel truly polyrhythmic in a sense that few others match. What needs to be illustrated below is how this technique of narrative intersects with the various categories in the anatomy of the act.

After García Madero's journal entries take us to the beginning of 1976 and the dramatic flight from the Font house and the thugs in the Camaro, the narratives of other characters begin. One of these is privileged over the others in the way already mentioned: the narrative of Amadeo Salvatierra is dated as January 1976, which means that he is delivering his narrative at the same time that the events in the Sonora desert, including the death of Cesárea Tinajero, are taking place. In Amadeo's narrative he describes a visit from Arturo and Ulises to his home at some time earlier and the all-night drinking session and poetry discussion that ensues. Amadeo has known Cesárea since her youth. We have been reading García Madero's journal entry about the flight from the Font's house and the lurking thugs. Now we are (gradually) made aware that he is describing the visit at just the same time that those two are fleeing northwards with Lupe and García Madero in Mr Font's Impala. In the visit of Arturo and Ulises the main concern of the two boys is to quiz Amadeo about his memories of Cesárea and the poetic milieu of her time, the 1920s, whom they regard as the earliest forerunners of the visceral realists.

Part of the rhythmic nature of this text then is that Amadeo's narrative, which is all concerned with that same night breaks off and resumes at very regular intervals, in twelve separate instalments, but each time it picks up as if it had not been interrupted. Concerned as it is with just one night with Arturo and Ulises in his home, in which several bottles of mezcal and tequila are drunk, there is much discussion on the early days of avant-garde poetry and Cesárea Tinajero, which Amadeo is able to remember and for which he has their utmost and rather touching respect. But what we do not realise as readers—Amadeo also does not realise it—until very late in the novel is that Amadeo is speaking to us at the same time that Cesárea is being killed in the desert.

The polyrhythmic aspect that I mentioned lies partly in the fact that the other narrations—by various characters—are presented in chronological order, although the events that they describe, many of them connected with Arturo and Ulises, span a range of places and times, from the beginning of the 1970s until the 1990s. The narrations themselves are dated from 1976 until 1996 (Bolaño was apparently still busy writing the novel in 1996). Altogether there are 95 instances of narration, including those of Amadeo, and a total of 53 different narrators, excluding García Madero's journal entries of 1975-1976, which begin and close the novel. Most of the leading characters get a chance at narrating—Arturo, Ulises and Lupe are exceptions and do not themselves narrate—and most of the minor characters who narrate only do so once.

Each character narrative that appears is delivered at a later time than the previous one and the date and place of its delivery is announced in a subheading, with Amadeo's January 1976 narration being the sole exception. The incidents they describe, however, are not in chronological order; they depend on the memories and inclinations of the character-narrators. Some go further back from the time of narrating than others. All of this means that the chronology of events is quite out of alignment with the order of the reading of the book, in some cases very much so. For example, near the end of the book in Amadeo's very last narration of 1976 he tells us that Arturo and Ulises vowed to find Cesárea, and very soon after that, in Garcia Madero's journal entries that close the book, we see that they were witnesses to her death. But in the meantime, we have followed the lives of Arturo and Ulises as late as 1996. So, if Cesárea's death is a denouement—as it seems—it is an unusual one in that it occurs much earlier in time than most of the rest of the novel's events. It breaks with the tradition of a "chronological denouement" while nevertheless presenting a "dramatic denouement".

So, January 1976 is a pivotal date: it is the date under discussion when the novel comes to an end; it is the date when Amadeo's intermittent narrative occurs; it is the date when Cesárea Tinajero dies in the Sonora Desert; it is the date when Garcia Madero and Lupe move into her former house and their story ends—1976 keeps coming back. When we follow the later lives of Arturo and Ulises we do so in ignorance (at least on a first reading) of the fact that Cesárea is already dead. This is an extremely adventurous exploitation of one of the key elements of the novel, the fact that it unfolds in time, an element whose potential is apparently only limited by the cognitive powers of a reader to reconstruct. But is this not what we do in actuality, reconstruct the past on the basis of new knowledge and on the

basis of experiences that have intervened in our live? This is what Bolaño's novel forces us to do in fiction to an extent that few others do.

In these various narratives we get a quasi-infinite set of judgments and memories of the two central characters. For example, Laura Jauregui, a former girlfriend of Arturo, remembers him as a student:

> That's what Arturo Belano was like, a stupid, conceited peacock. And visceral realism was his exhausting dance of love for me. The thing was I didn't love him anymore. You can woo a girl with a poem, but you can't hold on to her with a poem. Not even with a poetry movement. (1998, 172)

Maria Font, in December 1976 remembers Arturo and Ulises returning from Sonora, without her father's car. She meets them in Cafe Quito, one of the regular haunts in the novel for meetings and partings. They tell her they are leaving, Ulises for Paris, Arturo for Spain, and the further adventures that will be related by other narrators. She thinks of angrily demanding the return of her father's car and, alternatively, of sleeping with both of them in some hotel, but then leaves them without giving voice to either alternative.

Auxilio Lacouture, who also happens to be the sole narrator in Bolaño's earlier novel *Amulet*—goes further back in her only narrative contribution (also of December 1976) to her first memory of Arturo:

> I am the mother of Mexican poetry. I know all the poets and all the poets know me. I met Arturo Belano when he was sixteen years old and he was a shy boy who didn't know how to drink. (1998, 195).

This memory of Arturo, however, gives way almost immediately to her own autobiography, from her origins in Uruguay to her adventures in Mexico, which she was never to leave. Chief among these is her experience of 1968 and the state repression of that year, and its crackdown on students in particular. The central incident is finding herself in the toilet when armed soldiers with tanks invaded the university campus and began rounding up students. She spends two weeks in the toilet determined not to be taken prisoner, thankful that at least the water has not been turned off. And into this narrative she weaves her personal history as a bohemian academic and her affection for Arturo. Her memory of his journey to his native Chile in 1973 is particularly touching and significant and worth quoting at some length:

> … Arturo Belano, who was sixteen or seventeen and who began to grow up as I watched and who in 1973 decided to return to his homeland to join the revolution. And I was the only one besides his family who went to see him

off at the bus station, since he was travelling overland, a long journey, extremely long, plagued with dangers, the journey of initiation of all poor Latin American boys, crossing this absurd continent, and when Arturito Belano looked out of the window of the bus to wave goodbye to us, it wasn't just his mother who cried, I cried too, and that night I slept at his family's house … And when Arturo returned in 1974, he was a different person. Allende had fallen and he had done his duty, and his conscience, the terrible conscience of a young Latin American male, had nothing with which to reproach itself. He had presented himself as a volunteer on September 11. He had mounted absurd guard in a deserted street. He had gone out at night; he had seen things. Then, days later, he had been arrested at a police checkpoint. They didn't torture him, but he was held captive for a few days and during that time behaved like a man. (1998, 201)

It may seem that this sentimental account is some sort of wish fulfilment on the part of the author. After all the facts recounted above fit quite precisely with the facts of Bolaño's own trip to Chile at that time. Wouldn't he have liked a woman who herself has suffered political repression to understand *him* in just this way? However, she goes on to say:

But when he got back he wasn't the same. He started to go out with other, younger people, snot-nosed kids of sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, he met Ulises Lima (a bad influence, I thought so from the first time I saw him), he started to make fun of all his old friends, look down on them, see everything as if he were Dante and he's just returned from hell, or not Dante, I mean, but Virgil himself, such a sensitive boy, and he started to smoke marijuana, that vulgar weed, and deal substances I'd rather not even think about. But deep down he was still as nice as ever, I know he was. (1998, 201)

Could it be that these thoughts are substantially similar to Bolaño's own thoughts and memories during the last years of his life when he was writing the works that were about to make him famous? Is this to some extent not his own way of reflecting on his youth as a rebellious poet and under the sorts of influence mentioned by Auxilio? We cannot know the answers to such questions, but what does emerge is his intense sense of his own milieu, his "generation", and the time in which he came of age. What exactly is it that he is sharing with his readers, when he describes his work as a love letter to his generation? In the previous chapter I suggested that a key to the ethic of a work of fiction lies in an author's own relationship to a milieu or milieux of the actual world, of his/her own experience. When one senses the presence of the author in the work as strongly as this, as I mentioned briefly in connection with Coetzee's *Summertime*, then perhaps innovative techniques are what bring this about. The style of narrative adopted by Bolaño, with the multiple narrators and shifting time perspectives, seems to

have been selected to give a satisfying sense of a whole self, a self that resembles his own, and that does justice to the complex and many-sided nature of a life remembered with the wisdom of hindsight. In this view, style, in the sense intended in the anatomy of the act I presented, is not merely some idiosyncrasy of an author or some decorative aspect of a work, but it is rather an element whereby the whole act of authorship achieves its range of substantial purposes. With that in mind, one may find an almost unbearably sad or regretful aspect of authorship in the memory from Auxilio:

> And so when we met (purely by chance, because we didn't see the same people anymore) he would say how are you Auxilio, or he'd shout help, help! help! From the sidewalk on Avenida Bucareli, jumping around like a monkey with a taco or a piece of pizza in his hand, always with that Laura Jauregui, who was gorgeous, though her heart was blacker than a black widow's heart, and Ulises Lima, and that other little Chilean, Felipe Muller, and sometimes I would even bring myself to join his group, but they spoke in *glíglico* ... you could tell they liked me, you could tell they knew who I was, but they spoke in *glíglico* and that made it hard to follow the ins and outs and ups and downs of the conversation, which ultimately drove me off. Let no one think they laughed at me! They listened to me! But I didn't speak their *glíglico* and the poor kids were incapable of giving up that slang. Those poor abandoned kids. Because that was the situation: no one wanted them. Or no one took them seriously. And one day someone said to me: Arturo Belano has left Mexico. And then: let's hope this time he doesn't come back. (1998, 201-202)

We have seen that Laura Jauregui did not have anything good to say about Arturo in her narrative (*a stupid, conceited peacock*), and, one cannot avoid wondering, was the author when writing these narratives not perhaps thinking of his youth and reevaluating his own friendships of the time? Why did Bolaño himself decide to leave Mexico for Europe at this time? The vehemently negative portrayals of Arturo, such as Laura's, are apparently at odds with Auxilio's, but can nevertheless be seen as complementary to the latter. The following is an even more derogatory description provided by an artist, a painter, who knew Arturo and Ulises purely as drug dealers:

> Of course, we never considered them to be real poets. Much less revolutionaries. They were salesmen, and that was all. We respected Octavio Paz, for example, and they held him in utter contempt, willfully ignorant. That's just unacceptable, don't you think? (1998, 348)

It is perhaps worth reiterating concerning the artifice of these various narratives and their multifunctionality. Their "speakers" are all characters

in the novel. The last-mentioned narration, dated June 1981, is said to have simply been delivered in a street, "Calle Toledo", addressed to whom, as with all of them, we do not know. The narrative from Auxilio, quoted above that, is dated December 1976, not very long after some of the events of the early 1970s that it relates (despite its nostalgic notes), and the place given is just "Faculty of Literature, UNAM". Her contribution is ten pages long, thus very difficult to imagine as continuous speech—once again, to whom?—and, if we are to imagine this as being written, then it would have to be part of some autobiographical work. However, there are very many such narratives and they clearly cannot all be parts of (pseudo-)autobiographies. Some of them occur in streets, others in cafes, lunatic asylums, darkened offices and so on. This is a crucial point, the significance of which one tends to absorb slowly while reading, and especially rereading, *TSD*.

What we have is a technique, an artifice, whereby a life can be constructed from various points of view, even though no author can *know* these points of view, no matter how "autobiographical" the work is, no matter even if each one of these character-narrators is based on someone once known by the author. Through the use of narrators, character speech is representative of character thoughts. This "speech" is not speech as such—it is not even the representation of speech—it is the use of conversational speech *style* to represent character thoughts. The speech, which is not speech but rather thought and memory, is couched in the speech style of the character as a type, the way the character *would* speak *if* she were speaking. Nevertheless, by the many iterations of this technique, the narrative emerges for *us* in its many-sided nature and the nature of the various character types that have constituted a milieu, with its surrounding antagonists. But, I suggest, can these character thoughts not also be read as an author's self-critical reflections on his own life, projected onto the observations of others, *like* those others whom he actually knew?

Style and characterisation

Style in fiction is inseparable from social heterogeneity and an author's perspective on the same. This matter can be illustrated by a simple example from the Raymond Chandler novel discussed earlier: It is an extract from the "society section" of a newspaper being read by the narrator, Marlowe, and it is clearly multifunctional in its satirical intent as well as a means of performing narrative and characterisation functions:

> Your correspondent is all fluttery at the news that Terry and Sylvia Lennox
> have rehitched at Las Vegas, the dears. She's the younger daughter of

multimillionaire Harlan Potter of San Francisco and Pebble Beach, of course. Sylvia is having Marcel and Jeanne Duhaux redecorate the entire mansion in Encino from basement to roof in the most *devastatingly denier Sri*. Curt Westerheym, Silvia's last but one, my dears, gave her the little eighteen-room shack for a wedding present, you may remember. And what ever happened to Curt, you ask? Or do you? St Tropez has the answer, and permanently, I hear. Also a certain very, *very* blue-blooded French duchess with two perfectly adorable children. And what does Harlan Potter think of the remarriage, you may also ask? One can only guess. Mr Potter is one person who but *never* gives an interview. How exclusive can you get, darlings? (*TLG* 1989, 16)

It is surely not necessary to do a complete stylistic analysis of this passage— its most obvious characteristics being its "camp" phraseology and its consistent use of signifiers of wealth and pretentious French references—in order to connect this style with the value system that is advanced in this novel. The celebration here of the wealth and superficiality of the milieu under discussion and the sycophantic character of its supporters contrasts maximally with the values of the shabby but principled character of the character-narrator. There is little room left to doubt that Chandler himself admires Marlowe's values more than those of the writer of the society column. Here is a meeting of style and substance of the kind we see in regard to characterisation virtually throughout fictional prose, sometimes starkly, as in the above example, sometimes more subtly. In all cases though, style serves as a means for the perspective on a milieu or on a character type to emerge, and this is a tendency that has only increased in the further development of the modern novel, as compared with its ancient and medieval antecedents.

The observations that were made earlier on Bolaño's novel came out of a consideration on the aesthetic elements of this novel, particularly the way in which its rhythmic nature enhances the depictions of character in a many-sided way, that is, not only from the perspectives of various characters in relation to one another, but also from various points in time, thereby subverting the linear format of the novel in a special way that I have termed polyrhythmic. The same novel could also be analysed with respect to "polyphony", that is, in terms of contrasting registers, dialects and speech styles, as mentioned in the last few sentences of the subsection on rhythm above. The vast array of narrators alone, with their various voices and speech styles ensures that we have a form of polyphonic discourse of the kind that is difficult to replicate in any literary genre other than prose fiction. The use of multiple character-narrators brings about a radical "refracting" of the author's own voice. This kind of refraction, coming about as it does

through the authorial discourse assuming a plethora of narrating personae, with the polyphonic nature of the resulting discourse, may not always be carried out in this radical way, but is nevertheless inherent to some extent in fictional prose in general.

The metaphors being mixed here, refraction and polyphony, while potentially awkward, bring us back to Nietzsche's challenge to the aesthetics of literature, and its most modern manifestations in prose fiction. Recall the dialectic of Apollo and Dionysus. If Apollo is with the visual, the image and the concept, Dionysus is with the rhythm, the harmony and the tone. Refraction as a visual metaphor suggests to us a breaking up into oblique relationships of a line at a certain point; author's discourse refracts into characters' "voices". Polyphony suggests the tones that make up a harmony, but also the tones that can make up a *dissonance* or a cacophony of different melodies sounding at once, as opposed to the monological nature of other genres. Both of these metaphors, refraction and polyphony, are used by Bakhtin and it is to him once more that we may turn for further clarification.

Bakhtin's approach has one central concern, the celebration of heteroglossia, which in his view is the prime characteristic of the novel, contrasted with unitary languages such as are characteristic of poetry and various kinds of authoritative discourse. One might paraphrase him by saying that fiction celebrates heterogeneity through heteroglossia. Let us take three extracts from two of Bolaño's narrators in *TSD* to show how speech styles of various characters enable a reader to imagine various social types and their mentalities. The first two of these are from the American character Barbara Patterson, both of them in which she is complaining about her Mexican boyfriend Rafael. The last is from the Spanish lawyer Xosé Lendoiro, whom we have already seen satirised in my last chapter. They exhibit perhaps the most basic principle of fictional heterogeneity, the extreme contrast between "low" and "high" speech in the same work, the principle being: social heterogeneity manifests (largely) as heteroglossia. The first of Barbara's extracts is one of the few narrations in the book which appears to connect with another, Rafael's own narration on the previous page. Let me emphasise again that no addressee is specified for any of these narrations:

> Politics? That son of bitch! That piece of butt-hair-encrusted shit. What does that dumb-fuck know about politics? I was the one who said: take up politics, Rafael, take up some noble cause, goddam it you're a freaking man of the people, and the bastard would look at me like I was shit, some piece of trash, like he was looking down from some imaginary height, and he would say:

cool it Barbarita, it's not so easy, and then he'd go to sleep and I'd have to go out to work … (1998, 340)

One day I said things can't go on like this. Rafael wasn't doing anything. He didn't work, he didn't write. He didn't help me clean the house, he didn't do the shopping, all he did was take showers (because if nothing else, Rafael is clean, like practically all fucking Mexicans) and watch TV until dawn or go out for beers or play soccer with the fucking Chicanos in the neighbourhood. (198, 365)

In any case I don't tell Claudio everything that happens to me. *Imperita confidentiam erudito timorem creat*. For example: I haven't told him that my family is unaware of the state of my health. For example: I haven't told him that I've strictly forbidden them to come and visit me. For example: I haven't told him that I know with absolute certainty that I won't die in his Ospedale Britannico but one night in the middle of the Parco di Traiano, hidden in the shrubs. Will I drag myself, will I be brought by my own powers to my last leafy hiding place or will it be others, Roman hoods, Roman hustlers, Roman psychopaths, who hide my body, their corpus delecti, under the burning bush? In any case, I know I'll die in the baths or the park. I know that the giant or the shadow of the giant will shrink as the howls are unbottled from the Domus Aurea and spread all over Rome, a black and ominous cloud, and I know that the giant will say or whisper, save the boy, and I know that no one will hear his plea. (1998, 473-474)

Even in his illness and in his hallucinogenic dementia, Lendoiro's idiom remains intact: his showing off of his scholarly knowledge of Romance languages, the general formality and stiltedness of his own language, the "poetic" style of rhythmic repetition and the obscure symbolism that harks back to the abyss theme. The contrast between the two narrators above, "low" and "high" respectively, expresses, at the level of style, the relationship between Bolaño's central milieu and its antagonised others. Barbara's and Lendoiro's narratives are radically different refractions of the author's discourse. As narrators they might also be thought of as singing two very different sorts of tunes. A particular claim of Bakhtin's argument is that poetic language is an "ennobled" type of language, since it stands on the side of the unifying, centralising pole of "high" language (monoglossia). While not necessarily viewing all of poetry in this way, he nevertheless identifies a tendency which dominates and conditions it:

… the language of poetic genres, when they approach their stylistic limit, often becomes authoritarian, dogmatic and conservative, sealing itself off from the influence of extra literary social dialects. Therefore such ideas as a special "poetic language", a "language of the gods", a "priestly language of poetry" and so forth could flourish on poetic soil. It is noteworthy that the

> poet, should he not accept the given literary language, will sooner resort to the exploitation of a new language specifically for poetry than he will to the actual exploitation of actual available social dialects. (1981, 287)

In contrast, living discourse, the discourse of the novel, is always dialogical:

> The word, breaking through to its own meaning and its own expression across an environment full of alien words and variously evaluating accents, harmonising with some of the elements in this environment and striking a dissonance with others, is able in this dialogued process, to shape its own stylistic profile and tone.

> Such is the *image in artistic prose* and the image of *novelistic prose* in particular. In the atmosphere of the novel, the direct and unmediated intention of a word presents itself as something impermissibly naive, something in fact impossible, for naïveté itself, under authentic novelistic conditions takes on the nature of an internal polemic and is consequently dialogised … Such a dialogised image can occur in all the poetic genres as well, even in the lyric (to be sure without setting the tone). But such an image can fully unfold, achieve full complexity and depth and at the same time artistic closure, only under the conditions present in the genre of the novel. (1998, 278)

One can and must add that the converse also applies: the unifying and ennobling tendency can make its appearance in the novel, as when one idealises to one degree another the language of a transcendent third-person narrator, or even the speech of characters (such as Lendoiro), or, more unusually, in cases where an author creates an artificial language for the aspiration and purpose of writing a "poetic novel". I will return to this point shortly.

Concerning the word finding its "own expression" in a fictional context, an interesting example is provided by the use of *poetry* and *poet* that we have seen in Bolaño's novel. A poet there is different from what Bakhtin (or Nietzsche) is describing; it is someone who *lives* "poetically", a "romantic anarchist" as Andrews (2014) puts it with reference to Bolaño himself. Yet it does *also* take on a meaning directly akin to Bakhtin's sense, especially when there is reference to the establishment poets that the visceral realists oppose, and the example of Lendoiro. This difference is precisely what is at stake in the eventual meeting of Ulises Lima and Nobel prize winner Octavio Paz in a park. Paz is just the sort of poet that has been scorned by Ulises and his friends, while Ulises himself is just the sort of poet that Paz has never even heard of; a significant moment in *TSD*.

Bakhtin discusses the "compositional forms for appropriating and organising heteroglossia" in the various types of novel that have emerged during the long history of its development. For example, in the case of the comic (especially English) novel he identifies a particular kind of relationship between the author and "language conceived as the common view," which "demands a conventional shifting of the distance between author and language." (1981, 302) But further: "

> Shifts from common language to parodying of generic and other languages and shifts to the direct authorial word may be gradual, or may be on the contrary quite abrupt. Thus does the system of language work in the comic novel." (1981, 302)

What is significant is that Bakhtin's demonstration that there are always other voices that are available to the writer of fiction and that it is a hallmark of fiction that these can be incorporated into the authorial discourse, for example this from Dickens's *Little Dorrit*:

> The conference was held at four or five o'clock in the afternoon, when all of Harley street and Cavendish square was resonant of carriage-wheels and double-knocks. It has reached this point when Mr. Merdle came home from *his daily occupation of causing the British name to be more and more respected in all parts of the civilised globe capable of appreciation of wholewide commercial enterprise and gigantic combinations of skill ad capital.* (Book I, ch.33, quoted by Bakhtin 1981, 303)

Here the third-person narrative incorporates another discourse, indicated by Bakhtin's italics, which is not to be associated with the author himself, but rather expresses, for satirical purposes, the views of the dominant political class, as might be expressed by one of its members in a public speech. Bakhtin presents many such examples, and here is a somewhat different and perhaps more subtle case from the same Dickens novel:

> But Mr Tite Barnacle was a buttoned-up man, and consequently a weighty one. (Book 2, ch.12, quoted by Bakhtin 1981, 305)

This is an example of what Bakhtin calls hybrid construction. The logical connection appears to conceal and reveal at once the fact that the "author's opinion" in the first clause is being contrasted with that of "public opinion" in the second. Through such stylistic means the author creates the relationship between heteroglossia and fiction, through incorporation, often with ironic effect. In such ways the stylistic choices of the author serve not only to illustrate content, that is, to show how various classes of people actually speak, but to express an evaluative stance towards the various social

groups that would produce similar utterances, thereby connecting style with substance, as also seen somewhat differently in the "society page" example from Chandler. We have seen something similar in Bolaño, for example in the case of the Latin-quoting lawyer Lendoiro, where the use of style, and the self-glorification it indicates once again bring together style and substance in the presentation of the author's perspective.

Poetic prose

Just as fiction incorporates other varieties and genres of discourse, so it does too with poetic language. I will continue under the influence of Nietzsche to consider this as the unity of sound and image, musical and visual art, Dionysus and Apollo. But let us draw also some caution from Nietzsche:

> By no means is it possible for language adequately to render the cosmic symbolism of music, for the very reason that music stands in symbolic relation to the primordial contradiction and primordial pain in the heart of the Primordial Unity, and therefore symbolises a sphere which is above all appearance and before all phenomena. Rather should we say that all phenomena, compared with it, are but symbols: hence language, as the organ and symbol of phenomena, cannot at all disclose the innermost essence, of music; language can only be in superficial contact with music when it attempts to imitate music; while the profoundest significance of the latter cannot be brought one step nearer to us by all the eloquence of lyric poetry. (1910, no pag.)

If tragedy can emerge from the spirit of music, through its fusion of symbolic language with musical sounds then this is a principle that one should accept for literature in general, as a potentiality. It is no doubt true that there is language that is quite devoid of music, and no doubt Nietzsche would have consigned much of fiction to this category. I have possibly done enough to show that there is something of music in much of fiction, specifically as a form of art that unfolds in time. What remains is the question of poetic prose, and here I want to draw attention to a form of writing very common in novels, that, while it can be described in musical terms, at the same time is filled with the sensibilities of visual art. This is not the prose of dialogue or of action, but the prose of poetic description, and it plays an important role in the writing of fiction. This is an example from Jean Rhys's novel *Voyage in the Dark*:

> There was a red-shaded lamp on the table, and heavy pink silk curtains over the windows. There was a hard, straight-backed sofa, and two chairs with curved legs against the wall—all upholstered in red. The Hoffner Hotel and

Restaurant, the place was. called. The Hoffner Hotel and Restaurant, Hanover Square. (1968, 18).

In much of Jean Rhys's descriptions of interior and exterior environments one finds a distinction between those that are "posh" or "swanky" and those that are shabby or tawdry. These descriptions clearly relate to topicalisation, to the changing fortunes of her heroines, who generally tend to be insecure financially and emotionally. Their relations with men are an invariable factor in these changing situations. In the above passage Ana has been taken to the venue by the central male character in the novel, a man of means. The establishment described is clearly of the "posh" variety.

In what does the aesthetic nature of such a passage consist? The Dionysian aspect is found firstly in the syntactic rhythms, for example the repetition if *There was* as the predicator of each of the first two sentences, and the way the full name of the establishment is repeated as the beginning of each of the last two sentences (or fragment in the case of the last one), also the alliteration in the last phrase. The shifting of a repeated element to the beginning of consecutive structures is a common rhythmic device in Rhys. The *red/pink* motif, the seating descriptions and even the Germanic names (*Hoffner/Hanover*) provide the element of lexical-semantic harmony. Such is the music of the passage. But these harmonised items arise sequentially in the description as the reader builds up an image of the interior scene. The Apollonian elements are of two kinds: The first is that of the image: line, colour and texture of the various furbishments in the room. In the shabby or tawdry environments in the same novel we tend to be told of the floral and/or dirty wall-paper and chintz, as well as other equally tasteless and mawkish décor items. From such descriptions *conceptual* meanings arise, such as wealth, good taste and the relative deprivation of the heroine. In the above description the room is revealed as "swanky"; it is for people of means who have good taste. This meaning is reinforced by the altogether risible moment in the narrative preceding the above description, when Anna's refined beau complains to the horrified waiter that the wine he brought was *corked*, forcing him to sniff it too and then go off to rectify the matter.

In this combination of the music of syntactic rhythm and lexical harmony, on the one hand, with the discourse-semantic elements of image and concept/topic, on the other, that the aesthetic dialectic of poetic prose resides. A constitutive principle of prose fiction that has not been discussed yet is how such poetic prose alternates and interacts with narrative-functional writing. This can be seen in comparing two passages from John

Fowles's novella *The Ebony Tower*. These two passages occur fairly close together, the first dwelling on the scene that presents itself to the character David as he arrives on his mission to meet the celebrated artist Breasley at his home in Brittany:

> There was a graveled courtyard opposite the southward of the house. Geraniums by the foot of the wall, two old climbing roses, a scatter of white does on the roof; all the shutters were in use, the place asleep. But the main door, with a heraldic stone shield above, its details effaced by time, and placed eccentrically toward the west end of the house, was lodged open. (1999, 5)

In common with much of this kind of descriptive prose, the passage begins with *There was*, as in the Rhys example above. Poetic licence is observable in the sequence phrases with the verbless structures in lieu of declarative sentences. The main rhythmic pattern is created by the various nouns or noun phrases being followed regularly by prepositional phrases almost throughout the extract: *by the foot*; *of the wall*; *of white doves*; *on the roof*; *by time*; *toward the west end*; *of the house*. A sense of inaction and slumber is created by the complete absence of active verbs. There is no dissonance to disturb the harmonious description of the various descriptive terms, all of which form the set relating to rustic quietness and age. Only the open door creates a slight element of narrative tension. This prose is poetic in its very close union of visual imagery and verbal rhythm and harmony. After several such passages we come to the following:

> David had been warned by the publishing house—by the senior member of it who had set the project up—of the reefs, far more formidable than locked gates, that surrounded any visit to Coëtminais. (1999, 10)

This is a quite different style of writing, with almost nothing in it poetic, all of it functional narrative with a touch of drama. We are given an explanation of why he was there and what his mission might be in visiting the eccentric old artist. The ominous dramatic note is signaled by the warning of the *formidable reefs* that might be awaiting David in this ostensibly bucolic situation.

These two types of passage are both very common in fictional works that attempt to balance poetic passages with narrative or dramatic ones. The effect is rather like people stopping to admire a scene or a picture and after a suitable pause saying "alright back to business!" Not all fiction incorporates poetic prose in this way alongside dialogue and action, but a great many works do and it is a characteristic style of certain authors.

What I have done in this chapter is to show through examples how it is that questions of form and style are combined in practice with those of content and substance. In the final chapter I bring these together in a conceptual manner via as return to the theoretical model and an explication of its workings.

CHAPTER SIX

PROGNOSIS:
PRAGMATICS FOR READERS

Summary and topics for further research

In Chapter 4 I introduced an "anatomy of the act," which is a model that sums up the approach that I have adopted in my pragmatics of fiction. In this concluding chapter we need to consider the potential of this model to explain the nature of acts performed in the reading, writing and appreciation of fiction. While I believe it to be robust enough to cover all cases and to illuminate all of them from the point of view of the agon of authorship that I have adopted, this will need to be established in further studies. What I will do here is attempt to show that this project is worth pursuing. Here is the matrix once again, this time relabeled in terms of *intentionality*, which is central to the field of pragmatics:

	A. SUBJECT MATTER	B. STRUCTURE
1. IMMEDIACY/SURFACE PHENOMENON	*Referential intention* Content: character, incident, milieu, situation	*Linguistic intention* Style: technique, dialect & register, lexis, prosody
2. REFLECTION/DELAY IN RECOGNITION	*Ethical intention* Substance: ethic, perspective, axiology	*Generic intention* Form: convention, genre, sub-genre, organisation of content, "chronotope"

Let us consider this model as a whole now in the light of an example, but let me first forestall one possible criticism of this anatomy of the act. It could be argued that the model is not specific to fiction, as such, but is far more general than that; it could be applicable to a very wide range of communicative acts, both written or spoken, or even accomplished by semiotic means other than language. This may be true. However, that would miss the point that was made early in this book, namely (a) that there is no model in the field of pragmatics that is *adequate* to fictional literature in all its agonistic dimensions, and, further, (b) that this may be symptomatic of a general area of weakness in pragmatics. Earlier I considered certain available models, particularly speech act theory, that fell well short of the mark, and some other eclectic approaches that have made valuable contributions, but none that could systematically draw together all the dimensions of the act in their interrelatedness.

I began by considering Charles Morris and his view of pragmatics as part of a general semiotics, that it consisted in the relationship between a sign and a sign user. I have made the case that the notion of intentionality is essential to building on Morris's insight. This is based on my commitment to a particular notion of agency. The *user* of a sign is an intentional agent. It is key in speech act theory, but it has other dimensions that are missing there. The further step for the agon of authorship that I have outlined was provided by the notion of ethical intention. On that basis I have argued that substance in fiction is ethical intention. This fundamental notion of intentionality has now been elaborated through the quadratic model above.

The strength of this model lies partly, I believe, in its avoidance of sterile conceptual antinomic pairings such as form vs. content, or style vs. substance. At the same time, it purposely avoids the introduction of unnecessary new "scientistic" terminology, such as one encounters sometimes in literary theory, semiotics and narratology, and which sometimes appears to sow more "professional debate" than is useful. What is needed is not categorial rigidity but rather a fluidity in the use of concepts. I have of course used binary distinctions, firstly, between subject matter (A) and structure (B), but I have used these contrasts in passing in a descriptive manner and as oppositions to be overcome in the working of the model. The same applies to immediacy (1) and reflection (2). The temporal aspects of these distinctions will be alluded to below.

Perhaps then it might be better to think of the four parts of the model also as *aspects* of it rather than as categories, because once one thinks in a categorial way then the question of boundaries tends to become a limitation,

if not outright distortion, of thought. I have noticed when working with this model that each of the four parts sometimes appears to have the other three parts "reflected back" into it in some manner. For example, style and form: the intention of an author's style often appears to be as a way of modifying or reshaping narrative form. This is apparent in Bolaño, where his rhythms of narrative in *TSD* make use of traditional genre schemas, especially of adventure and quest, but radically reshape them in the complexities of his narrative style. Another example: it can be the case that form has a certain ethical substantiality inherent in it or at least associated with it. In a romantic novel of the trials and adventures of lovers with their eventual happy union as an ending, this form has ethical implications. The very form, one might say, is ideological. This is precisely what is at stake in the response of Jean Rhys to *Jane Eyre,* where the areas of ethical blindness in the latter could only be accomplished with a complete abandonment of romantic form.

While I imagine that an author would begin with some ideas of subject matter in the conception of the work, I do not mean to suggest that it is entirely impossible for an author to begin with, say, writing in a particular style and then for the story and the characters to develop out of that. But what I am prepared to maintain rather more strenuously is that in the quadratic model that I propose none of the four aspects that comprise it can be absent in a communicative act of any complexity at all, that is without distorting the nature of the act or reducing it to a mere shadow (or caricature) of itself, particularly in the case of fiction. So, let me demonstrate how the model is intended to work using an example.

Julian Barnes's novel *The Noise of Time* is a biographical novel that deals with the life and career of Dmitri Shostakovich, the 20th-century Russian composer. It therefore has a basis in fact. One criticism of this novel has been that there is very little of the composer's music in it, as one might expect to find in the biography of a composer. However, this might be to miss the point that this is a work of fiction—it is indeed a novel—rather than a "pure" biography. What does come strongly into focus is one aspect of Shostakovich's music and career: the extent to which his various works found approval or did not find approval with Stalin and the cultural bureaucracy of the Soviet Union.

Applying the model, we can see that the *content* of the novel has to do with the composer himself and his relationship with the Soviet State, as revealed in certain incidents presumed to be of a factual nature. Crucially there can be no consistent separation between this content and the *substance* of the work. This does not mean that there is no distinction between these aspects

to be made; on the contrary, the distinction is essential to make. But the two aspects tend to be presented together inseparably. The *selection* of incidents from the life of the composer and the *ways* in which they are described constitute the ethical stance presented by the author. On the other hand, there are many passages where this substance predominates over the factual content. In the following fairly typical passage, for example, the factual content (presuming it is such) is strongly coloured by the chosen perspective of the author through the use of common techniques, such as FID and irony:

> As for love—not his own awkward, stumbling blurting, expressions of it, but love in general: he had always believed that love, as a force of nature, was indestructible; and that, when threatened, it could be protected, blanketed, swaddled in irony. Now he was less convinced. Tyranny had become so expert at destroying that why should it not destroy love as well, intentionally or not? Tyranny demanded that you love the Party, the State, the Great Leader and Helmsman, the People. But individual love— bourgeois and particularist—distracted from such grand, noble, meaningless, unthinking 'loves'. And in these times, people were always in danger of becoming less than fully themselves. (2016, 87-88)

My claim has been that the relationship between author and a milieu of the *actual* world is invariably constitutive of a fictional work's substance. If that is so, then it is visible here in the way the author's perception of the Soviet state dominates the content, that is, in this case, the character and his presumed thoughts and feelings. The techniques used are more common in fictional works than in non-fiction, because, as I have said, these include detail that cannot normally be known, especially not in propositional form, and especially, if not exclusively, in the realm of thought and feeling of another, let alone another that one has never met.

The reflection of substance (A2) into form (B2) is exhibited in the overall shape of Barnes's story. It can be described as being based on a "tragic" schema. The hero is young, talented and admirable. His rise in his chosen profession is assured by his undoubted virtues and gifts. But at a defining point in his life he is confronted with an evil that he is unable to overcome. There is a flaw in his character and he is unsure whether he can or should "take up arms against a sea of troubles and by opposing end them." He makes compromises that lead to his tragic downfall: he eventually succumbs and ends up as a card-carrying member of the Communist Party. We are not told, however, whether his music becomes better or worse during this tragic phase of his career, since the quality of his music is not the author's main concern.

The style of Barnes's third-person narrative is most certainly novelistic and demonstrates clearly the fictional nature of the work. Let us consider the extract below in which Shostakovich receives a telephone call from Stalin, instructing him to undertake a specific mission. We are told precisely when this occurred; it was on the 16th of March 1949. When he is told by an official that Stalin will be calling shortly, an interesting detail is mentioned: "Nita [his wife] immediately ran into the next room and picked up the extension" (2016, 79). We are not told that she turned on a recording device of any kind. The dialogue between Stalin and Shostakovich that follows has some amusing aspects. After a brief discussion of Shostakovich's somewhat poor health, Stalin raises the issue that he has called about, a forthcoming Cultural and Scientific Congress for World Peace in New York. After asking whether Shostakovich is in favour of such an event and getting his approving reply, Stalin comes out with his "request":

> "So you will go?"
>
> He paused. Part of him was conscious that the slightest wrong syllable might land him in a labour camp, while another part of him, to his surprise, was beyond fear.
>
> "No, I really cannot go, Iosif Vissarionovich. For another reason."
>
> "Yes?"
>
> "I do not have a tail-suit. I cannot perform in public without a tail-suit. And I am afraid I cannot afford one."
>
> "This is hardly my immediate business, Dmitri Dmitrievich, but I am sure that the workshop of the administration of the Central Committee will be able to make one that is to your satisfaction."
>
> "Thank you. But there is I am afraid, another reason."
>
> "Which you are also about to tell me."
>
> Yes, it was just conceivably possible that Stalin did not know.
>
> "The fact is, you see, that I am in a very difficult position. Over there, in America, my music is often played, whereas over here it is not played. They would ask me about it. So how am I to behave in such situation?" (2016, 80)

Stalin then assures him that this has been a "mistake" and the matter is quickly "corrected" so that he is able to go to New York and report that his

music is in fact played in the USSR and also to propagate other aspects of the official line (mostly against his own judgments, we are told).

But what concerns us now is how the style (B1) serves the author's purposes. All the aspects of style observable in the above extract are characteristic of fiction. The sentence that contains phrases such as *part of him was conscious* and *to his surprise* are descriptions of internal states that one does not expect from a purely factual account coming from someone so far removed in space and time from the one whose states are being described—Stalin's mental states are of course not described, as is commonly the case with the despised other in fiction. Secondly, the dialogue is given in an apparently verbatim way that could not be reported this way outside of fiction, even if the broad content of the discussion is historically quite accurate, as remembered say by Nita or by Shostakovich himself afterwards. Then, in the sentence *yes, it was just conceivably possible that Stalin did not know*, we have Shostakovich's thoughts revealed to us through an FID-type structure. These aspects of style serve the author's purpose in composing a work of fiction, but based on certain facts of Shostakovich's life. As I have pointed out there is a degree of revelation in all fiction of matters that are not normally knowable. This is definitive, and there is much of it in *The Noise of Time*, as I have shown.

Thus, we have traversed the model in an anti-clockwise direction from content around to *style*. One could imagine an author, if not Barnes, deciding to write a *non*-fictional work on similar content, but at each point there would be differences from the work under consideration, most visibly at the stylistic level, if this were not to cross over into fiction. Then, as a thought experiment, let us imagine a different scenario, for this same novel, one that is plausible even if less likely: Barnes decides to write a work about how authoritarian regimes are fatal to the careers of artists (A2); he then decides that this should involve a central tragic hero and his personal tragedy (B2); he considers that the most appropriate stylistic features would be common fictional techniques of dialogue, satire, irony, FID, etc. (B1); *lastly,* he decides that Shostakovich's (actual) life would provide the ideal referential content for such a work (A1).

Of course, much more likely than any of these scenarios is one in which an author traverses these four aspects many times in the conception and development of the work, and in more complex ways. These possibilities can be imagined and pondered by the interested reader.

Pragmatics and literary education

I believe that this model has implications for the way in which literature is taught and appreciated. It is surely the case that one cannot directly teach someone to appreciate literature. What seems a more promising educational approach is to teach, with appropriate examples, how it is that a form of literature such as prose fiction works. It may be that attempting to instill a critical attitude to literature, without any kind of scientific understanding of what it is and what it involves, is counterproductive. While it is no doubt important to foster a critical attitude, it seems that one cannot instruct someone as to what their subjective response to a work should be. But what sort of science is being proposed for the development of readers of literature? The following quotation from John Fowles may help:

> Of course there is a place for the scientific, or quasi-scientific, analysis of art, as there is (and far greater) for that of nature. But the danger, in both art and nature, is that all emphasis is placed on the created, not the creation. (Fowles 2010, 47)

The above from Fowles, an author of fiction who was unafraid to write philosophically (and often) about his own approaches to art and literature, as well as those of others, could be taken as something of a motto for the relevance of pragmatics to literary education. Perhaps pragmatics is "quasi-scientific", rather than scientific—I have certainly striven to avoid making it scientistic—but what is the "place" of which Fowles speaks?

Literary education needs to concern itself with the creation of literature, including the acts involved in the production of works of fiction. But one might consider how and why it is that Fowles needs to caution us against seeing what has been created in isolation from its creation. Has it always been thus? No doubt there was a time when literature was seen purely as part of a tradition. The literary scholar was one who examined a work for its influences and its continuities with the literature, the mythology and themes derived from the past, if not from the ancient world, then at least from the history of the language in which the work was written. Of course, there were discontinuities, and these could be described and attributed to individual genius and its inspirational muse.

This classical and philological education had its strengths and produced much knowledge and it continues to yield the same today, albeit perhaps at a reduced level of importance. But there is no doubt that at some time in the twentieth century, if not before, it generated a certain dissatisfaction. What was wanted were critical tools that could be applied more closely to the

literary *text*, especially to the novel, the now dominant literary genre, and its realist, modernist and avant-garde variants. Amongst the newer critics, careers became founded on such views, which became increasingly radical during the course of the twentieth century, culminating in those with which I took some issue earlier in this book. The reader's only point of interest was to be the text itself, with the author reduced to anonymity or non-existence. Such radical proposals have enjoyed a vogue lasting half a century, at least amongst professional literary scholars, although they appear to have had much less impact on the reading public. Readers of both serious and entertaining fiction still seek out works by their favourite authors, probably as much as ever. It is worth mentioning as an aside here that this may not apply analogously to forms of fictional art other than literary fiction, such as cinema, where it may well be the actors whose careers are followed with greater interest than those of writers or even directors, but this is an interesting question to be pursued elsewhere. Certainly, in the case of cinema there is much to be appreciated in the processes, the considerations and the techniques that have brought a film to fruition, and the importance of a pragmatics of cinematic fiction is not to be denied.

Rather than discuss any further the two broad tendencies of scholarship mentioned above, that of the tradition and that of the autonomous text, in their oppositions to each other, I would rather consider what it is that makes fiction interesting to literate readers, and indeed ways in which that interest might be increased. There is no doubt that *intensional* (rather than intentional) issues are interesting to a great mass of readers. These readers are interested mainly in content features, such as characterisation, plot, tension and suspense, and the sort of style that supports this content most effectively, their interest in the author being mainly confined to whether he or she is competent to deliver the desired level of interest. I have characterised this sort of intensional reading of fiction as being based on a form of curiosity, which has been enormously important in fiction, together with the revelatory function of fiction that is needed to meet it. But what else is there?

There is the agon of authorship. The fact that I have borrowed this term from philosophy is significant in that it denotes here an object of interest more than the prurient or curious anticipatory desire for revelation of secret life. Authors are intentional beings—they are agents—and from the point of view of pragmatics (rather than literary criticism) there can be no intentional fallacy. The question, following Morris, of the relationship between the sign vehicle and the sign user, is surely a fully scientific notion that I hope would

not have been objectionable to Fowles, as it sets out a well-defined and delimited object of study that has the potential to stimulate interest in the processes of writing. This includes what authors themselves have to say about it, not only critics. Such a relationship of sign to author without any notion of intentionality would be opaque to the extent of obscurity. What do authors intend to do? The answer has been proposed in the quadratic anatomy of the act, in which I have given some priority to the ethical intention of the author, because it is the least developed part of the pragmatics of the day. Few working in the field, if any, have advanced on Searle's notion of intention as illocutionary intention, and for that reason I have sought to broaden certain philosophical horizons of pragmatics.

What pragmatics can do, rather than offer a new approach in literary criticism, is to offer explanations of how it is that literary criticism is possible, indeed how it has been possible all along, and according to what kinds of value criteria. In turn, the value of this to education needs to be clarified. The main issue here is the possibility that there are multiple sources of interest in fiction and the interest shown by individual readers may be various. This the quadratic model predicts. Let us examine it accordingly as four integrated sources of potential interest to readers and those who are learning what fiction has to offer them. It is surely not enough for experts in literary criticism—and many teachers of literature no doubt see themselves as falling into this category to some extent—to inform students that these texts, and not those, represent "good literature" and therefore the students must somehow discipline their own interests to appreciate these works as prescribed.

As I bring this discussion to a close, let us traverse the anatomy of the act one more time, now in a clockwise direction, with the question of readerly interest in mind and with just one example question for each of the four dimensions:

A1 What secret history of the world can be told in fiction and why should it capture the interest of some category of reader?

B1 What sorts of language variation are possible in works of fiction that are not be available in the same way, or in similar combination, in other communication genres?

B2 What is the appeal of various novelistic schemas of time, space and revelation in relation to the expectations of a particular readership?

A2 How does an author intend to affect a given readership, and how might this readership be able to recognise the author as an agent thus engaged?

In the answers to each of these questions, further issues of value and validity might arise. These will no doubt be explored on other occasions.

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