THE BRITISH ALEATORY NOVEL, 1959 - 1979

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By

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Abstract

This thesis examines aleatory strategies and dynamics in an experimental strand of British fiction between 1959 and 1979. Drawing upon musicological theories of the 'aleatory' and unpacking the literary significance, it offers a working definition of the aleatory novel as a foregrounding of chance and complex narrative chaotics that are offered to the reader with, at least, the suggestion of requiring activation or animation. Aleatory strategies are shown to reflect a set of diverse and overlapping conceptual understandings and socio-cultural dynamics relating to a paradigm of chance in crisis. Possessing the potential to extend the complexities and contradictions inherent in the incorporation of chance within the novel and its formal qualities, aleatory novels amplify the manner by which both writers and readers conjoin perspectives in their relations with a fictional text and its representation of an emergent chaotic reality. This thesis examines the aleatory in various selected authors whose concerns are among those that retrospectively help define the experimental novelist's view in Britain during the period. B.S. Johnson explores issues of identity and working class consciousness within innovative modes of aleatory form, aware of personal and political struggle. Rayner Heppenstall, Ann Quin, Wilson Harris, and Doris Lessing engage with aleatorical stylistics to articulate ontological instability, personal and collective trauma, and the fragmentation of grand narratives. Brigid Brophy and Eva Figes foreground issues of gender through aleatoric and ludic perspectives and various intensely personal struggles within patriarchal structures. Finally, John Fowles and Iris Murdoch indicate a popularization of complex conceptual engagements with chance within more conventional modes of writing, thus taking textual and conceptual experimentation to a wider readership. Aligned with positions of apparent marginalization, aleatory dynamics encourage readerly engagements with chance and chaos as fertile grounds for collaborative agitation against the imposition of totalizing narratives and order.

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Contents

Introduction

Derived from the Latin *aleator*, meaning dice-player or gambler, the aleatory broadly denotes actions dependent on chance procedures and the active enactment of chance determinations from within set boundaries. In its elementary association with the casting of die, the aleatory is conceptually closer aligned to notions of possibility and probability than pure randomness or primordial chaos. The outcome of an aleatory procedure is not certain, but falls inevitably within certain bounds of possibility. Further to its etymology, the *Oxford English Dictionary* cites *Gargantua and Pantagruel* by François Rabelais as containing the earliest appearance of the term 'aleatory', in a 1693 publication translated by Thomas Urquhart and Peter Anthony Motteux that reads: 'So continually fortunate in that *Aleatory* way of deciding Law-Debates'.[1] While the term still appears in legal documents and insurance contracts to refer to contingent events – aleatory contracts, for example, stipulate the rights and obligations of each party in an uncertain event [2] – it has since more commonly been employed to denote works of art that incorporate chance procedures. Specifically, aleatory creations typically contain a provisionality and encourage the animation of chance procedures after composition, usually in the moment of their reception. This thesis therefore diverges in some ways from existing studies of the aleatory and chance in post-war British writing (discussed in Chapter One), which have typically considered the aleatory as synonymous with chance compositions – incorporating indeterminacy, spontaneous prose and free writing – and have broadly explored the aleatory alongside generalized notions of randomness and improvisation. Clearly, these elements are still relevant to my readings, and such critical examinations have proven fruitful in the demarcation of chance and its variously pervasive embodiments of scientific, philosophical, and cultural developments. However, responding to these, although this thesis investigates such aspects of chance, it principally demarcates the aleatory as the offering of pronounced engagements with chance within certain structural dynamics. The aleatory novel (or art more broadly) is characterized by a foregrounding of chance and augmented engagements with chance that are offered to the reader with, at least, the semblance of requiring activation or animation. The aleatory novel summons a provisionality to any such animation, suggestive of an open and unfixed quality to the work, that is akin to the variable outcomes of the throw of dice. In this study of the aleatory novel, a sense of the aleatory emerges which might be defined as relating to the reader's heightened and self-reflexive engagement with chance and its potentially variable outcomes rather than any linear progression that conventional literary emplotment tends to imply.

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[1] François Rabelais, *The third book of the works of Mr. Francis Rabelais, Doctor in Physick: containing the heroic deeds of Pantagruel the son of Gargantua*, trans. by T. Urquhart and P. A. Motteux (London: Printed for Richard Baldwin, 1693), p. 357.

[2] In a more colloquial register referred to as "acts of God".

Aleatory fiction seeks to offer the haphazard possibilities of chance and its effects within each textual encounter and reading experience, it seeks to restore the living, fluctuating, unpredictable quality to life within the fixed form of the novel. Of course in doing so, the aleatory novel creates a fundamental illusion (given the guiding authorial mind and hand). As Gabriel Josipovici observes 'chance brought in by the artist is never exactly chance'.[3] However, what we might term an aleatory shock prevents the immediate closure of the effect, creating a radical and lasting (at least for the period of immediate reading) meta-textual impact and thereby potential extension(s) of meaning. Part of the role of this thesis is to analyse the variety and scope of these methods of making the text new through its aleatory possibilities, often through the incongruous, the seemingly accidental, and the supposedly contingent. No one term (or even definition) could curtail and define the aleatory, that much is obvious (given its mercurial and adaptive nature). Nothing that stable or predictable could offer any such insight in to a complex and chaotic sphere of chance and its effects. Nevertheless, the personal and subjective elements are key to these relationships, for as Alain Robbe-Grillet commented 'Objectivity in the ordinary sense of the word – total impersonality of observation – is all too obviously an illusion. But *freedom* of observation should be possible, and yet it is not'.[4] If the process of human perception is imbued with such ambivalence, so too might one designate the novel as a genre, with its aleatory version overturning or undermining its apparently conventional relationship, which according to Robbe-Grillet, traditionally consists of a 'tacit convention [that] is established between the reader and the author: the latter will pretend to believe in what he is telling, the former will forget that everything is invented and will pretend to be dealing with a document, a biography, a real-life story'.[5] In stark contrast, the aleatory novel generates a pronounced perception of uncertainty and of a range of possibilities offered to the reader as if that person might be observationally free to animate (or activate) these variabilities in narrative terms, which are naturally offered within prescribed compositional boundaries rather than as entirely indeterminate or pure chance, so they often engage with a reflexive or self-referential quality. For example, in Ann Quin's *Three* (1966) the girl identified only as 'S' (who appears to have committed suicide or disappeared) has left the legacy of her journals that convey the impressionistic newness many experimental writers of the period strove to capture, the detail, and even perhaps a notion of incommensurate incompletion:

> There
> Springing up. Statues revealed. His father's hobby.
> Figures unfinished. Row upon row. Salute the house.
> Arranged disorder.

[3] Gabriel Josipovici, *Whatever Happened to Modernism?* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 135.
[4] Alain Robbe-Grillet. *For A New Novel: Essays on Fiction*, trans. by Richard Howard (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1989), p. 18.
[5] Ibid, pp. 30-31.

Surround
The swimming pool. Some fallen. Broken. After storms.[6]

The narrative's apparent paradox is that her ideas and observations will never be aesthetically complete or traditionally rounded, so within the frame of the story and her aspirations never set onto the printed page. Of course, in Quin's text, ironically they are, which doubles the implications and adds a commentary on this aspect of the text itself as if unresolved in time and the creative process intended, therefore becoming reflexive. This echoes Matthew Beaumont's observation, in an analysis of George Eliot's self-conscious attitude to experimental realism, in which he even identifies an 'aleatory realism, which is in the end the formal possibility of representing reality as meaningless'.[7] Such reflexive or self-reflexive aspects of a text – which have been considered particular characteristics of metafiction – may well contribute to one being able to distinguish a fictional text, even an apparently realist and traditional one, as aleatory.

Patricia Waugh's influential study on *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (1984) suggests the aleatory novel might be considered a subset of the metafictional, claiming that 'Aleatory writing might imitate the experience of living in the contemporary world, but it fails to offer any comfort'.[8] Indeed, Waugh argues that the 'metafictionist is highly conscious of a basic dilemma: if he or she sets out to "represent" the world, he or she realizes fairly soon that the world, as such, cannot be "represented". In literary fiction it is, in fact, possible only to "represent" the *discourses* of that world'.[9] This thesis contends, however, that aleatory fiction is not just grounded in discourses but is a residual worldly concretion of a complex dynamic that obsesses the writers of such novels, seeking to capture the apparently chaotic or haphazard and unpredictable elements of narrative and experience. Indeed, an analogy for the aleatory novelist would be someone trying to sustain the unfixed provisionality of dice about to be thrown (rather than those that have been tossed and have settled), with possibilities open and any sense of the outcome as yet capricious. The analysis of this particular dynamic and set of relations would be unhelpfully muddied by explicit containment within the metafictional and its varying critical interpretations.[10] Indeed, in the

[6] Ann Quin, *Three*, (Champaign, Illinois: Dalkey Archive Press, 2001), p. 24.
[7] Matthew Beaumont, 'Aleatory Realism: Reflections on the Parable of the Pier-Glass', *Synthesis: an Anglophone Journal of Comparative Literary Studies*, 3 (2011), pp. 9-17, p.15.
[8] Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1984), p. 12.
[9] Ibid, p. 4.
[10] *Metafiction* emerged initially as a critical term when coined by William H. Gass for a revised edition of *Fiction and the Figures of Life* (1971), identifying qualities in 'the work of Borges, Barth and Flann O'Brien, for example, in which the forms of fiction serve as the material upon which further forms can be imposed. Indeed, many of the so-called antinovels are really metafictions'. (25) In *Postmodernity, Ethics and the Novel* (1999) Andrew Gibson suggests 'the anti-novel or self-reflexive novel is not best understood as itself a distinct genre or subgenre, but rather as a peculiar if drastic extension of the novel's insistent drive to surpass all cognitive horizons, its unmasterable, endlessly repeated declension from *adequation* to inadequation' part of 'a distinctly ethical turn' (92). Equally, what Gass indicated earlier is that such avant-garde narratives might be considered as having

1970s most literary critics identified metafictions as being typical of the American novel and entwined with the postmodern, which were in some ways regarded as being divergent from the Anglo-Irish literary modernism and Continental 'anti-novels' that influenced the British aleatory novel of this thesis.[11] Despite a transatlantic sharing of writing practices in the flux of creativity – with certain affinities shared in all such experimental or self-aware writing, such as self-conscious (reflexive) narration and challenges to previous aesthetic dynamics – nevertheless, I maintain there are fundamental differences in terms of nuance and an overarching perspective between these various groupings and traditions.

Curiously, in their praxis, most metafictions emphasize the place of the author within the text, albeit often problematized in ludic fashion. They do so at least implicitly in response to an overemphasis of certain aspects of Roland Barthes's highly influential and yet brief essay, 'The Death of the Author' (of which there are various English versions with subtle differences in their translations). His thesis is predicated on the effacement of the primary signification of the originating person, not through solely foregrounding of their aesthetic tasks, but a disconnection:

> No doubt it has always been that way. As soon as a fact is narrated no longer with a view to acting directly on reality but intransitively, that is to say, finally outside of any function other than that of the very practice of the symbol itself, this disconnection occurs, the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, writing begins.[12]

For Barthes, traditional criticism searched for the Author so as to explain the text, but for him such an author is displaced and the resulting '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.[13] Significantly, aleatory fictions arguably differ from their metafictional counterparts, in that an aleatory text is more faithful to the logic of Barthes' positioning of the text by placing emphasis on the reader's relationship to a novel, and their animation of the

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'become properly philosophical' (26) in which context 'A word is a concept made flesh, if you like—the eternal presented as noise' (29). Gass was working within a North American exegetical tradition; in this field subsequently the term was co-opted and associated with postmodernism and writing that draws attention to its own fictionality. For Linda Hutcheon in *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (1984) such fiction 'includes within itself a commentary on its textual identity and/or linguistic identity' (1) and thus it foregrounds aspects of the aesthetic process (which is not entirely the same point or category as either Gass's or Gibson's). Waugh's interpretation seems to starkly contrast both Gass's philosophical narrative and Gibson's ethical one, which would both engage with our epistemic understanding of being in the world, although Waugh does foreground obliquely the referential and linguistic conundrums that were fashionable for many readers and writers from the 1960s to the 1980s.

[11] Much later, in a 2013 doctoral thesis Michael Heitkemper-Yates explores the metafictional impulse in the works of Donald Barthelme, Robert Coover, and Ishmael Reed, identifying as its central feature 'parody and other ironic narrative forms in the metafictional mechanism' (19). It is not in this general grouping of metafictional or postmodern fiction that I wish or choose to place the aleatory fictions featured in this thesis, rather in a second category of writing related more to an Anglo-Irish literary modernism (albeit an influence seen as both negative and marginally positive by my selected novelists).

[12] Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author' in *Image / Music / Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), pp. 142-148, p. 142.

[13] Ibid, p. 148.

author's intention. In this model the critical, exegetical logic is subverted, and so too in appearances is the author. Rather than explicit efforts to problematize authorial authority as a primary position within the text, as characterizes the metafictional, aleatory novels celebrate the reader's influence over the very provisionality and possibilities of animating chance within the text.

This thesis explores aleatory strategies in the British experimental novel – reflected in approaches to form, structure, style, language and content – as aligned with positions of apparent marginalization. By doing so I seek to explore a paradigm of chance in crisis, in which the reader's personal responses and engagements with contingency become fertile grounds as sites of agitation against the imposition of totalizing narratives, unpacking various potentialities from within prescribed boundaries that are latent and radicalizing. Aleatory radicalization or unsettling of authorial boundaries might not be solely a matter of printed words as read and responded to mentally by the reader, for as Glyn White observes in comparing poetry and narrative fiction: 'awareness of the graphic surface ultimately applies equally to prose. The initial categorisation of a text is in fact likely to be conditioned by our recognition of different forms of graphic surface'.[14] There may also be artefactual dimensions, as one finds with B.S. Johnson's *The Unfortunates* (1969), where the chapters are contained in a literal box and may be shuffled into any order (apart from the first and last chapters whose status is still designated by the author), but as White points out, the content of each section (chapter) is resistant to the impulse to 'randomise'.[15] Moreover, such a project seeks to contain chance, and may be characterized by contradiction and compromise. As an aleatory fictional narrative, by its very nature and form, underlying its origins is at least an implicit allusion to the formulation of probability and constrained possibility in the act of throwing dice. In Johnson's *The Unfortunates,* this is made explicit in the matter of which chapter the reader will 'randomly' select to read next. Such uncertainty is further framed within narrative logic and its possible parameters, formal and ideological. An occurrence of chance therefore seems not to be limitless, whatever the incongruities, although divergence and the quality of the unexpected is part of its function. Thus the aleatory novel is inexorably linked with a seemingly contradictory logic that circumscribes an internalized, textual understanding of chance, both in ontological and epistemological terms, leaving a profound ambiguity.

Chance resists absolute definition in its essential uncertainty and apparent spontaneity, yet simultaneously it embodies a persistent search for meaning or direction, given a pathway must finally be taken (a die cast, or even a chapter selected if the reading of Johnson's text is to continue). Hence, chance reflects an organising logic in the complex causality of how events

[14] Glyn White, *Reading the Graphic Surface: The Presence of the Book in Prose Fiction* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 9.
[15] Ibid*,* p. 116.

come about and pass into the known and apprehensible – indeed its etymological origins stem from the Latin *cadere*, 'to fall' – yet, paradoxically such contexts contain notions of randomness and unpredictability. While perceived as signifying the unfathomable and uncertain, often in an ontological context, chance has also gained increasing epistemological significance across modern fields of inquiry. Ian Hacking, in *The Taming of Chance* (1990), notes that 'Throughout the Age of Reason, chance had been called the superstition of the vulgar. Chance, superstition, vulgarity, unreason, were of one piece'.[16] Chance had been 'tamed' according to the inexorable laws of determinism, and a pursuit to retroactively explain uncertainties with clear causal logic. Indeed, 'The world, it was said, might often look haphazard, but only because we do not know the inevitable workings of its inner springs'.[17] Subsequently, as Hacking describes, 'Determinism was subverted by laws of chance' and while the primacy of causality has perhaps remained, its causation no longer rests entirely on determinism.[18] Instead, most apparent through the lens of physics, indeterminism became dominant in our understanding and the seemingly fixed laws of causality were challenged by models of probability and uncertainty. As Karl Popper identified, in *The Open Universe: An Argument for Indeterminism* (1982) – in galley proofs that were circulated from 1956/7 – 'new indeterminism was introduced by quantum mechanics, which assumes the possibility of elementary chance events that are causally irreducible.'[19] While maintaining a broader signification of the unknown and the imperceivable complexity of causation, "chance" has been variously explained, circumscribed, or compartmentalized by such fields as probability theory, evolutionary biology, and quantum mechanics. Corresponding developments in the scientific understanding of chance – particularly in the twentieth century – have introduced more nuanced explications of the unpredictable haphazardness of experience. Such fields have served to heighten the potency and permeation of chance across everyday experience and public understanding, so that, together with the mounting contingency of modern life, chance as a nexus of meaning has gained a prominence in our everyday encounters. While simultaneously perceived as an unpredictable, unfathomable, and unrepresentable force, chance is also pregnant with meaning and significance in its various applications.

In common parlance, chance is associated with (and arguably assimilates in the popular imagination) such notions of fate, fortune, risk, possibility, and even uncertainty, chaos, probability, free will, among many other conceptual ideas. Yet, these terms independently articulate vastly different fields of inquiry or experience and assume differing interpretations according to the mode of perception, cultural milieu, or scientific discipline that might apply. Mindful, therefore, of such a plethora of internal contradictions – of the fundamental

[16] Ian Hacking, *The Taming of Chance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 1.
[17] Ibid, p.1.
[18] Ibid, p.3.
[19] Karl Popper, *The Open Universe: An Argument for Indeterminism* (London: Routledge, 1988), p.124.

unknowability of chance and the array of codifications across the 'known unknowns' of chance in modern science – this thesis suggests that aleatory treatments of 'chance' are most usefully approached from the basis of the Aristotelian bifurcated formulation of *tyche* and *automaton*. To further contextualize, in classical Greek mythology, Tyche was the tutelary deity for fortune – with whom the Roman goddess, Fortuna, was later assimilated – and is treated in Aristotle's *Physics* as denoting that which befalls the individual, in effect a momentary experience of chance on a personal level.[20] The associated term, *automaton*, instead indicates free will, randomness, or the accidental, and is presented by Aristotle as the effect upon the physical world. For Aristotle, *tyche* should be interpreted as necessary happenings – rather than a primary cause – that disrupt what is normally considered determined and in doing so reveal a range of potential possibilities inherent in human actions and interactions, and human experience emergent from the natural world. *Tyche* signifies the manner in which *theos* (the gods) and *kairoi* (a circumstantial moment) synthesize to create chance in the individual experience, where nature exposes its possibilities and presents avenues for choice and therefore meaning. For Jacques Lacan, *tyche* – configured in the French spelling, *tuché* – concerns 'the encounter with the real',[21] while the *automaton* should be aligned with 'the present stage of modern mathematics, that it is the network of signifiers'.[22] Therefore, while *automaton* encompasses the random happenings and becoming of the natural world – a perspective of chance to be derived more from precise scientific comprehension – *tyche* is a particularly human orientation towards an experience of chance, a matter of consciousness and perception, which are arguably major dynamics in the architectonics of the novel.

Prior to Aristotle, Leucippus posited the chance movements of atoms, forming the universe, whilst his pupil Democritus considered the chaotic collision of atoms to have formed the basis of all matter. Yet Aristotle criticized Democritus's denial of a beginning to this process, and thereby furthered the perception of a juxtaposing close synthesis between causality and chance, of order and disorder working in unison towards a complex system, a sensibility that is reminiscent of modern thinking. Aristotle's unravelling of necessity, characterized by accident being at the primal root of a final cause, permitted a human influence to enter a perception of events. The indeterministic thought that followed Aristotle, presented in the work of Epicurus and the Stoics, argued for a sense in which atoms would 'swerve' beyond necessity and thereby permit human autonomy – 'some things happen of necessity, others by chance, others through our own agency'.[23] Lucretius furthered this theory with the notion of the clinamen, in which the random swerves indicate a sense of free will, of escaping predetermined

[20] Aristotle, *Physics*, ed. by David Bostock, trans. by Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008)
[21] Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis,* ed. by Jacques Alain Miller, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London and New York: Taylor & Francis, 2018), p. 53.
[22] Ibid, p.52.
[23] Epicurus, *Letter to Menoeceus*, trans. by Robert Drew Hicks (Adelaide: University of Adelaide, 2005)

paths, and the potentiality of chance occurring at the site of deviation. Akin to the Aristotelian relationship between *theos* and *kairoi*, the interrelationship in fiction between the once god-like author and the circumstantial influence of the reader manifests in an aleatory novel as a multifaceted (or multi-layered) quality where both elements may well be at play. So, while this thesis will draw upon chance in a broader sense – from which natural and scientific concepts contribute to our understanding – its focus remains very concerned with the quotidian and personal response to such notions. Further, it investigates the aesthetic and narratorial desire to represent phenomenological experiences of chance such as those encountered within a reading of an aleatory novel where convention is not only challenged, but that very challenge may contribute to a structural or formal (or both of these) reframing of the novel as an artefact and example of communicative action.

Though necessarily concerned with the wider implications of a scientific understanding of chance and its varying effects, this thesis seeks to curtail such expansive and labyrinthine considerations to explicitly personal orientations to chance, as represented in the novel. More specifically, this thesis explores the emergence of the aleatory in post-war British fiction and draws upon exemplary aleatory novels elsewhere to further contextualize, but its primary focus is on the experimental British novel of the 1960s and 1970s, and its various manifestations of an aleatory consciousness or form. The subject matter lends itself to framing such an enquiry, and marking an entry point as 1959 – a significant year in which the dissolution of the British Empire can be seen to be conceded in cultural terms, as displayed by the change from celebrating 'Empire Day' to 'Commonwealth Day'; being the year in which the contraceptive pill was developed which facilitated new approaches to sexuality (in particular for women); another liberalization was initiated by the Obscene Publications Act and subsequently the so-called *Lady Chatterley* trial of 1960, enabling a 'public good' defence; and it was also the year that the relationship between science and the arts was contemplated by C.P. Snow in his influential 1959 lecture, 'The Two Cultures'.[24] Furthermore, the end of my period will be 1979, the year in which a new scientific perception of chance fully emerged, in the form of the burgeoning field of chaos theory. Famously heralded by Edward Lorentz's presentation of 'Predictability: Does the Flap of a Butterfly's Wings set off a Tornado in Texas?' in 1972, [25] Chaos Theory was furthered in mathematics by those such as Guckenheimer and Williams in 1979,[26] marking its arrival and widespread acceptance as a transdisciplinary discipline. 1979 was also – with regard to the 'Britishness' this thesis considers, at least implicitly – the year in which Margaret Thatcher took the helm in British politics and instigated a further change of

[24] C. P. Snow, 'The Rede Lecture (1959)' in *The Two Cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 1-52.
[25] Presented before the American Association for the Advancement of Science, on the 29th December 1972.
[26] John Guckenheimer and R. F. Williams, 'Structural stability of Lorenz attractors' in *Publications Mathématiques de L'Institut des Hautes Études Scientifiques*, 50 *(*1979), pp. 59-72.

direction in the arts, and well beyond, an ideological and cultural shift of arguable seismic proportions. Such a narrativized bookending of a cultural movement or socio-political state of affairs is of course problematic, and often limiting (like all such periodizations, including decades). However, given that the intention of this thesis is to problematize the packaging of chance and randomness – and to respond to cultural interpretations of chance after the emergence and impact of new science – a period of just over twenty-years enquiry that charts the move from a post-war Britain still dominated by the legacies and memories of the Second World War to the end of its Keynesian economics and the associated cultural interventionism that had prevailed is perhaps rather apt. 1979 also arguably saw a generational shift in the British novelists who were regarded as being at the forefront of experimentalism, heralded in part by the suicide of B.S. Johnson, the death of Ann Quin, the final illnesses which prefaced the death of Rayner Heppenstall, the completion and preparation for publication of Alasdair Gray's first novel, *Lanark* (1981), after a gestation period of around twenty-five years, and the final significant prose publications of Samuel Beckett during his lifetime.

Chapter One offers contextualization for a study of the aleatory, beginning with an exploration of the musicological notions of the aleatory and indeterminacy, a bifurcation of chance engagements in experimental music in the 1950s that – in their dialogical development – offer an entry point to more nuanced study of aleatory fiction. From the vantage of a working theoretical model for the aleatory, the thesis will return to survey elements of an evolutionary history of scientific and socio-cultural perspectives of chance coupled with associated literary responses. Seeking to contextualize some of the key theoretical and cultural engagements with chance that will be returned to and unpacked in subsequent chapters, this introductory chapter will proceed to indicate literary precursors to the aleatory and note other engagements with chance that are more closely aligned to compositional indeterminacy. Following this theoretical foundation in the first chapter the thesis will thereafter develop thematically. Having identified a paradigm of chance in crisis and a turn towards chaos, subsequent articulations of chance and narrative chaotics will be unpacked through the kaleidoscopic lens of so-called 'New Materialism'. Its varying interdisciplinary engagements with contingency and chaos offer a framework from which to retrace a 'turn' to materiality beyond dualist thought and binary structures of understanding, and to tease out the nuances of literary engagements with a burgeoning paradigm of 'chaos'. Each subsequent chapter thus clusters differing articulations and engagements with chance and narrative chaotics – illustrated with exemplary novels by a particularly stratified set of authors that reflect the vanguard of literary experiments in the period – to delineate what the aleatory offered some marginalized identities in their agitations and problematization of universalizing dominant structures. Furthermore, each chapter will additionally proffer an analysis focusing on a particular facet of compositional intent and

experimentation, namely the employment of aleatory form; aleatorical style; an aleatoricism of language; and conclude with a foray into the popularization of the aleator as subject.

Chapter Two offers a close analysis of B.S. Johnson's *The Unfortunates* (1969), which arguably presents the most pronounced employment of both the aleatory form and aleatorical style in the British novel of my period. Johnson's shuffleable novel provides a foundation from which to forge a thesis, as it reflects the pivotal concepts of the retrieval of fragmented memory; the concern for the 'truth' of the self in representation; the open text performed by the reader; the ludic quality to language and chance; the desire to respond to avant-garde innovations, despite a rejection of experimental and elitist sensibilities; and the engagement with chance as a means to process trauma. Such elements will be furthered by an analysis of their treatment across other texts, in subsequent chapters. In Chapter Two, an exploration of class concerns in Johnson's text will reveal the juncture between a working-class ideal and the treatment of avant-garde, supposedly 'high-brow' concepts. Despite the fierce humility of his style and the populist intentions, there remains an agitation with the canon and accepted modes of literary fiction that is problematized using unconventional techniques. Johnson sought to rejuvenate the form, through what are conventionally considered elitist and 'high-art' techniques, so as to best depict the 'truth' of reality for the common reader. The relationship between these various tensions, of a working-class identity, ideology and heritage in combination with an educated and innovative – yet sometimes conceited – voice are illuminated by the contradictions inherent in an aleatory approach. The incorporation of chance in the form and structure of the novel will be shown to be a means of accommodating the issues of uncertainty, complex structural dynamics of identity, and apparent contradictions.

Chapter Three continues an exploration of literary agitations against dominant structures in its examination of aleatory approaches to grand narratives, manifesting in varying forms of resistance to national identity and imperial values, psychological social norms, and an articulation of the structural trauma of colonialism. The chapter begins with a close analysis of Rayner Heppenstall's *The Woodshed* (1962) and *Two Moons* (1977), unpacking an aleatorical style that foregrounds the fallibility of authorial voicing and problematizes a representation of personal tragedy and the search for explanation. Furthering this enquiry, the chapter continues with a close analysis of the stylistically complex *Three* (1966) by Ann Quin. The novel is discussed for its representations of personal trauma and the text's possibilities for reanimating the fragmentary representations of the self and their association with the breakdown of ontological security. Structural trauma and the problematization of cultural memory and imperialism are subsequently explored in an analysis of *The Eye of the Scarecrow* (1965) by Wilson Harris. The novel's recalled trauma of Guyana, as narrated from London, reflects the internalized exile from experience and history. Memory, time and sequence are unreliable and the characters prove to be interchangeable, responsive to the communicated

happening. The narrator is consciously attempting to break down the perceived order of things so as to reveal the greater depth of experience as an independent moment – forming 'an open dialogue within which a free construction of events will emerge in the medium of phenomenal associations all expanding into a mental distinction and life of their own'.[27] The chapter subsequently examines Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* (1962), which challenges the notion of universality, breaking down its characters and celebrating their fragmentariness in contrast to the frailties of absolutism. Lessing's text contains a problematization of structural entrapments and encourages aleatorical engagements with chance within prescribed boundaries, suggesting that the multiple possibilities and mutability of the detail enable meaning in surrendering to the broader machinations.

Chapter Four considers the manner in which a language of aleatoricism is discernible in literary and experimental novels that enact performative engagements with gender and identity. The chapter offers an analysis of *Days* (1974) by Eva Figes, which conveys the seemingly infinite repetition of female suffering and considers the trauma of women across many generations of family through the aleatoricism of ambiguous language and narrative voices. The chance-based simultaneity of time and identity, within a frame of inherited illness, opens the narrative to multiple interpretations and reveals the mobility of gender issues. The novel plays with gender stereotypes and narrative conventions to destabilize meaning and to reveal the flux of possibilities in articulations of identity. The central text of the chapter, Brigid Brophy's *In Transit* (1969), employs aleatoricism to engage with the unreliability of gender constructs and the convergent fallibility of signifiers. The novel's narrator inhabits the open and dislocated space of an airport and forgets their sex and gender, ultimately playing a game to determine their gender from interactions with strangers and the deciphering of signs. The ludic quality of the language, turned towards unsettling and unravelling norms of gender, is considered across a plethora of stylistic reconfigurations. Each mode is as impotent as the last in determining the absolute of the protagonist's gender, a quest which ultimately negates binary configurations. The analysis of Brophy's project is furthered by a new materialist reading that seeks to unpack the non-dialectical, pluralistic potential for intersectional thinking that seeks a means of 'transversing' disciplinary boundaries. This turn towards new materialism marks an unfurling of the threads of varying materialisms that are explored throughout this thesis, offering a lens for the examination of a paradigm of chance in crisis.

The final chapter, Chapter Five, investigates an aleatory approach to the tension between compromise and comprehensibility and the literary articulation of emergent theoretical concepts in popular understanding. Complex scientific and philosophical theories are considered within the broadly populist (though still frequently considered literary) novels of

[27] Wilson Harris, *The Eye of the Scarecrow* (London: Faber and Faber, 1974), p. 13.

The Magus (1966) by John Fowles and *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* (1970) by Iris Murdoch. The noticeably Victorian structure and thematic style of *The Magus* is charted alongside the intricate manifestations of 'hazard' as a particularly loaded notion of chance characterized by existentialism, risk and violence. Central to the novel is the portrayal of the growing cultural awareness of the aleatory nature of experience, and a cognizance that chaos resides within structures of all deterministic logic. Such a situation appears heightened by the characterization of the aleator, a pseudo-metafictional creator figure that demarcates chance and offers games loaded with the potential for meaning. The chapter furthers its exploration of the relationship between theory and an aleator in Iris Murdoch's *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* (1970), in which her moral philosophy and novelistic views on contingency collide. Here the thesis extends the exploration of materialism, and its culmination in the previous chapter, with a turn to Louis Althusser's aleatory materialism. The structures of being that form from aleatory encounters and their varying aleatory effects are demarcated in Althusser's analysis of Niccolò Machiavelli's, and the figure of the Prince is unpacked as the role of the aleator who encounters and animates chance. As with Fowles's 'hazard', Murdoch's notion of 'muddle' is a summarization of the complexities of chance and the aleatory, and alongside her philosophical enquiries, the novel explores the synthesis of literary conventions and popularism with multifarious examinations of contemporary shifts in theoretical and philosophical understanding.

Chapter One
Chance and the Aleatory

This first chapter consists, in part, of a theoretical analysis of the aleatory within a contextual cultural milieu of the novel as a genre, and equally drawing upon practice and theory as regards other associated art-forms where the term is relevant (especially in terms of avant-garde music). A key element will be the conceptual understanding and positioning of aleatory as an aesthetic term as regards such tangible artistic products, ones where aleatory thinking and closely allied radical approaches to chance have brought about new forms. There have been several explorations of the subject of chance in the 'modern' British novel, most notably Leland Monk's *Standard Deviations: Chance and the Modern British Novel* (1993) and Julia Jordan's *Chance and the Modern British Novel* (2010). These texts are an invaluable resource in any unravelling of chance influences on fiction, and their approach reveals a great deal about a subject that Monk describes as something 'literary and critical studies usually dismiss, discount or altogether ignore'.[28] Monk's study charts the representation of chance in the novel between George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871-2) and James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), while Jordan's focus is on chance in modern British fiction between Henry Green's wartime novels of *Caught* (1943) and *Back* (1946) to Iris Murdoch's *The Sea, The Sea* (1978). Both Monk and Jordan acknowledge that, prior to their selected periods, chance had been denigrated in effect. Yet, as Jordan suggests, 'chance had secured its dominion, scientifically, by the 1940s, and, philosophically, once the existentialists' ideas had become common currency in intellectual and literary circles'.[29] Yet, as both Jordan and Monk indicate, incorporating such 'modern' perspectives of chance in the novel, or its application to art more generally, is by its very nature a pursuit destined for ultimate failure (since all aesthetic decisions are in the final analysis almost all authorial and therefore thoroughly determined and crafted). The accommodation of chance in the novel will ultimately involve the chaotic or random impression made concerning the order of things – essentially fate, history and eventfulness – and in doing so the author imposes a representational system that at least mimics such randomness by seeming haphazard representationally. However, at least in the main, such strategies are not fully consonant with chance and disorder in the world. Indeed, Monk asserts 'chance is that which cannot be represented in narrative; as such, it marks and defines a fundamental limit to the workings of *any* narrative'.[30] Jordan similarly argues that 'every representation of chance is a misrepresentation',[31] but suggests that 'chance has managed to be represented at various

[28] Leland Monk, *Standard Deviations: Chance and the Modern British Novel* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 3.
[29] Julia Jordan, *Chance and the Modern British Novel: From Henry Green to Iris Murdoch* (London and New York: Continuum, 2011), p.ix.
[30] Leland Monk, *Standard Deviations*, p.10.
[31] Julia Jordan, *Chance and the Modern British Novel,* p. xi.

junctures, usually by writers who seek to disturb the form'.[32] Implicitly, therefore, stretching the limits of conventional narrative for such a form to accommodate chance requires an element of experimentation and a challenge of accepted norms.

In essence, even in the most experimental of open forms, the enactment of chance in the novel is always administered deterministically and any perceived openness is fundamentally fixed by its reception within the practice of a linear reading. The aforementioned *The Unfortunates* (1969), by B.S. Johnson, seems to offer such possibilities since the reader can engage in a shuffling of the sections of the novel, which could be argued to be the form that is closest to a random spontaneity, and which dimension Johnson refers to in *Albert Angelo* (1964) as 'the moment-to-moment fragmentariness of life, my life, and to echo it in technique, the fragmentariness, a collage made of the fragments of my own life, the poor odds and sods, the bric-à-brac […]'.[33] Nevertheless, his book is ultimately read in a linear fashion and the essential plot remains unchanged, and can be understood by an attentive reader in chronological fashion. However, as will be unpacked later in my second chapter, the contradictory nature of such a project is precisely the terrain from which the possibilities of the aleatory manifest themselves in fiction, and the potential for the reader to find and attribute associated meaning are enabled. Certainly, true enactments of absolute chance would lead to pure chaos and an unintelligible form. Instead, the aleatory novel – in its celebration of the provisionality of the procedure itself (aligned with the charged potential of a throw of dice) – reflects the elements of possibility and potential in the unknowns that characterizes a modern perspective of chance. Jordan notes that the 'overwhelming variety and unpredictability of modern life, or its contingency, and the recalibration of our place in relation to this […] inculcates a sense of man as no longer the lightning rod of meaning, but just another contingent cog in the wheel'.[34] I propose, however, that chance is rarely considered in isolation and that it is more often encountered within the conventional frame of an oppositional position as regards order or necessity, which such literary *techniques* (to adopt Johnson's terminology) undermine. Instead, the contradictory synthesis of factors across these seemingly oppositional concepts is more representative of a 'modernist' positioning. I propose that the multifarious nature of chance is encountered – and that proto-modernist position is perhaps best encapsulated by Friedrich Nietzsche – as a sense in which, as he claims, the 'iron hands of necessity which shake the dice box of chance play this game for an infinite length of time so that there *have* to be throws which exactly resemble purposiveness and rationality of every degree'.[35] Our dice box of a world does not exist through pure chance or randomness, yet nor

[32] Julia Jordan, *Chance and the Modern British Novel,* p. xii.
[33] B.S. Johnson, *Albert Angelo* (London: Constable, 1964), p. 169.
[34] Julia Jordan, *Chance and the Modern British Novel,* p. vii-viii.
[35] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, trans. by R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 130.

is it determined in its confusion and chaos by necessity and reason alone. It would appear other forces are at play. However much regularity and order we see around us, in the labyrinth of interrelated designs beneath the most complex of functions and systems, there is always a role played by chance and the accidental, and a perception of sustained flux. In these seemingly contradictory positions one might trace or identify possibilities for meaning, and a sense of being more than a 'cog in the wheel'. The aleatory novel, to return to Nietzsche, enables a sense in which one believes the possibility that 'we ourselves shake the dice-box with iron hands, [...] we ourselves in our most intentional actions do no more than play the game of necessity'.[36] While ultimately one must be cognisant of the futility of such efforts to disrupt the synthesis between chance and order, the aleatory proffers a sphere in which engagements with chance reveal and amplify a sense of our individual attempts to comprehend, systemize and reflect on experience beyond the reductively rational, offering magnified perception of various possibilities for mutable interpretation and the engendering of unexpected, unintended meanings and outcomes. It is precisely the self-reflexive playing of the game, the moment of provisionality of the dice about to be thrown, that characterizes the aleatory and offers recourse to a perception of individual influence on their environment.

So as to unpack the rendering of aleatory dynamics in the novel – which I argue are particularly apparent in experimental British fiction published between a period stretching from 1959 to 1979 – what follows is an examination of the first major appearance of the aleatory as a term applied to artistic practice, the emphasis here being on literary avant-garde British fiction, but other coordinates will be drawn into the analyses. Most importantly, music – particularly in the post war period – explored engagements with chance in such a way that serves to most readily clarify the aleatory in its differing approaches drawing on key concepts, and an understanding of such musicological experiment offers a theoretical basis from which one might develop the study of the aleatory novel of this period. As Jennifer Iverson explores, in 1954 Kalheinz Stockhausen delivered an analysis of Claude Debussy's *Jeux* (1913) in a talk in Germany, proselytising the merits of its statistical form, and Iverson says, 'Stockhausen identified and described rising and falling arches in pitch, loudness and speed. He suggested that these gestures were more important than motives, harmonies or traditional notions of form',[37] and regards him as a precursor to what was called a 'statistical, aleatoric structure',[38] which Stockhausen thought of as 'a random distribution of elements within given limits'.[39] The concession of limits is critical to the emergence of the aleatory structure. Given that the aleatory in the field of the novel can be characterized as relating to the reader's heightened

[36] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, p. 130.
[37] Jennifer Iverson, 'Statistical Form amongst the Darmstadt School', *Music Analysis*. 33:3 (2014), pp. 341-387, p. 341.
[38] Ibid, p. 342.
[39] Karlheinz Stockhausen, *Conversations with the Composer*, ed. Jonathan Cott (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), p. 73.

and self-reflexive engagement with chance and its potentially variable outcomes, rather than any fixed linear progression, the teasing out of its theoretical dynamics will not necessarily be linear or progressive. Nevertheless, a cumulative picture will appear of the conceptual coordinates of the aleatory, once furnished with a suitable theoretical underpinning for the concept in part drawn from music, and applied to various literary engagements with various subsets of chance and the shifts in contemporary understanding of contingency, complex systems, providence, disorder and chaos.

Aleatory Music

As explored in this section (and subsequently as appropriate) musical practice and musicology appear to have been acutely aware of and to have devised strategies of aleatory practice, and as indicated above may offer paradigms that allow us to comprehend the scope of such aesthetic encounters with chance and may well prove relevant to practice in the field of experimental fiction. The end of the Second World War in Europe, at midnight on 8 May 1945, is known as 'Stunde Null' in Germany; a 'Zero Hour' that marked a radical new beginning of a non-Nazi nation. In 'Music after Zero-Hour', Christopher Fox charts how music was corrupted by the Nazis, and how the devastated city of Darmstadt became a centre for a new school of experimental music. The mechanical, mathematical system of Serialism and the dodecaphonic technique – more colloquially known as 'twelve-tone'[40] – that gained traction was thus adopted (as a form of aesthetic resistance) in agitation against the emotional and aesthetic co-opting of music witnessed under the Nazi regime. The effect of the technique, in its avoidance of conventional musical harmony and the structural resistance to the traditional dominance of key, was to establish equal importance across all musical tones. William G. Harbinson describes in 'Performer Indeterminacy and Boulez's Third Sonata' (1989) that 'With the advent of integral serialism in the early 1950s, register, dynamics, articulation, and eventually form fell under the control of the series; yet the aural result of integral serialism was a fluid and kaleidoscopic effect that as easily might have been derived by chance'.[41] John Cage sought to celebrate such an accommodation of chance, and yet his compositions were also his own agitation against the stark formalism of serialism and dodecaphonic impositions. As Fox highlights, John Cage's reaction to Serialism inspired the emergence of open form in music:

[40] Arnold Schoenberg developed the twelve-tone technique in 1923, which became associated with the Second Viennese School of composers that includes Anton Webern and Alban Berg, pupils of Schoenberg. The technique was widely used in the 1950s, by such composers as Milton Babbitt, Luciano Berio, Pierre Boulez, Luigi Dallapiccola, Riccaro Malipiero, and Luigi Nono.
[41] William G. Harbinson, 'Performer Indeterminacy and Boulez's Third Sonata', *Tempo*, 169 (1989), pp. 16-20, p. 17.

> Throughout the 1950s Cage was pushing ever wider the separation between compositional strategy and the material to be used in each composition, a separation which would culminate at the end of the decade in the series of scores entitled Variations. In these scores no sounds are prescribed—the score no longer provides any indication of what the music will sound like—instead, the performers are provided with a set of instructions for making a performance in which everything will be fixed according to chance.[42]

Cage's experiments with chance during the 1950s, beginning with arguably the first fully indeterminate works – *Imaginary landscape No.4* (1951) and *Music of Changes* (1951) – and culminating in the series of *Variations* (1958 - 1967) demonstrate differing approaches to the accommodation of chance in composition. Explicit engagements with chance in orchestral music can be categorized according to three principle areas. Indeterminacy is characterized by the employment of seemingly random procedures in the compositional process (in which the chance engagements are instigated by the composer and fixed prior to performance). Aleatory music instead offers determined elements to be performed as a whole, according to chance procedures (inviting the musicians to interact with the fragments and reify the piece on each performance); and the third category may be more loosely grouped around interpretive and improvisational practices involving graphic notation of indeterminate scores (which are interpreted by the performer, thereby incorporating unpredictable outcomes).

In 1955, Werner Meyer-Eppler adopted the term *aleatory* in 'Statistic and Psychologic Problems of Sound', responding to the growing interest shown toward the manipulation and employment of chance strategies in the shaping of sound and composition. Stipulating that a 'process is said to be aleatoric (from Lat. *Alea* = dice) if its course is determined in general but depends on chance in detail',[43] this concept has since been applied to all artistic practices in which the details are offered up to chance interactions, performed by the audience, within a broadly determined whole. Such processes signify a sensibility in which the art remains true to a determined compositional intent, but permits indeterminate moments to arise that illuminate the essence, in each performance. In 1955, the same year of Meyer-Eppler's paper, Pierre Boulez and Karlheinz Stockhausen (who studied phonetics, acoustics and information theory with Meyer-Eppler at the University of Bonn)[44] began separately composing pieces in a new approach to the use of chance in composition, seeking to differentiate from John Cage's method of indeterminacy in the compositional process. As Christopher Fox states:

> the preferred option for European composers in their search for a way of incorporating some performer freedom in works which were still effectively under compositional control became known as open-form, with the term 'aleatory' coined as its companion. The

[42] Christopher Fox, 'Music after Zero Hour', *Contemporary Music Review*, 26:1 (2007), pp. 5-24, p. 22.
[43] Werner Meyer-Eppler, 'Statistic and Psychologic Problems of Sound', trans. by Alexander Goehr, *Die Reihe*, (1958), pp. 55-61, p. 55.
[44] Michael Kurtz, *Stockhausen: A Biography*, trans. by Richard Toop (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1992), p. 208.

> model was not Cageian anarchy but the controlled circumstances of a game with strict rules where chance might be called upon to select at various fixed points one from a number of predetermined routes.[45]

While indeterminate music – as seen in Cage's music in the early 1950s – relies on chance for aspects of the compositional process, the open form of aleatory music demands a combination of chance engagements and conventional compositional intent, offering chance in the details – as interpreted by the performer – from within predefined boundaries and constrained possibilities, engaged with in a ludic manner.

The distinction between indeterminate and aleatory music is exemplified by the aleatory form of Boulez's *Third Piano Sonata* (1955) and Stockhausen's *Klavierstücke XI* (1955) in contrast to the indeterminacy of Cage's *Music of Changes* (1951). Cage incorporated chance in the act of composition, employing the ancient Chinese divination text, *I Ching*[46] – also known as the *Book of Changes* – to compose *Music of Changes* indeterminately. The method required a random selection of one of the book's 64 hexagrams, each charged with many further possibilities, to determine such factors as musical pitch, length, dynamic and rhythm. Contrastingly, Boulez and Stockhausen refused to surrender compositional intent to randomness in this manner, and thus opted for a variety of hybridized systems of aleatory composition. William G. Harbinson identified that 'Boulez emphatically dismissed 'chance' as a viable compositional technique declaring that 'What a performer meets in the *Third Piano Sonata* is 'choice', not 'chance''.[47] Indeed, the sonata offers the performer control over reordering the formative elements of the piece, of its five movements, furthered in the internal choices made in each performance. In the polemical 'Sonata, What Do You Want of Me?' – an essay on the *Third Piano Sonata,* first published in 1960 – Boulez summarizes the intention, declaring 'Why compose works that have to be re-created every time they are performed? Because definitive, once-and-for-all developments seem no longer appropriate to musical thought as it is today'.[48] Therefore, while the indeterminacy of Cage's work primarily situated the engagement of chance in the hands of the composer, thereby offering a definitive final

[45] Christopher Fox, 'Music after Zero Hour', p. 22.
[46] The *I Ching* – the oldest Chinese text, claimed to pre-date recorded history (but its earliest version generally considered to have emerged after 800 BCE) – is integral to traditional Chinese ideals of balance between opposing forces and an acceptance of change. It can be used as a compendium of principles as well as a tool toward divination and the uncovering of wisdom. The *I Ching* is made up of 64 hexagrams, each comprised of six lines corresponding to either yin or yang, representing the receptive principle and the creative principle respectively, and denoting 8 trigram arrangements that depict a sense of natural imagery, direction, family association, body part, attribute, state and animal. Employing chance strategies to activate these combinations stimulates insight into philosophical and cosmic principles as well as permitting divination readings. The text offers the reader seemingly infinite possibility for application and meaning, and has been influential in numerous art works engaging with chance strategies – most famously by John Cage in his indeterminate compositions, but also in Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle* (1962), which portrays a dystopia arising from the alternative history of Nazis and Japanese forces defeating the allies in World War II. Many of the characters, in agitation against the totalitarianism they are subjected to, consult the *I Ching* as a guiding principle.
[47] William G. Harbinson, 'Performer Indeterminacy and Boulez's Third Sonata', p. 20
[48] Pierre Boulez, 'Sonate, que me veux-tu?' In *Orientations: Collected Writings*, trans. by Martin Cooper, ed. by Jean-Jacques Nattiez (London: Faber & Faber, 1986), pp. 143-154, p. 143.

performance, Boulez in his aleatory compositions maintains a degree of composer autonomy in providing an open work from which the performer determines, within defined parameters. Composing in this manner resists a conventional finality of composition, instead requiring interactivity and reification of the final form with each performance.

Pierre Boulez, in the same paper, situates the literary origins of his aleatory form, naming James Joyce and Stéphane Mallarmé as the two writers that most 'stimulated my thinking and thus most profoundly influenced me',[49] with further references to Franz Kafka and Michel Butor. Boulez identifies the creation of independent 'universes' within their texts as becoming reflections on themselves, with fluidity of meaning, form and vocabulary that was less potent in music. Indeed, more than simply drawing inspiration from such literary sources, Boulez considered 'that some writers at the present time have gone much further than composers in the organization, the actual mental structure of their works'.[50] In his formulation of an aleatory technique in music, Boulez identified the aleatory as a pre-existing structural dynamic in experimental writing. Referencing a similar context in *The Role of the Reader* (1979), Umberto Eco further illuminates the alignment of the aleatory with literary precursors, indicating the universal essence of chance performances creating 'a wealth of different resonances and echoes without impairing its original essence'.[51] Eco's proposed definition of aleatory composition suggests works that 'offer themselves, not as finite works which prescribe specific repetition along given structural coordinates, but as "open" works, which are brought to their conclusion by the performer at the same time as he experiences them on an aesthetic plane'.[52] In his analysis Eco refers to the Boulez and Stockhausen works previously mentioned, in addition to Henri Pousseur's *Scambi* (1957) and Luciano Berio's *Sequenza I* (1958), which are 'linked by a common feature: the considerable autonomy left to the individual performer in the way he chooses to play the work'.[53] In this relationship between aleatory music and the novel there lies an intrinsic perception, for both Boulez and Eco, of the reader as operating in active participation and interpretation of the text, akin to the musical performer, rather than in a mode of receiver more aligned with the listener. This readerly dynamic will be further unpacked throughout this thesis, but such interactive autonomy is an element encouraged and facilitated by the offering of open form or style. Within such 'openness' a comprehensibility is paramount, with a controlled environment of constrained possibilities required to facilitate a pronounced interplay between author and reader, or composer and performer.

In his formulation of the aleatory across music and literature, Boulez problematized compositional indeterminacy, exemplified by John Cage's earlier engagements with chance,

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[49] Pierre Boulez, 'Sonate, que me veux-tu?' in *Orientations*, p. 143.
[50] Ibid, p. 143.
[51] Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 49.
[52] Ibid, p. 48.
[53] Ibid, p. 47.

and deemed the aleatory technique as the logical intermediary due to his claim that in 'any construction containing as many ramifications as a modern work of art total indeterminacy is not possible, since it contradicts – to the point of absurdity – the very idea of mental organization and style'.[54] Instead, Boulez sought to celebrate compromise between compositional intent and an enabling of chance engagements. Boulez thereby considered:

> it is logical to look for a form which does not become fixed, an evolving form that will rebelliously refuse to permit its own repetition; in short, a relative formal virtuality. We are getting around to the determining factor of this research which, in my opinion, can concentrate on the necessity of destroying any immanent structure.[55]

In rejection of the seemingly unintelligible and near random chaos of encounters with indeterminate music, Boulez inscribed a name on to efforts to engender comprehensible open forms to reflect the mental organization and systemizations of chance engagements in a representative flux. While reflecting an experimental agitation against immanent codifying structures, the mobile state of potential interactivity and openness simultaneously seeks an exploration of contingency in celebration of the contradictory nature of manifestations of chance in experience. Boulez found inspiration, even a guiding principle, in the experimental novel offering a fluidity of meaning and innovations in the 'mental structure' of open forms. While the aleatory, as a formalized artistic practice, can be deemed to have arrived in the 1950s, it is evident that such an arrival reflects not a swift paradigm shift but a gradual enfolding of conceptual encounters and experimental creative practices.

Reading Backwards: Experimental Novels and Chance

What constitutes an 'experimental' novel is irreducibly diverse, and – very much like the conceptual terrain of chance or the aleatory – the imposition of a stable definition would be contradictory to the very essence of the form. However, there are common threads that traverse the multifarious instances of experimental literary practice, ones on which a certain amount of unanimity has been reached among critics, as explored below. Glyn White deems the output of 1960s writers of this sort as being characterized by writing 'about diversity, in gender, class and backgrounds, and it told the criticism of its day – explicitly and not so explicitly – that its categories were wrong, its preferred themes were wrong and that literature was something capable of affecting the future'.[56] Yet, despite this narrational confidence,

[54] Pierre Boulez, 'Sonate, que me veux-tu?' in *Orientations*, p. 146.
[55] Pierre Boulez, 'Alea', trans. by David Noakes and Paul Jacobs, *Perspectives of New Music*, 3:1 (1964), pp. 42-53, p. 45.
[56] Glyn White, 'Afterword' in *British Avant-Garde Fiction of the 1960s*, ed. by Kaye Mitchell and Nonia Williams (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), pp. 248-261, p. 257.

another key element essential for such potentially aleatoric writers is a self-reflexive questioning of what constitutes literature, the novel or a text. As Gabriel Josipovici says of the novel genre: 'That is the secret power of novels: they look like mirrors held up to the world, but what they are is machines that secrete spurious meaning into the world and so muddy the waters of genuine understanding of the human condition'.[57] Revealing this artificiality and this kind of process (while partaking of the self-same dynamics to a degree) is one tenet of most avant-garde fiction. An experimental novel thus inherently contains a commitment to challenging the conventions of the canon or the mainstream literary establishment, and invitations are made for the reader to interrogate all such associated norms and their preconceptions. For the writers of such fiction during this period Kaye Mitchell regards them as being 'informed by and radically reworking the complex legacies of an earlier modernism, influenced by some of the most exciting, challenging aesthetic experimentation happening worldwide in the 1960s'.[58] This thesis will largely employ the term experimental to denote those texts that make such a challenge of the reader, which I suggest is a commonality with the expectations of the aleatory. Mindful that such 'experiments' with narrative forms and conventions can themselves become canonized, and of the scientific connotations of the term, this thesis employs experimentalism as – in effect – synonymous with 'innovative' or even 'avant-garde' literature, though the latter will retain some alignment with the more politically-infused agitations against hegemonic structures and the associated practice and theory in the twentieth century. This propensity Eveline Kilian describes as fiction that seeks 'to displace and decentre totalising master narratives in favour of a pluralisation of voices and views'.[59] Any such challenge made to the reader, a central concern of both the aleatory and experimental novel, can also be identified to varying degrees in almost all fiction. Yet, in concordance with the aforementioned aleatory heightening of reflexive potential and interactivity, this thesis is particularly concerned with attempts to foreground such dynamics. Therefore, the focus of this thesis is on the crucial intersection between the experimental and the aleatory, an interplay that can be explicated according to Frank Kermode's analysis of the peripeteia in *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (1966).

Aristotle defines peripeteia, in *Poetics*, as a change by which the action veers round to its opposite, a reversal that is subject to rules of probability and necessity,[60] which Kermode identifies as being 'present in every story of the least structural sophistication'.[61] However, in

[57] Gabriel Josipovici, *What Ever Happened to Modernism?*, p. 70.
[58] Kaye Mitchell, 'Introduction' in *British Avant-Garde Fiction of the 1960s*, pp. 1-19, p. 16.
[59] Eveline Kilian, 'Maureen Duffy: The Politics of Experimental Fiction.' In *British Avant-Garde Fiction of the 1960s*, ed. by Kaye Mitchell and Nonia Williams (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), pp. 231-247, p. 243.
[60] Aristotle, *Poetics*
[61] Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 18.

its heightened state, 'schematic expectations of the reader are discouraged immediately'[62] and 'the reader is not offered easy satisfactions, but a challenge to creative co-operation'.[63] For Kermode, the communicability and constrained possibilities according to limits of probability or necessity are paramount to the comprehensibility and co-operative peripeteia of art as a fundamentally communicative act. The novel must be grounded in the reader's sphere of the possible, and yet it too must replicate the reality of the seemingly unpredictable insurgences and contingency of life. For Kermode, the greater the peripeteia, the 'more we may feel that the work respects our sense of reality; and the more certainly we shall feel that the fiction under consideration is one of those which, by upsetting the ordinary balance of our naïve expectations, is finding something out for us, something *real*'.[64] Returning to the fundamental difference between indeterminacy and aleatory music, exemplified by the respective formulations of Cage and Boulez, it is evident that for Kermode an experimental articulation of chance must remain grounded by a sense of the possible. As Kermode identifies, this line can be drawn according to:

> the difference here between Schoenberg and random music, the translogical order of *The Waste Land*, and the random collocations of Emmett Williams, between Ford's cubist novel and the cutup-foldin experiments. However radical the alterations to traditional procedures implied in the first, they are extensions, in a recognizable sense, of a shared language. The others succeed only in so far as they are that, and since they are trying not to be they more often fail.[65]

In order to 'succeed' as an experiment, in Kermode's reckoning, the unexpected and challenging routes of a novel must be tethered to a confidence of ultimate consonance in a moment of discovery. Such a consonance may be found in the aleatory shock or peripeteia of the open form and its semblance of the 'real', of the unpredictable occurring within certain bounds of the possible rather than appearing as utterly random or impossible.

This thesis suggests a particular prevalence of the aleatory in the British experimental novel from 1959 to 1979 and seeks to investigate the cultural and scientific milieu in a moment of flux that generated the need for such experiments, as consistent within the scientific paradigm(s) of the period and the shifting perceptions of chance. Teasing out the experimental literary responses to the conceptual and cultural terrain will draw upon Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), which proposed the theory of the paradigm as a logically consistent disciplinary matrix that offers a 'portrait' of the world. Rather than a history of scientific progress, Kuhn articulated a series of phases in scientific development in which the accepted 'normal science' ultimately suffers a crisis. Such a state leads to 'a proliferation

[62] Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending*, p. 19
[63] Ibid, p. 19.
[64] Ibid, p. 18.
[65] Ibid, p. 123.

of compelling articulations, the willingness to try anything, the expression of explicit discontent, the recourse to philosophy and to debate over fundamentals'.[66] The resulting expressions eventually manifest in a 'paradigm shift' that gains influence, explains the anomalies, and ultimately becomes the new 'normal'. In accordance, Kermode's explication of peripeteia aligns with the departure from a 'basic paradigm', 'So that in assimilating the peripeteia we are enacting that readjustment of expectations'.[67] In an effort to explore the literary influences on the aforementioned musicological framework for the aleatory – and to unpack the intersections between scientific perspectives of chance, its associated paradigm shifts, and everyday encounters with the 'real' – what follows is a broad examination of emergent threads of engagements with chance in the experimental novel and their relation to the diverse conceptual terrain, cultural milieu and everyday subjectivity in their reflection on contemporary shifts in the understanding of chance. While following a broadly linear trajectory, I contend that each conceptual cluster and cultural response surveyed below remains pertinent to a modern understanding of chance an encounter with the 'real', according to the aforementioned tyche and their conceptual legacies will be returned to variously in the subsequent exploration of the British aleatory novels between 1959 and 1979.

Laurence Sterne and the Doctrine of Chances

In this section I examine a classic eighteenth century novel that many regard as providing fertile ground for understanding the genesis of experimental and (what would become) self-reflexive fiction by considering Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759-1767) and its relation to contingency. My intention is that this analysis will move forward my theoretical basis for an analysis of aleatory techniques in later experimental fiction, and offer a concordance with emergent paradigm shifts relating to perceptions of chance that have characterized much aesthetic thought in the latter half of the twentieth century (and beyond). Sterne's book is widely considered to be the first British experimental novel,[68] particularly in its foregrounding of an aesthetic and structural self-consciousness and the pronounced rejection of continuous linear narration, procedures (or techniques) that have become exemplary for many avant-garde writers. In *Reading the Graphic Surface of the Book in Prose Fiction* (2005), Glyn White says, 'Sterne's choices of format (page size), typeface (and deviations from it), and design (margins) were idiosyncratic, and a personal response to

[66] Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Discovery* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), pp. 90-91.
[67] Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending*, p. 18.
[68] See *The Routledge Companion to Experimental Literature*, ed. by Joe Bray, Alison Gibbons, Brian McHale (New York: Routledge, 2012)

the publishing conventions of his time'.[69] Certainly, *Tristram Shandy* agitates against the conventions of the eighteenth century novel, and might be better labelled as a proto-experimental work for it disavows conventions that had yet to become fully entrenched in the mainstream or indeed the literary canon.[70] Further, *Tristram Shandy* incorporates typographic experiments and thematic considerations that amplify the reader's engagement with chance, in a manner that might suggest a prototype for a later aleatory sensibility. Its narrator, Tristram, attempts to tell the complete story of his life, manifesting in a multitude of vignette-like chapters and digressions that reveal the dynamic and creative potential of the interruptive. Remarkably modern concerns of disjointed memories and the maelstrom-like manner in which the mind operates permeate Sterne's articulation of experience and the unravelling of his characters. Comically, as a result of attempts to fully reveal his story, Tristram is so exhaustive of the many causal factors and influences on his early life that much of the novel follows the experiences of his father and uncle, and the linearity of the narrative is repeatedly disrupted. Self-reflexively discussing his series of digressions, Tristram calculates that were 'every day of my life to be as busy as this – And why not? – and the transactions and opinions of it to take up as much description – And for what reason should they be cut short? At this rate I should live 364 times faster than I should write'.[71] As even the self-reflexive internal digressions of this calculation reflect, Sterne's novel can be read – and particularly when viewed through the lens of chance – as a problematization of its contemporaneous perception of linear causality and calculable probabilities, and a pronounced response to the shifts in a public understanding of new science promulgated by the British Empiricists.[72]

While literary critics have variously analysed Sterne's novel for its response to John Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689),[73] less well documented are the relationships between the novel and the more contemporaneous philosophy of David Hume. Christina Lupton, however, in 'Tristram Shandy, David Hume, and Epistemological Fiction', identifies the numerous similarities between *Tristram Shandy* and David Hume's philosophy,

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[69] Glyn White, *Reading the Graphic Surface*, p. 27.

[70] Interestingly in his monograph White details changes in the layout and topography of Sterne's novel that have occurred since its original publication in various reprinted volumes, highlighting how practices in publishing and presenting novels have mutated or evolved, changing the conventions (27-30). He concludes 'A facsimile edition of *Tristram Shandy* would be a worthy enterprise. Until then we must be careful not to imagine that a text is a text is a text when it appears in more than one edition' (30).

[71] Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, ed. by Melvyn New and Joan New, (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 257.

[72] A philosophical movement which grew within the Age of Enlightenment, or the Age of Reason, British Empiricism is associated with the major figures of Francis Bacon and John Locke in the seventeenth century, as well as the subjective idealism of George Berkley and the skepticism of David Hume in the eighteenth century. Broadly, the movement emphasised the role of sense experience in the formation of knowledge and ideas, over *a priori* reasoning or intuition. David Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40) sought to apply the empirical investigation of scientific experiment to studies of human nature, arguing that our understanding of cause and effect is drawn from observation and experience, that inferences are not necessarily derived from reasoning.

[73] Judith Hawley, for example, explores Sterne's parodist response to Locke in 'Tristram Shandy, learned wit, and Enlightenment knowledge' in *The Cambridge Companion to Laurence Sterne*. ed. by Thomas Keymer. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 34-48.

suggesting that 'both entertain the possibility of radical uncertainty in a context which offers the reader something to fall back on'.[74] It is this compromise between uncertainty and a comprehensibility offered to the reader, in the novel's treatment of chance considerations, that are central to the works discussed throughout this thesis. Sterne's experimental fiction and Hume's scientific investigations on human nature offer insight into the conceptual landscape of chance in the period, and the strands that remain widespread into the twentieth century. The everyday understanding of chance in the mid-eighteenth century can be generally aligned with an ignorance of the causality of a situation – a perception that remains pervasive in modern perceptions of chance – and yet can be further characterized by what Ian Hacking identifies as a scientific and cultural paradigm shift toward a 'taming of chance' according to developments in the theoretical 'laws' of probability, risk, and gambling.[75] While Hume's philosophical work considers such theoretical perspectives on probability, and the psychological process of probable reasoning, it essentially perpetuates the 'superstition of the vulgar' in the denial of true chance, stating that 'Though there be no such thing as *Chance* in the world; our ignorance of the real cause of any event has the same influence on the understanding, and begets a like species of belief or opinion'.[76] Lupton also aligns Sterne with this generally accepted contemporaneous position, but suggests that *Tristram Shandy* reveals a departure from Hume on the position of language, with Sterne more readily acknowledging the disruptive and mutable potential of language and meaning: 'Even as Sterne suggests the possibility of collaboration in a playful world where good readers become insiders and where misreadings are comfortably anticipated by the author, he also marks words as sites of contingency which can escape the author's control'.[77] Tristram's attempts to sequence a causal narrative logic foreground both language and perception as inadequate within the conventional 'order of things', revealing the structural openness and essential incompleteness of Sterne's novel as paradoxically purposeful in its representation of an untameable chance and the discouraging of the reader's schematic expectations.

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[74] Christina Lupton, 'Tristram Shandy, David Hume, and Epistemological Fiction', *Philosophy and Literature*, 27 (2003), pp. 98-115, p. 105.

[75] In the period that Sterne was writing his novel, there was a burgeoning reconsideration of the accommodation of the conditional probability of unknowns. This shift can be seen to have great socio-cultural effect in the founding of the Equitable Life Assurance Society in 1762, the first of its kind to adjust premiums according to probability and risk. The insurance industry's 'taming' of chance in the factoring for the effects of uncertainties in contingent events is revealing of the broader cultural moment and the promotion of risk mitigation. Furthermore, in the sciences, Thomas Bayes was the first mathematician to consider inverse probabilities, that of the likelihood of possible causes given the results. His 'An Essay towards solving a Problem in the Doctrine of Chances' (1763), published two years after his death – with additions from Richard Price – solved the converse problem from Abraham De Moivre's *The Doctrine of Chances* (1718) and introduced the term of probability theory in the process. Perhaps responsive to such an emergent paradigm shift, Sterne's characters find themselves perpetually concerned by what may otherwise have happened, by the likelihood of causes, and the series of accidents that reveal the possibilities of paths not taken and alternative outcomes.

[76] David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. by Peter Millican (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 41.

[77] Christina Lupton, 'Tristram Shandy, David Hume, and Epistemological Fiction', p. 108.

Discussing such manifestations of chance in *Tristram Shandy*, numerous critics have considered the novel to be characterized by chaos.[78] Stuart Sim, for example, reads *Tristram Shandy* as 'a world where chaos is periodically punctuated by brief moments of respite in the form of remorselessly deterministic causal sequences: a world that is in its very essence discontinuous, catastrophic, non-rectifiable, and paradoxical'.[79] Yet, I contend that Sterne's creation is far from an improbable or chaotic world in the classical sense.[80] Instead, in its digressive and experimental probing of causalities, *Tristram Shandy* frequently draws upon articulations of probability, the ludic, and risk, in what indicates a purposeful design concerned with the unpredictable instead of the improbable (in terms of its unbelievability). As such, what the reader encounters is neither chaos nor disorder, but a pronounced structural openness and an aesthetic fascination with the contingent that is reflected in the form. Niklas Luhman defines contingency 'as something given (something experienced, expected, remembered, fantasized) in the light of its possibly being otherwise; it describes objects within the horizon of possible variations'.[81] The potency of other non-actualized possibilities, related to that which has already happened, is a sensibility frequently on display in the plot of Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* and in the procedures of the text. The reader is frequently presented with the retrospective possibility of various causal paths, and from the outset the narrator declares: 'I wish either my father or my mother, or indeed both of them, as they were in duty both equally bound to it, had minded what they were about when they begot me'.[82] The explication of the dizzying possible paths and the haphazard nature of the novel, and its series of digressive techniques, are aimed to divert the reader from the supposed intention to plot a 'tolerable straight line'.[83] Such transgressions illuminate the reader's faith in a route toward arrival (however disorienting) in accordance with Kermode's peripeteia, which 'depends on our confidence of the end; it is a disconfirmation followed by a consonance; the interest of having our expectations falsified is obviously related to our wish to reach the discovery or recognition by an unexpected and instructive route'.[84] Indeed, the alternative potential happenings serve to place the occurrences precisely within the confined limits of the possible, amplified by the preoccupation with causal explication.

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[78] See John Freeman, 'Delight in the (Dis)order of Things: Tristram Shandy and the Dynamics of Genre', *Studies in the Novel* , Vol. 34, No. 2 (2002), pp. 141-161; Sharon Cadman Selig, *Generating Texts: The Progeny of Seventeenth-Century Prose*. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996).
[79] Stuart Sim, ''All that exist are Islands of Determinism': Shandean Sentiment and the Dilemma of Postmodern Physics' in *Laurence Sterne in Modernism and Postmodernism,* ed. by. David Pierce and Peter de Voogd. (Amsterdam-Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1996), pp.109-21, p.109.
[80] Prior to the emergence of chaos theory that will be discussed later in this thesis, chaos denotes a disordered and formless void.
[81] Niklas Luhmann, *Social Systems*, trans. by John Bednarz Jr. and Dir Baekner (Stanford University Press, 1992), p. 349.
[82] Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, p. 5.
[83] Ibid, p. 425.
[84] Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending*, p. 18.

In its treatment of contingency, *Tristram Shandy* frequently draws upon the aleatory probability of dice and the enactments of chance within certain bounds of possibility. David Wellbery, employing Luhman's definition, proposes that 'Contingency is always a selection, an actualization that draws on a reservoir of other, non-actualized possibilities, a throw of the dice, an intersection. Without this selection there would be no events to concatenate in narrative series'.[85] In *Tristram Shandy* aleatory procedures are foregrounded in effect to problematize contingency and to explicitly involve the reader in the very aleatory moment in which the die has been cast. For example, Walter views his son's early development according to casting of fortune and the probabilities of unknowns: 'Still, brother *Toby*, there was one cast of the dye left for our child after all – O *Tristram!*'.[86] In such pivotal moments as conception and childbirth – that might be described as potent sites of 'known unknowns' – *Tristram Shandy* appears as a series of unlikely events and a particularly unfavourable run of 'bad luck'. Similarly, attempts made by Walter to mitigate against the risk of contingent events are rendered futile, despite the apparent possibility for their calculable chances. Following an episode in which Walter and Toby discuss the circumstances of Tristram's birth, Walter remarks 'what a long chapter of chances do the events of this world lay open to us! Take pen and ink in hand, brother Toby, and calculate it fairly'.[87] Toby's response is to swing his crutch and, on accidentally striking Walter on the shin, comically declares ''Twas a hundred to one'.[88] There are a plethora of such calculations in the novel that present uncertain happenings according to arithmetical probability and suggest the vagaries of chance as being potentially computable. Indeed, the crushing of baby Tristram's nose by Dr Slop's forceps are calculated 'fairly' by Walter as 'a million to one'.[89] The frequent calculations of odds and risk within *Tristram Shandy* indicate the sheer unlikelihood of the events occurring, and yet their self-conscious appearance in the text fix such happenings in the realm of the possible, situated in a broader culture of actuarial science, gambling and the eighteenth century vogue for probability theory and the 'doctrine of chances'.

Sterne's text, as a physical object, is a model of contingency in its duality of structural openness and physical boundedness, so that the book itself appears as an 'horizon of possible variations' in Luhman's terms.[90] The effect of this is a peripeteia that conjoins in its pronounced invitation for interactivity within a comprehensible and open form. Indeed, the narrator declares 'how the world has revenged itself upon me for leaving so many openings to equivocal

[85] David E. Wellbery, 'Contingency' in *Neverending Stories: Toward a Critical Narratology*, ed. by Ingeborg Hoesterey, Ann Clark Fehn, and Maria Tatar (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 249.
[86] Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, p. 267.
[87] Ibid, p.252
[88] Ibid, p. 252.
[89] Ibid, p. 253.
[90] As Glyn White explains the original edition offered an exuberance and range missing in subsequent versions. 'Trim's famous flourish of his stick, while reproduced at approximately original size in the modern editions, is hemmed in with text, above and below, not given the bottom two-thirds of the page as it is in the original' (28).

structures – and for depending so much as I have done, all along, upon the cleanliness of my readers' imaginations'.[91] The network of relationships between the author and the reader are characterized by the heightening of the encounters with chance as sites for possibility, and the foregrounding of the interactive quality of Sterne's codex in the typographical and textual techniques to exaggerate the machinations of the form and raise the possibility of multiple ambiguous interpretations. Perhaps the most discussed of these techniques – which include squiggly lines to represent the haphazard nature of proceedings, missing chapters that appear at the end of the book, a uniquely marbled page that serves as a 'motly emblem of my work',[92] and disruptions in the pagination – is the curiously blank page at the end of chapter xxv, Volume 1 of the original edition. Prior to its appearance, the narrator remarks:

> I should blush and an author, inasmuch as set no small store by myself upon this very account, that my reader has never yet been able to guess at any thing. And in this Sir, I am of so nice and singular a humour, that if I thought you were able to form the least judgment or probable conjecture to yourself, of what was to come in the next page, – I would tear it out of my book.[93]

Julia Jordan, responding to J. Paul Hunter's assertion that the 'singular humour' of the narrator points to the contents of a blank page being the most 'easily guessable',[94] proffers the alternative interpretation that Sterne has 'responded with his promised protest against the predictability of narrative';[95] that the blank page represents one already torn out by the author in response to a reader having correctly guessed its content. Jordan's reading of Sterne's 'uncompromising response' seems, I suggest, incongruous with Sterne's wider project and the opening of the form to contingent happenings and the encouragement of digressive reading and mutable meaning within the frame of the bound text. [96] Rather than a removal of content, the page appears as an opening of the form and a foregrounding of the book as a codex. Its conventions are disrupted and its communicative framework left ajar, with the relationship between the author and reader operating in the contingency of the space left in flux. In a fictional world recognising its own sheer complexity, beyond complete causal comprehensibility, the novel marks a point of the self-reflexive systemization of its environment, in an effort to 'call all the powers of time and chance, which severally check us in our careers in this world'.[97] The blank page thus serves as a reminder to the reader of the very narrative structure and physical form that operates in a self-conscious constraint of the

[91] Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, p. 149.
[92] Ibid, p. 204.
[93] Ibid, p. 70.
[94] J. P. Hunter, 'From Typology to Type' in *Cultural Artifacts and the Production of Meaning: The Page, the Image and the Body*, ed. by M.J.M. Ezell and K.O.B. O'Keefe (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1994), p. 55.
[95] Julia Jordan, *Chance and the Modern British Novel,* p. 18.
[96] Ibid*,* p. 18.
[97] Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, p. 423.

plot and the bounds of possibility within the seemingly unpredictable environment. On display is a duality of openness and closure – open in its entry points for individual experience, but closed to the incomprehensible and incalculable chaos of wider knowledge in its complexity. Sterne thereby displays a proto-aleatory technique that celebrates its contradictory appearance, so that in its 'contrivance the machinery of my work is of a species by itself; two contrary motions are introduced into it, and reconciled, which were thought to be at variance with each other. In a word, my work is digressive, and it is progressive too, - and at the same time'.[98] The resolution of the contrary intentions, in the novel's progressive experiment, are achieved by its very self-conscious openness to the reader's influence, marked by contingency and the ludic.

The Evolution of Providence

In order to further contextualize what might be regarded as earlier manifestations of an aleatory consciousness that impacted upon subsequent aesthetic production and reception, continuing from the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth, the broad scientific consensus of chance centred on an ignorance of causes, tethered to notions of providence and omniscient direction.[99] Yet, as Richard Terry explores in '*Tristram Shandy* in the Age of Insurance', it is conceivable that Sterne was 'aware of this discrepancy between the consolations of providence he was obliged to teach to his congregation and the world of grievous accidentality he created in his fictions'.[100] However, signalled by Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859), a paradigm shift in the understanding of complex systems disrupted the notion of providence in relation to chance, promulgating a position of chance as constituting both unknown and undesigned causes. Darwin's evolutionary biology and the widespread introduction to the concept of natural selection as a branching pattern of evolution ignited a tussle between chance and a theistic purposeful design. Darwin suggested the process of evolution is responsive to chance variations, about which the complexity of causation is too great to unravel, and fundamentally not purpose-driven:

> [Evolution by natural selection] absolutely depends on what we in our ignorance call spontaneous or accidental variation. Let an architect be compelled to build an edifice with uncut stones, fallen from a precipice. The shape of each fragment may be called accidental; yet the shape of each has been determined by the force of gravity, the nature of the rock, and the slope of the precipice,—events and circumstances, all of

[98] Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, p. 50.
[99] Indeed, Pierre-Simon Laplace's famed demon of 1814 postulates that should a vast intellect be able to possess complete knowledge of the universe at any particular point, that 'for such an intellect nothing would be uncertain and the future just like the past would be present before its eyes'
[100] Richard Terry, 'Tristram Shandy in the Age of Insurance', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 42:3 (2019), pp. 347-363, p. 350.

> which depend on natural laws; but there is no relation between these laws and the purpose for which each fragment is used by the builder. In the same manner the variations of each creature are determined by fixed and immutable laws; but these bear no relation to the living structure which is slowly built up through the power of selection whether this be natural or artificial selection.[101]

To this effect, regardless of a theological position, evolution was a product of fortune, of progress derived from chance variation in combination with natural selection. Indeed, Darwin's evolutionary biology reflects a teleonomic (rather than a teleologic) progression, in its contradiction to a purpose-oriented design in a providential world. In private correspondence, Darwin suggested that: 'I am inclined to look at everything as resulting from designed laws, with the details, whether good or bad, left to the working out of what we may call chance'.[102] There is a parallel to be drawn here with the concept of the aleatory, defined by Meyer-Eppler and furthered by Pierre Boulez as dependent on 'chance in the detail'. As with the Extended Evolutionary Synthesis that arose in the 1950s, this dynamic suggests Darwin's concealed awareness that evolution itself is of an aleatory nature, of chance in the detail – a determinate indeterminacy.[103]

Darwin's disruption of a teleological worldview and the purposive dominion of providence, in addition to the socio-cultural impact of *On the Origin of Species*, were certain to invade everyday thought. The text has come to define a cultural moment, encapsulating ideas that were taken up in literature of the time – such as in the works of George Eliot, Thomas Hardy and H. G. Wells[104] – particularly manifesting in a shift from inexorable narratives of fate to those of chance happenings. In Elizabeth Gaskell's unfinished *Wives and Daughters* (1864), the characters of Molly Gibson and Roger Hamley are observant in a manner reminiscent of contemporary scientific traits. Furthermore, Hamley – who is a naturalist, rational, and a collector of insects – may well have been modelled on Gaskell's cousin, Charles Darwin.[105] The characters of the novel are depicted as changing according to their environments, in a process of adaptation, and the romantic arc of the novel is perpetually thwarted by chance insurgences. Similarly, George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871-72) appears to task itself with such

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[101] Charles Darwin, *The Variation of Animals and Plants Under Domestication* (London: John Murray, 1868) pp. 248-249.
[102] Charles Darwin, 'Letter to Gray' (22 May 1860) in *The Correspondence of Charles Darwin*, vol. 8, ed. by Frederick Burkhardt and others (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 223.
[103] Curtis Johnson's analysis of the role of chance in Darwinian evolution, in *Darwin's Dice: The idea of chance in the thought of Charles Darwin* (2015), points to the great agitation at the core of Darwin's career, between chance and an omnipotent designer. Johnson argues that from the 1837 beginnings of *Notebooks* B and C to his death in 1882, 'Darwinism had a single meaning […] from beginning to end' and in exhaustive analysis, identifies Darwin's departure from conventional omnipotent design. For Johnson, Darwin's 'chance-governed world seems tantamount to a godless world' (p. XVIII.)
[104] In *The War of the Worlds* (1898), H.G. Wells demonstrated a social Darwinism in the Martians who appear as more evolved than humans, yet having not adapted to the environmental circumstances, fall prey to earthly bacteria.
[105] Additional points of comparison between Darwin and Roger are explored in Mary Debrabant, 'Birds, Bees and Darwinian Survival Strategies in Wives and Daughters', *Gaskell Society Journal*, 16 (2002), pp. 14-29.

Darwinian thinking as adaptation and variation, picturing society as being a complex ecosystem, as depicted in the microcosm of Middlemarch itself. As Gillian Beer notes, in *Darwin's Plots* (1983), Eliot employs a Darwinian image in the structure and metaphor of a web to explore society, furthered by Henry James's statement that 'Middlemarch is too often an echo of Messrs. Darwin and Huxley'.[106] Indeed, it was noted that 'She has actually employed in a work of fiction such words as 'dynamic' and 'natural selection'.[107] Further, Thomas Vargish argues that Eliot 'produced the first and greatest examples of the ways in which the aesthetic conventions and structural devices of the providential tradition can be turned to the service of what has become a generally secular art'.[108] Leland Monk even identifies that while drafting Book IV of Middlemarch, in which the character of John Raffles appears, Eliot was reading an article on the clinamen of Epicurean-Lucretian theory[109] and suggests that the character of John Raffles personifies the unpredictable swerve, in 'a new sense of chance in the English novel that focalizes a corrosive critique of the genre's providential affiliations'.[110] The character appears in a web of unmotivated and often arbitrary coincidences, which manifest as a pronounced problematization of the conventions of providential coincidences. Monk suggests that the inclusion of Raffles in both 'name and effects suggest an aleatory agency aligns Raffles with George Eliot's realist project',[111] and the character's expulsion from the novel signals a closure of the aleatory potential and a novelistic unease with the possibilities for an aleatory openness.

Similarly, in the novels of Thomas Hardy, the characters are surrendered not to fateful occurrences but quite uniquely to chance happenings, much like the variations of evolutionary theory. Oscillations between good luck and misfortune follow Tess, in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), frequently configured to reveal chance thwarting her good intentions. Chance events, stacking up on her, prevent her from revealing her child born out of wedlock, and ultimately the weight of 'the harrowing contingencies of human experience'[112] lead to her murder of Alec. This is treated with the query of 'what obscure strain in the d'Urberville blood has led to this aberration?',[113] a claim that gestures toward Darwin's views on inheritance, or pangenesis, which twenty years later developed into the study of genetics, through such figures as William Bateson. Leland Monk's study teases out the role of chance in Hardy's novels, which he views as subverting the traditional Victorian norms, and 'the way their narrative practices exemplify

[106] Henry James cited in Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 139.
[107] Edward Dowden, cited in Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots*, p. 140.
[108] Thomas Vargish, *The Providential Aesthetic in Victorian Fiction* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1985), p. 6.
[109] Jenkin Fleming, 'The Atomic Theory of Lucretius' in *The North British Review*, 48:95 (1868), pp. 211-242.
[110] Leland Monk, *Standard Deviations*, p. 47
[111] Ibid, p. 65.
[112] Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1895), p. 267.
[113] Ibid, p. 442.

a movement from providence to perspective'.[114] The traditional narrative mode of Hardy, providential in its aesthetic, appears as familiar ground from which the flurry of sometimes implausible coincidences in the plot serve to challenge providence and problematize the conventions of Victorian narrative plotting. In doing so, Hardy promotes the seeming indifference, or even absence, of divine power. Indeed, in a scene marked by the 'primeval' arboreal setting, in which 'darkness and silence' rule, Alec preys upon a sleeping Tess and alludes to Elijah's mockery of the prophets of Baal in the *I Kings* (18:27): 'where was the providence of her simple faith? Perhaps […] he was talking, or he was pursuing, or her was in a journey, or he was sleeping and not to be awaked'.[115] Hardy's amplification of an unjust and primordial world, where providence appears challenged, and chance and its effects are turned toward tragedy is cemented in the novel's conclusion, in which '"Justice" was done, and the President of the Immortals (in Aeschylean phrase) had ended his sport with Tess'.[116] The allusion to *Prometheus Bound* conjures the tragedy of Tess, of the capricious interplay between her perceived guilt, the problematics of fate, and a pronounced pessimism around human agency and the morality of justice. Instead, the injustice of her tragedy has been sport in an unpredictable pagan game, or simply a divine indifference.

Writing during the same period, in France, Stéphane Mallarmé was conceptualizing a style of writing that came to profoundly influence the rise of aleatory practitioners, as specifically cited by Pierre Boulez. Mallarmé's *Livre* – an unobtainable ideal that the poet wrestled with for thirty years – was intended as a text consisting of four books, of five volumes each, containing 3x8 page groups in each volume. Within these sections the books, volumes, page groups, pages, lines and words could all be shuffled. Jacques Scherer, who collated the notes and essays on the project in *Le Livre de Mallarmé* (1957), describes how the 'sheets are allowed their freedom, but if this freedom were total, it would take several lifetimes to exhaust the work's content. We can speak only of a "controlled" freedom'.[117] Similarly, Umberto Eco's *The Role of the Reader* refers to Mallarmé's *Livre* as a 'work in movement', expounding the aleatory potential of how the 'pluridimensional deconstructible book envisaged the breaking down of the initial unit into sections which could be reformulated and which could express new perspectives by being deconstructed into correspondingly smaller units which were also mobile and reducible'.[118] Mallarmé's project is the archetype of an aleatory text, due to its amplification of chance strategies and the readerly animation of chance procedures, within determined boundaries. Indeed, Mallarmé was principally concerned with the typographical arrangement of words and spaces on the page, their sound and associated silences, and with

[114] Leland Monk, *Standard Deviations*, p. 157.
[115] Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, p. 80.
[116] Ibid, p. 457.
[117] Jacques Scherer quoted in Pierre Boulez, *Orientations: Collected Writings,* p. 153.
[118] Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader,* p. 58.

complex layering and simultaneous meaning. This is most evident in his influential poem, 'Un Coup de Dés Jamais n'abolira le Hasard' (A Throw of Dice will Never Abolish Chance). Written and published in 1897, the poem is an exploration of typography, of space, nonlinearity and a conceptualization of a literary 'mastery' of chance, spread over twenty pages in various typefaces and irregular sequential flows. Both Leland Monk and Julia Jordan only briefly refer to the work, and yet for Monk it marks 'the beginnings of a truly modernist interest in chance'[119] and for Jordan it has 'sown the seeds of possibility for the literary avant-garde to make their forms reflect the realities of chance'.[120] The poem recounts the Master (a shipmaster, referred to as Le Maître) in the act of throwing dice – typographically strewn across twelve pages – seeking to yield a 'unique number' that will tame chance and the chaos of the sea.

In *The Number and the Siren* (2011), Quintin Meillassoux embarks upon a reading of Mallarmé's 'Un Coup de Dés', with a view to deciphering the code of the unfinished aleatory project of *Livre* in explication of the significance of 'the Number' in Mallarmé's poem. This thesis increasingly enfolds engagements with the 'intra-actions'[121] of new materialism – that explode the dialectical antagonisms of existing frameworks, and of language and meaning – drawing upon such philosophical theorists as Karen Barad, Rosi Braidotti, Vicki Kirby, Quentin Meillassoux, Michel Serres, and their intra-actions between science and culture. The new materialist lens, enfolding their conceptual positions alongside the aleatory materialism of Louis Althusser, offers frameworks from which to find footing within the labyrinthine relations between chance in the everyday, burgeoning literary chaotics reflecting a turn to chaos in scientific consensus, and the continuing breakdown of ontological stability. Indeed, offering the possibility of relating different identities in movement, embodying subjectivities and disrupting teleological classifications, one new materialist 'intra-action' is that between mathematics and language. This dynamic position is, for Quentin Meillassoux in *After Finitude* (2006), the 'enigma which we must confront'.[122] Meillassoux's debut philosophical work presents nature as fundamentally contingent in that it precedes any structure of logic, any anthropocentric sensibility. The seemingly stable chaos we experience is beyond comprehension within traditional frameworks of knowledge.[123] The new materialist approach stresses 'mathematics'

[119] Leland Monk, *Standard Deviations*, p. 9.
[120] Julia Jordan, *Chance and the Modern British Novel,* p. 70.
[121] Karen Barad's term, 'Intra-action', replaces 'interaction' so as to negate that which necessitates pre-established bodies that participate in action with each other. Intra-actions suggest agency is not an inherent property of the individual to be exercised, but as a dynamism of forces (Barad *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham: Duke University Press., 2007, p. 141)
[122] Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. by Ray Brassier (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012), p. 26.
[123] Indeed, the movement of 'Speculative Materialism' that embodies new materialism grew from Quentin Meillassoux's problematization of 'correlationism', the absolute correlate between Human and World that has structured the philosophical landscape since Immanuel Kant. Meillassoux describes correlationism as 'the idea according to which we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other'. (Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, p. 5) Graham Harman's study, *Quentin Meillassoux: Philosophy in the Making* (2011), suggests six principal ideas within Meillassoux's *After Finitude* that articulate a position that 'When strong correlationism is radicalized, it yields the truth that only one thing is

ability to discourse about the great outdoors; to discourse about a past where both humanity and life are absent'.[124] The foundation for Meillassoux's study of 'Un Coup de Dés' is the notion that Mallarmé sought to encode his ultimate project of *Livre* with numerological formulae, creating a literary fractal in which the 'reader looks through the pages, and reads according to depth. Each line of each page helps form a new vertical page'.[125] For Meillassoux, the poem holds the key to the 'unique Number' of Mallarmé's broader project. Such a quest is, for Meillassoux, a concern articulated throughout his philosophy, seeking to:

> found a scientific rationalism based on the use of mathematics to describe non-human and inorganic reality. This is not to "Pythagorize," or to assert that Being is inherently mathematical: it is rather to explain how it is that a formal language manages to capture, from contingent-Being, properties that a vernacular language fails at restituting.[126]

In Part One of *The Number and the Siren*, Meillassoux deduces the 'Unique Number' of the poem as 707, before engaging in a simple count. Mounting proofs, such as the signifier of 'Si' corresponding to the English 'If' and the seventh musical note, amass to reveal the unique number of 707 as the signifier of chance itself. 'In other words, if we obtain the Number that can be identified with Chance, *it would possess the unalterable eternity of contingency itself*, indifferent to the different aleas that proceed from it'.[127] In Part Two of the text, Meillassoux seeks to dismantle the certitude of his deductions, ultimately arriving at the realization that the 'quavering' number, 707, rests on how one counts a hyphenated, compound word. The only instance of this, in the original version, which 'reveals itself to be an exception to the exception […] it thus becomes a focus for the entire stakes of the Poem – the hypothesis, the infinite, the consecration',[128] is 'peut-être' (perhaps), and the ultimate signifier of the ambiguity of chance and of the aleatory nature of the reader's interactions. For Meillassoux, 'the code is thus a thing at once fragile and coherent, authorizing a perennial balance between two polarities'.[129]

In Nietzsche's aforementioned consideration of 'the iron hands of necessity which shake the dice box of chance', there lies a problematization of providential purpose characterizing perceptions of chance, related to order and necessity. Yet, as Gilles Deleuze surmises in *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 'The dice of creation thrown once are the affirmation of

necessary: contingency itself'.(Harman, p.6) In essence, Meillassoux considers that contrary to Kantian correlationism there is always something contingent outside of the human-world correlate. He further asserts that to alter the model of finitude that denies a literal interpretation of scientific knowledge requires agitation from within the structure, rather than outside of the post-Kantian developments of Philosophy.

[124] Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude*, p. 26

[125] Jacques Polieri, 'Le Livre de Mallarmé: A Mise en Scène', trans. By Gabrielle Goff and Martin Goff, *The Drama Review : TDR*, 12:3 (1968), pp. 179-182, p. 181.

[126] Quentin Meillassoux in 'Interview with Quintin Meillassoux' in *New Materialism: Interview & Cartographies,* ed. by Iris van der Tuin and Rick Dolphijn (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2012), pp. 71-84, p. 80.

[127] Quentin Meillassoux, *The Number and the Siren*, p. 39.

[128] Ibid, p. 208.

[129] Ibid, p. 216.

chance, the combination which they form on falling is the affirmation of *necessity'*.[130] If chance and necessity are inextricable, the aleatory 'event' is the momentary abeyance of their synthesis that seeks to sustain the provisionality of the throw of the dice and of the 'unalterable contingency'. The dice throw is thus the constellation of an unfixed and provisional event in which necessity may be affirmed, and chance actualized as a justification of the world in its multiplicity of meaning. As Alan Badiou demarcates, such an 'Event' is 'not the realization of a possibility that resides within the situation or that is dependent on the transcendental laws of the world. An event is the creation of new possibilities'.[131] The effect of this, according to Meillassoux's analysis of 'Un Coup de Dés', is for the poem to emerge as 'a pure poetic metaphor for the result of a hazardous throw of the dice – specifically, that throw undertaken by the writing of verse after the death of God'.[132] Mallarmé's poem thus appears as the antithesis to a purpose-driven providential order and an unease with the singularity of the Master, as a vision of the author, attempting to tame chance in its representation. The reader's encounter with the text is characterized by the aleatory possibilities within its bounds, presented with the metaphor of the Master seeking to transcend the determined sphere of writing as a plane of immanence – circumscribing a textual understanding of chance, both in ontological and epistemological terms – and to present multiple possibilities and inherent ambiguities. Pierre Boulez identified this emergent literary dynamic, teleonomic in its effect, as a primary objective in the formulation of his aleatory technique: 'It must be our concern in future to follow the examples of Joyce and Mallarmé and to jettison the concept of a work as a simple journey starting with a departure and ending with an arrival.'[133] In his analysis, Boulez bemoans how 'Western classical music is opposed to all active participation'[134] which hinders 'significant contact and any 'element of surprise'. Instead, his proposed aleatory form in music sought to reflect the aleatory nature and self-reflexive ambiguity of meaning that had already been "revolutionized" in experimental literature, and the 'urgent need for a poetic, aesthetic and formal renewal'[135] to reflect a modernity increasingly characterized by shifting perspectives on chance and its inexorable dominion in everyday life. As Gerda Reith writes, in *The Age of Chance*, 'The most important facet of the nineteenth-century epistemological shift was this evacuation of meaning from determinism and the consequent development of the 'ontological insecurity' of the age',[136] so that chance emerged as a phenomenon on its own terms, rather

[130] Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. By H. Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p.
[131] Alain Badiou, *A Communist Hypothesis* (London and New York, Verso, 2010), p. 242.
[132] Quentin Meillassoux, *The Number and the Siren: A Decipherment of Mallarmé's Coup de Dés*, trans. by Robin Mackay (Falmouth: Urbanomic, 2012), p. 8.
[133] Pierre Boulez, *'*Sonate, que me veux-tu?' in *Orientations*, p. 144.
[134] Ibid, p.145.
[135] Ibid, p.148.
[136] Gerda Reith, *The Age of Chance* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 35.

than tethered to the notion of our ignorance of causes. The emergence of indeterminism gave rise to what Reith describes as the 'Age of Chance' in the twentieth century.

The Age of Chance

In this final section of the theoretical and introductory chapter, I turn to an explication of the so-called 'Age of Chance', and the paradigm shifts that occurred in the crisis of classical mechanics and the Newtonian norm in the emergence of relativity and quantum mechanics across a web of 'normal science', culminating in widespread acceptance of indeterminism as the dominant scientific position of the modern period and the gradual emergence of (what was later termed) chaos theory. The archetypal paradigm shift (second only, perhaps, to the Aristotelian and Newtonian shift) was signalled by Albert Einstein's general theory of relativity – published in 1915 following his work on special relativity since 1905 – which instigated a unified theory of space and time, proposing the relative curvature of spacetime and fundamentally propounding non-linearity. As Hermann Weyl exclaimed in 1918, the effect of Einstein's revelation was 'as if a wall which separated us from Truth has collapsed. Wider expanses and greater depths are now exposed to the searching eye of knowledge, regions of which we had not even a presentiment'.[137] Yet, simultaneously, Einstein's theories placed new emphasis on the subjectivity of the observer, serving as widespread challenge to absolutism and any such stable notions of 'Truth'. The radical theories, terminology, and conceptual terrain of new physics have been well enumerated in critical studies documenting its influence on the modernist literature of the age,[138] and will not be discussed in great detail in this thesis. However, and crucial to the analysis to come, I contend that the critical consensus regarding the ideological and philosophical concordances between modern physics and modernist literature suggest a fundamental synthesis in the emphasis placed on uncertainty and the characteristic of 'ontological insecurity'. Indeed, a significant implication of relativity was the challenge made to absolute meaning, in which previously held absolutes of time, mass, length, were dependent on the frame of reference of the observer.

Monk's aforementioned suggestion that Mallarmé can be considered the beginning of a modernist concern for chance concludes with the statement that it is 'not until James Joyce's *Ulysses* that a narrative mode manages to convey a kind of chance that does not necessarily yield to an altogether fateful reading'.[139] Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) certainly marked a seismic

[137] Hermann Weyl, *Space-Time-Matter,* trans. by Henry L. Brose (New York: Dover Publications, 1922), p. ix.
[138] See, for example, Daniel Albright, *Quantum Poetics*: *Yeats, Pound, Eliot and the Science of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Gillian Beer, *Virginia Woolf: The Common Ground* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996); Allen Thiher, *Fiction Refracts Science: Modernist Writers from Proust to Borges* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2005).
[139] Leland Monk, *Standard Deviations*, pp. 13-14.

shift in literature, one that Monk suggests 'affirms chance in order to problematize the aesthetic determinism of narrative'.[140] There are a plethora of parallels to be drawn between *Ulysses* and the indeterminism that characterized modern physics, such as in the irregular flow of time in 'Wandering Rocks'[141], or the stylistic explorations of 'Oxen of the Sun' and their impact on stable notions of meaning. Indeed, the novel displays a close synthesis between innovations in literature and contemporary scientific developments and there is an extensive body of critical work unpacking its treatment of time and relativity.[142] Most revealingly, for the analysis to come in this thesis, *Ulysses* appears as a project principally concerned with the limitations of language to represent a modern notion of the 'real' as a communicative action. As M. Keith Brooker identifies, *Ulysses* is 'an exhaustive exploration of the implications of these simple basic limitations just as modern physics is an exploration of the limitations posed by the quantum of energy and by the constancy of the speed of light'.[143] Likely referring to such exhaustive articulations, Leland Monk boldly claims that *Ulysses* 'goes as far as any novel can, marking a limit point to the representation of chance in narrative'.[144] In this thesis, I seek to illustrate how literary engagements with new science and shifting perceptions of chance were not exhausted by Joyce's *Ulysses*, just as Einstein's theories do not reflect a limit point to paradigm shifts in perspectives of chance.

Furthering Einstein's challenge to the Newtonian determinacy of nature, the burgeoning field of quantum mechanics was concerned with physical phenomena at a microscopic level, rather than the traditional macroscopic considerations of classical mechanics. Erwin Schrödinger's equation of 1925 described the wave function that defines the energy levels in a quantum system, as well as the macroscopic system, and offers a means of determining the probability of a particle's position. Now considered to correspond to the Copenhagen interpretation, Werner Heisenberg illustrated in his 1927 uncertainty principle that the very act of measurement in wave-like systems proves problematic to the micro-system. Indeed, the more precisely the position of a particle is measured and determined, the less precisely its momentum can be known. Arguably even more challenging to everyday

[140] Leland Monk, *Standard Deviations*, p. 154.
[141] In the schema of *Ulysses* – provided to Stuart Gilbert by Joyce – the 'Wandering Rocks' episode is identified as corresponding to mechanics and, therefore, the tenth episode must be considered a study of motion. Made up of nineteen character vignettes (or eighteen and a coda) that delineate movements across Dublin in discrete periods of time, the simultaneity of the episode – in which the reader is offered a parallax view – describes events from various vantages, serving to add relative detail to discrete events as they reappear.
[142] See, for example: M. Keith Booker, 'Joyce, Planck, Einstein, and Heisenberg: A Relativistic Quantum Mechanical Discussion', *James Joyce Quarterly,* 27:3 (1990), pp. 577-586; Alan J. Friedman, 'Ulysses and Modern Science' in *The Seventh of Joyce*, ed. by Bernard Benstock, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), pp. 198-206; Ihab Hassan, 'Joyce and the Gnosis of Modern Science', *The Seventh of Joyce,* ed. by Bernard Benstock, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), pp. 185-190; David W. Robinson, 'Stephen Dedalus' Physics Lesson', *James Joyce Quarterly,* 24:3 (1987), pp. 359-360; Mario Salvadori and Myron Schwartzman, 'Musemathematics: The Literary Use of Science and Mathematics in Joyce's Ulysses', *James Joyce Quarterly,* 29 (1992), pp. 339-55.
[143] M. Keith Brooker, 'Joyce, Planck, Einstein, and Heisenberg', p. 579.
[144] Leland Monk, *Standard Deviations*, p. 14.

perception was the possibility of 'entanglement', in which two particles can become twinned and behave in unison even when no possible physical causation can explain it. So even if the particles are separated by a great distance, they will simultaneously act in correlation. Fundamentally, the intrinsic uncertainty of quantum mechanics was shown to operate and rule over every atom and particle in all matter, postulating that they do not necessarily follow a single path or stay in a single location. Given that particles can not have defined positions or speeds in quantum mechanics, Max Born represented them by wave patterns, indicating the probability that a particle can be found in a particular position. Contradicting the notions of classical mechanics, it was widely promulgated that all matter was therefore governed by probability. Even Einstein was unsettled by this uncertainty, writing in a 1926 letter to Max Born that God 'does not play dice'[145] with the universe.

Perhaps most prominently exemplifying further engagements with new science, after Joyce, Virginia Woolf's oeuvre appears highly influenced by the contemporary emergence of quantum mechanics, problematizing perception, observation and the tussle between classical logic of objective realism and mounting uncertainty. Christine Lanone, for example, identifies in 'The Non-Linear Dynamics of Virginia Woolf's London: From Elation to Street Haunting', a discernible aleatory position in Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) and its treatments of quantum mechanics. The novel is considered as an attempt 'to capture both the intensity of affect aroused by the hustle and bustle of city life, and the contrast between linearity (trajectory) and the random connections, the chaotic, aleatory shifts, encounters or lack thereof, coincidences, promiscuity, unseen vibrations and influences'.[146] Similarly, *To the Lighthouse* (1927) has been described by Paul Tolliver Brown, in 'Relativity, Quantum Physics and Consciousness in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*', as 'Woolf's exploration of the fuzzy boundaries between subjects and objects coincides with the quantum physical understanding of a holistic universe'.[147] These, among a wealth of critical studies, illustrate that Virginia Woolf directly responded to new physics and explored its ramifications on everyday understanding in the thematic and structural aesthetics of her work, likely because the most widespread of the notions aligned with her own sensibilities of the indeterminacy of consciousness and experience.[148] To move beyond physics, however, Woolf was also greatly influenced by the contemporary developments in the field of psychoanalysis and philosophy.[149] As with Joyce, the employment of stream of consciousness techniques can be paralleled to the work of

[145] Albert Einstein, 'Letter to Max Born' (4 December 1926) in *The Born-Einstein Letters*, trans. by Irene Born (New York: Walker and Company, 1971), p. 149.
[146] Christine Lanone, 'The Non-Linear Dynamics of Virginia Woolf's London: from Elation to Street Haunting', *Caliban: French Journal of English Studies*, 25 (2009), pp. 315-322, p. 319.
[147] Paul Tolliver Brown, 'Relativity, Quantum Physics and Consciousness in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*' *Journal of Modern Literature,* 32:3 (2009), pp. 39-61, p. 43.
[148] See Gillian Beer, *Virginia Woolf: The Common Ground* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1996)
[149] See: Elizabeth Abel, *Virginia Woolf and the Fictions of Psychoanalysis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989)

Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung and William James in psychology, alongside the philosophical works of those such as Henri Bergson and his considerations on time and memory.

William James coined the term 'Stream of Consciousness' – which later became associated with the literary style – in *The Principles of Psychology* (1890). Uninterrupted by objective description, the style is best described by Woolf herself in 'Modern Fiction' (1921), a polemic that states: 'Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall, let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or incident scores upon the consciousness'.[150] When considered alongside Henri Bergson's *Matter and Memory* (1896) – in which the classical separation of spirit and body is revaluated and intersected – a juncture between time and memory and of the relativity of mind and matter suggest a reinterpretation of chance across disciplines of the period. Bergson's influence on British modernist writers has been well documented – by those such as Mary Ann Gillies[151] and Jewel Spears Brooker[152] – but it was most pronouncedly explored in Marcel Proust's *À la Recherche du Temps Perdu* (1913-1927) and its reinterpretation of the quotidian experience of time and memory. Allen Thiher suggests 'Proust's belief that chance resides over much of what happens. Like the narrator's own experience, it is characterized as a largely aleatory result of a discontinuous flow of events – much like his just happening to taste the lime tea and madeleine pastry'.[153] The sense that chance imposed itself upon natural order – as configured in the narrator's experience – and that the flow of events were aleatorically reinterpreted upon each remembrance, became a vibrant thrust of modernist writing of the period. Indeed, the cyclical nature of *À la Recherche* means that its close is also the moment of inception, in which the characters 'stand like giants immersed in Time'[154] and the protagonist embarks upon writing the novel we have read.

Equally celebrated for the use of stream of consciousness and the fracturing of time and identity are William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) and *As I Lay Dying* (1930). In the latter, the chapters construct a kaleidoscopic window onto the larger plot through assimilations of various narrators, with contrasting viewpoints of time and subjectivity. And yet, as Dorothy J. Hale explores, 'why does a novel that looks as if it should be read as a series of interior monologues frustrate our attempts to do so?'.[155] The narratives themselves, in a book without narrator, appear to host impositions from the author in a hybrid form that denies

[150] Virginia Woolf, 'Modern Fiction' in *Virginia Woolf: Selected Essays* ed. by David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 6-12, p. 9.
[151] Mary Ann Gillies, *Henri Bergson and British Modernism* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1996)
[152] Jewel Spears Brooker, 'Eliot and Bergson: 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night' and the Intractability of Dualism', *Partial Answers: Journal of Literature and the History of Ideas,* 13:1 (2015), pp. 1–17.
[153] Allen Thiher, *Understanding Marcel Proust* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2013), p. 162.
[154] Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time, Volume III: The Captive, The Fugitive, & Time Regained*, trans. by C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin (London: Vintage, 1982), p. 1107.
[155] Dorothy J. Hale, '"As I Lay Dying's" Heterogeneous Discourse', *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, 23 (1989), pp. 5-23, p. 5.

mimesis and believability of character voices. The reader is repeatedly reminded of their place in 'reading' the text, and the mechanics of relative subjectivity, experiencing the problematized clash of interior voice with the voice of socially constructed language. In Faulkner's novel, interiority is unravelled and encouraged to transform at the very moment of observation. Jean-Paul Sartre's analysis of *The Sound and the Fury* explores Faulkner's aleatory temporality. His essay, 'On The Sound and the Fury: Time in the work of Faulkner' contrasts the novel's treatment of time with Proust, concluding that 'for Proust salvation lies in time itself […] For Faulkner, time must be forgotten'.[156] Yet, for Sartre, the novel's 'loss of all hope, for example, does not deprive human reality of its possibilities; it is simply a way of *being* toward these same possibilities'.[157] Revealingly, in *Being and Nothingness* (1943), Sartre rejects causal determinism, but instils the sense in which consciousness can conceptualize and materialize possibilities. In essence, if the world is contingent, then there is also possibility in the freedom of choice. Julia Jordan identifies that 'Chance for the existentialist novelists, is the opposite of what we saw in pre-seventeenth-century culture. It is no longer a negative, or a lack, but rather it is possibility in its widest sense: what *could* happen'.[158] Arriving after the extraordinary context of the Second World War, existentialism assumed its status as a key philosophical movement, led by Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Simone de Beauvoir and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Principally associated with anxiety and anguish, of the inexplicable absurdity of life, and therefore of a state of nothingness that can define and structure being, it is also a suggestion of possibility being infinite. I contend that within such existential concerns there lies a parallel to be drawn with the gradual emergence of a further paradigm shift in the twentieth century, relating to dynamics of chance, namely chaos theory (or so it has been colloquially termed) and a burgeoning acceptance of the ubiquity of nonlinear dynamical systems.

Chaos theory is a vast network of transdisciplinary fields of research that study structures of order in complex forms, so that contrary to pure randomness, chaos can be broadly bifurcated according to that which reflects the spontaneous emergence of self organization, or the dynamic complexity of systems that contain encoded structures (termed 'strange attractors'). In the influential study on *Chaos: The Amazing Science of the Unpredictable* (1987), James Gleick describes how the 'modern study of chaos began with the creeping realization in the 1960s that quite simple mathematical equations could model systems every bit as violent as a waterfall'.[159] Indeed, chaos theory broadly suggests that small perturbations can dramatically alter complex systems, unpredictably. That for such seemingly trivial changes to have such a profound influence, the elements of complex systems must

[156] Jean-Paul Sartre 'On The Sound and the Fury: Time in the Work of Faulkner' in *Literary and Philosophical Essays*, trans. by Annette Michelson (London: Collier, 1955), p. 89.
[157] Ibid, p. 88.
[158] Julia Jordan, *Chance and the Modern British Novel,* p. 71.
[159] James Gleick, *Chaos: The Amazing Science of the Unpredictable* (London: Vintage, 1998), p. 8.

operate with highly sensitive interrelations. The underlying order that emerges within dynamical systems challenge existing notions of determinism, reflecting a nonlinearity that disrupt conventional notions of cause and effect. Further, and perhaps most profoundly signalling a shift in the perceptions of 'normal science', such complex forms are both unpredictable *and* deterministic, reflecting a turbulence that extends beyond laminar flow.

In 1967 Benoît Mandelbrot published the paper 'How Long Is the Coast of Britain? Statistical Self-Similarity and Fractional Dimension', articulating the paradox in which the length of a coastline is dependent upon the scale of measurement. It was this paper that announced his theory of fractals, and conveyed how seemingly chaotic entities were imbued with order: 'Clouds are not spheres, mountains are not cones, coastlines are not circles, and bark is not smooth, nor does lightning travel in a straight line'.[160] To simplify, somewhat, the detailed self-similarity of fractals are unmeasurable and chaotic, and yet predictable within a frame of observation. A coastline measurement will reflect the method of its measurement, toward a seemingly infinite potential length depending on the detail. Correspondingly, in meteorology, Edward Lorenz formulated the notion popularly referred to as the 'Butterfly Effect', in which small perturbations to a weather model could have tumultuous effect, in a seemingly inconsequential manner. The Lorenz attractor, devised by Edward Lorenz in 1963, is a mathematical system that represents how physical systems can be both deterministic and indeterministic at the same time. Indeed, our inability to possess absolute knowledge regarding the initial conditions of a physical system will always deny predictability. As James Gleick describes in *Chaos: The Amazing Science of the Unpredictable (1989)*, the notion that he had formulated a theory for controlling the weather was perceived by Lorenz as more akin to 'giving an extra shuffle to an already well-shuffled pack of cards. You know it will change your luck, but you don't know whether for the better or worse'.[161] Instead, Gleick describes the Lorenz attractor as a visual manifestation of chaos: its 'loops and spirals were infinitely deep, never quite joining, never intersecting. Yet they stayed inside a finite space, confined by a box. How could that be? How could infinitely many paths lie in a finite space?'.[162] Such emerging theories of chaos crossed scientific disciplines, but also suggest a broader concern for chaos and the apparent proliferation of uncertainty.

In *Chaos Bound: Orderly Disorder in Contemporary Literature and Science,* N. Katherine Hayles examines the similarities, and occasional interrelationships, between the conceptual terrain of chaos in the humanities and the sciences, teasing out the particular parallels to poststructuralist criticism. Further, Hayles' study unpacks the thematic congruences and cultural turn toward chaos as reflected in literature, arguing that:

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[160] Benoit Mandelbrot, 'How Long Is the Coast of Britain? Statistical Self-Similarity and Fractional Dimension', *Science*, 156: 3775 (1967), pp. 636–638, p. 636.
[161] James Gleick, *Chaos: The Amazing Science of the Unpredictable*, p. 21.
[162] Ibid, p. 140.

> creative writing is located within complex fields of intertextual resonances that affect signification not only in the narrow sense of the way words are understood but also in the broader sense of the way plots are structured, characters conceived, actions represented. Combined, these factors make the literary texts more concerned than either chaos theory or deconstruction with the aura of cultural meanings that surrounds chaos.[163]

Rather than suggesting a direct link between distinct disciplines – of mathematics, physics, philosophy, literature, and beyond – or even across the human sciences and the physical sciences, I contend that there is a discernible thread across disciplinary lines of a broader cultural concern for attributing a positive value to 'nothingness', reflecting a presence rather than an absence in chaos, and a mounting perception of chance as analogous to positive freedom and concurrently a destabilizing of totalizing narratives. These claims will be teased out in the analysis that follows, unpacked in the manifestations of aleatory techniques and concerns in the subsequent experimental literature examined in this thesis. I contend that literary texts that self-reflexively play with the impositions of structure that the codex of the book demands, seeking to engineer conditions that heighten the reader's perception of possibilities in dynamic structures of an 'open' text, can be considered as aleatory projects. As Pierre Boulez summarized, in his development of the aleatory practice:

> It is not only that the way the story itself is told has been upset, but also that the novel, if one dares put it this way, observes itself as a novel, reflects its own image, becomes aware that it is a novel; and this results in the logic and cohesion of this prodigious technique that is constantly on the alert, creating expanding universes[164]

Further, such self-reflexive aleatory texts are suggestive of a paradigm of chance in crisis, an emergent reconsideration of the oppositional logic of chance and order, and attempts to house a new dynamic of chance within the determined sphere of narrative. To reflect a new encounter with the 'real', aleatory techniques seek to arrive at a compromise between narrative intent and a more faithful representation of experience, one that appeared increasingly characterized by chance insurgences and complex structural dynamics.

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[163] N. Katherine Hayles, *Chaos Bound: Orderly Disorder in Contemporary Literature and Science* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 19.
[164] Pierre Boulez, *'*Sonate, que me veux-tu?' in *Orientations*, p. 32.

Chapter Two
The Aleatory Form: B.S. Johnson and Structural Instability

This thesis has so far aligned shifting ideas concerning chance in terms of their treatment in contemporaneous literary experiments, introducing thematic and conceptual aspects that employ aleatory procedures. The theoretical chapter offered a working definition of the aleatory novel, drawing upon Pierre Boulez's delineation of such techniques in orchestral music, as an 'open' text that invites the reader to self-reflexively engage in the animation of chance determinations, from within certain bounds of authorial intent. In this subsequent chapter I extend this position on the aleatory novel through an exploration of the aleatory form and structure in the experimental British novel, focusing on approaches that heighten the reader's encounter with the dynamic possibilities of an 'open' text and the animations of chance 'in the detail'. Such a structural dynamic appears incongruous with the very codex of a bound book and its conventional linearity and determined narrative. As such, this chapter focuses on B.S. Johnson's *The Unfortunates* (1969), offering a close analysis of the so-called 'book in a box' that invites the reader to engage in the act of shuffling its contents before reading. I contend that Johnson's text can be considered the archetypal form of an aleatory novel, but that its structural experiments and aleatory considerations extend far beyond this explicit tactic. Indeed, the thrust of this chapter is to unpack the more nuanced aleatory characteristics of the novel's internal structural dynamics, and its treatment of conceptual concerns regarding how narrative has been organized and patterned.

Johnson's structural experiments will be discussed in this chapter in terms of being closely aligned with an authorial preoccupation with the faithful representation of the 'truth' of experience, as characterized by a perceived 'chaos' of the social order. Additionally, Johnson's evocation of the complexity of personal identity will be discussed as conjoined with a reformulation of the socially responsive possibilities of the avant-garde novel, a somewhat ambitious aesthetic project. Johnson's formative working-class ideals and fierce personal allegiances to truth and humility were persistently juxtaposed by his own literary ambitions and his commitment to formal innovation and avant-garde experiment. This chapter will pursue an analysis of the aleatory dynamics in consideration of Johnson's structural innovations, by suggesting they are manifestations of an internalized conflict between various aspects of his social and personal identities. My analysis will draw upon Pierre Bourdieu's sociological theory of the 'habitus' – and the developments of the concept throughout the period – to situate Johnson's perceived marginalization as a simultaneously 'structured' and a 'structuring' influence on the norms against which he agitated, within the critical landscape of the period. Johnson's approach to the form of the novel reflects a persistent need to problematize the representation of seemingly contradictory relationships between chance and order, narrative

and truth, chaos and meaning. The dialogic structures of such fundamental conceptual agitations, in their apparent binary conflicts, were manifested as solipsistic instabilities within Johnson's own sense of self. The 'truthful' depiction of the seemingly contradictory variances within Johnson's fluctuating portrayal of self, often formulated in relation to 'chance' and 'chaos', will come under further scrutiny in a reading that draws upon Michel Serres's mode of philosophical enquiry into chaos.

Serres offers a means of unpacking the maelstrom of narrative chaotics and approaching the aleatory compositions presented in this thesis as aligned to a paradigm of chance in crisis. A Serresian reading of the contradictory considerations in Johnson's delineation of supposedly 'paradoxical' threads of 'reality' will seek to entwine such subjective encounters with the 'real' – akin to the aforementioned *tyche* – with their reflections on a scientific milieu moving toward chaos (and a theory predicated on those possibilities with concepts such as iteration). An aleatory project will be characterized by considered attempts to configure a matrix of chaotic possibility (with potentially underlying patterns), a 'structuring structure' that encapsulates the inherent potential for mutable meaning within prescribed boundaries, but resists objective fixity and stability. Serres's philosophy of science, in its resistance of metalanguage and its wilfully chaotic articulations of multifarious conceptual terrains, offers tools for articulating the mediated complexities of an aleatory approach, and the animation of compromise and transmutable meaning during a period in which the paradigms of chance were seemingly in crisis. Niran Abbas recognizes, for example, that 'Attempting to impose an order to [*sic*] Serres, some conception of what the "essential" is about, one becomes aware of what his work teaches us to expect: that ordering is a falsification of the real, which has disorder as its fundamental and prevailing feature'.[1] My engagements with Serres will foreground this dynamic in articulating certain similarities to Johnson's literary approach, and Serres' own conceptual attitude to 'chaos'. In the exploration of structural depictions of noise and disorder, for example, Serres's *Genesis* (1982) is itself a disorderly text in which numerous examples clamour and compose polyphonic meaning amongst themselves. Mirroring the aleatory form, Steven D. Brown describes *Genesis* as 'made up of inter-leaving examples and discussions which resist singular summary but nevertheless impress upon the reader the very sense of the matter at hand'.[2] I deploy such a dynamic theoretical approach in order to suggest that Johnson's aleatory novel articulates a pronounced response (whether consciously or unconsciously) to the cultural and theoretical shifts that correspond to a paradigm of chance in crisis, characterized by a theorized chaos and its impact on experience.

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[1] Niran Abbas, 'Introduction' to *Mapping Michel Serres,* ed. by Niran Abbas (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2005), pp. 1-9, p. 7.
[2] Steven D. Brown, 'Michel Serres: Science, Translation and the Logic of the Parasite' *Theory Culture Society,* 19: 3. (2002), pp. 1-27, p. 5.

It is apparent, in retrospect, that much of the scientific research of the period between 1959 and 1979 was broadly concerned with complex structural dynamics, nonlinear systems, fractal geometry, and systems theory that came to be associated with the colloquially termed 'chaos theory' and a paradigm shift that surfaced by 1979. While mindful that the everyday person was (and still is) ignorant of the complexity of these concepts, this thesis suggests that there was a similarly burgeoning turn toward a celebration of radical instability in the socio-cultural sensibilities of the period. Localized to the everyday perception of the term 'chaos', the shifts in the paradigms of chance can be reduced to a shift from chaos denoting 'nothingness' and 'formless void' to the term becoming increasingly characterized by 'potentiality' and positive value, in effect (although not necessarily a positive outcome). Evidently, this shift reveals a great deal more about an implicit order/disorder dichotomy in the Western episteme and its problematic permutations in the cultural milieu than any supposed 'arrival' of a new paradigm marked by the acceptance of a 'chaos theory' and a stable definition of 'chaos'. However, there was a mounting comprehension of the significance of contingency, unpredictability and conditions of possibility on everyday experience. The so-called 'chaos' and the ambiguities of chance became positively allied with representations of experience as a radical new complexity that operated in a state of flux between order and disorder. I contend that the aleatory form of the novel is a particular response to the emergence of such a socio-cultural perception of the mounting significance of chance, complexity and dynamical instability, reflecting a need to comprehend the new 'chaos'.

In his polemical 'Introduction' to *Aren't You Rather Young to be Writing Your Memoirs* (1973), Johnson voiced a growing awareness of chance as a significant contributor to the 'reality' of contemporary experience:

> Present-day reality is markedly different from say nineteenth-century reality. Then it was possible to believe in pattern and eternity, but today what characterises our reality is the probability that chaos is the most likely explanation; while at the same time recognising that even to seek an explanation represents a denial of chaos.[3]

In this sentiment there are echoes of the impact of the uncertainty principle, as previously discussed, and the problem of subjective observation and objective reality. There is also a specific gesture toward the term chaos denoting some creative force, inexplicable and inexhaustible. Johnson's literary intention, therefore, was to find a new structural representation of this chaotic flux of experience and meaning, without seeking to necessarily explain (or define) the term. Perhaps the resistance to any 'explanation' of a reality characterized by chaos can be read here as a resistance to the urge to fix an objective and

[3] B.S. Johnson, 'Introduction' to *Aren't You Rather Young to be Writing Your Memoirs?*, in *Well Done God! Selected Prose and Drama of B.S. Johnson*, ed. by Jonathan Coe, Philip Tew and Julia Jordan (London: Picador, 2013), p. 17.

absolute truth of experience. Instead, any such representation of modern reality contained within the form of a novel must reflect the potential for temporary associations and collisions to establish meaning, while simultaneously exposing the fragility of any such meaning given it is necessarily characterized by flux. The problem, for Johnson, was situating such a complex and mutable dynamic within the novel form, while maintaining some comprehensible, and communicable, narrative order in the very representation of utter disorder.

Celebrating Unbound Chaos

Johnson's oeuvre reflects a commitment to delineating the truth of experience in innovative forms that are more representative of contemporary reality than, what he considered as, the 'outdated' conventions of the realist novel. Johnson's desire to represent the 'real' raised a fundamental issue in his writing of narrative fiction, of its being in conflict with a traditional worldview. Johnson thus distilled his perspective, making his now well-recognized assertion: 'Life does not tell stories [...] Telling stories really is telling lies'.[4] Such a tension between the neat, orderly logic of conventional narrative and a new form predicated on a much more contingent experience is discernible throughout his oeuvre. Even in the prelude to his first novel, *Travelling People* (1963), Johnson states that 'it was not only permissible to expose the mechanism of a novel, but by doing so I should come nearer to reality and truth: adapting to refute, in fact, the ancients'.[5] Though he was ultimately dissatisfied with the extent to which his first stylistically kaleidoscopic novel managed to convey the truth, it nonetheless articulates Johnson's ardent perception of form as necessarily responsive to content predicated on the truly experiential. Each section is articulated in a style he considered best suited to the material, manifested in various devices that heighten the reader's perception of the book as a quasi-mechanical process, an artefact of storytelling. In his subsequent novel, *Albert Angelo* (1964), Johnson disrupts the 'development' section of the so-far (reasonably) conventional novel with the sudden obscene outburst: 'OH, FUCK ALL THIS LYING!'[6] and thereby undermines the preceding storytelling norms. The 'Disintegration' section that follows dismantles the façade of Albert as a fictional representation of Johnson, from which the writer fully emerges to declare that 'writing fiction is telling lies'.[7] From this moment of his literary career, Johnson maintained a fiercely solipsistic position, which in *Trawl* (1966) translates to the self-exploratory transcript of the author's experience on a fishing trawler: 'here, to shoot

[4] B.S. Johnson, 'Introduction' to *Aren't You Rather Young to be Writing Your Memoirs?,* p. 14.
[5] B.S. Johnson, *Travelling People* (London: Constable, 1963), p. 2.
[6] B.S. Johnson, *Albert Angelo* (London: Constable, 1964), p. 163.
[7] Ibid, p.161.

the narrow trawl of my mind into the vasty sea of my past'.[8] There are echoes of a Kierkegaardian notion of truth as personal subjectivity, turning towards a faithful depiction of 'reality', all of which characterizes Johnson's approach to the supposed conflict between truth and the task of producing narrative fiction, at least as perceived by Johnson. However, the mining of memory and the search for a personal 'truth' so fiercely articulated in *Trawl* was further problematized in the articulation of the chaotic complexities of experience, the fallibility of memory and uncertainties of meaning that are foregrounded in *The Unfortunates* (1969).

The Unfortunates is arguably Johnson's most pronounced structural engagement with the conceptual threads of truth, chance and transitory meaning that characterize his oeuvre. The novel reflects, throughout, the self-imposed tenet to faithfully record the complex reality of the grief encircling the memory of his late friend and mentor, Tony Tillinghast. The narrative charts the resurfacing memories of Tony and the manner in which such painful recollections intersect with the writer's present experience, during the course of a day spent reporting on a football match (in Nottingham, the day based on a journalistic assignment undertaken by the author). In his 'Introduction' to *Aren't You Rather Young to be Writing Your Memoirs* (1973), Johnson remarked:

> The main technical problem with *The Unfortunates* was the randomness of the material. That is, the memories of Tony and the routine football reporting, that past and the present, interwove in a completely random manner, without chronology. This is the way the mind works, my mind anyway, and for reasons given the novel was to be as nearly as possible a re-created transcript of how my mind worked during eight hours on this particular Saturday.[9]

Such 'randomness' for Johnson appears to denote an unpredictability, rather than any true stochastic randomness, a sense of the chaotic uncertainty of experience and the potential for meaning to arise within the resurfacing of memories. Indeed, the apparent coincidence of being sent to the city where his friend suffered and eventually succumbed to the cruel 'randomness' of cancer awakens a thorough assay of a 'truthful' depiction of the effect of chance on fragmented memory. One of these disjointed memories, the last conversation the two shared, reveals the promise Johnson made to memorialize his friend, recalling that 'the last thing I said to him, all I had to give him [...] I said, I'll get it all down, mate'.[10] From this assurance an awareness emerges that any attempt to 'truthfully' depict the seemingly random resurfacing of such memories, and to faithfully recount the randomness of the death itself, would be compromised in the act of surrendering them to a composed narrative logic, a conventionally causal 'story'. In an effort to sustain the complexities of 'truthful' representation – characterized by solipsism in combination with the desire to best communicate the retrieval of memory as

[8] B.S. Johnson, *Trawl* in *Omnibus* (London: Picador, 2004), p. 9.
[9] B.S. Johnson, 'Introduction' to *Aren't You Rather Young to be Writing Your Memoirs?*, p. 25.
[10] B.S. Johnson, *The Unfortunates* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1969), 'Cast parapet, pierced', p. 5.

tripped by nonlinear chance associations – Johnson elected to employ the form of an unbound and shuffleable book to amplify the influence of chance on any encounter with the text.

Johnson overcame the 'technical problem' of a loyal depiction of the 'randomness' by employing an unresolved physical representation of the experience in the very form of the novel. Johnson's 'book in a box' is comprised of short 'episodes', internally paginated, with only the 'FIRST' and 'LAST' identified sequentially (perhaps on one level mirroring the fixity of birth and death). This shuffleable aleatory form offered to him the most appropriate means of conveying the agitation between truth and remembrance, and situating the subjective experience as consistently charged by chance associations. Offering an open form consisting of twenty-seven disjointed sections, or 'independent signatures', suggests that the fragments of memories that each signature contains could forge interrelationships according to chance, instigated by the reader's shuffling. An encounter with the twenty-seven independent signatures, upon opening the box, immediately foregrounds the concept of chance and invites the reader to actively animate the novel's fragmentary form. The title of the novel itself is suggestive of this aleatory shock – and indeed the essential outcome of the ludic endeavour – and conjures a sense of the unlucky and hapless sufferers of misfortune. Curiously, in *Travelling People*, the narrator (Henry Henry) tears out 'the only section of a newspaper that interested him, that column devoted to those fortunate to have died but unfortunate enough to have left something behind by which to be remembered'.[11] Perhaps this offers some insight into the agonized attempt that Johnson made to 'get it all down', wrestling with a perception of how the very act of fixed narrative memorialization does a disservice to the unfortunate subject and a distilled sentimentalization of life. The novel's aleatory form presents a resistance to a natural inclination to narrativize and sentimentalize. Indeed, Johnson chastises himself for doing so within the text: 'I sentimentalize again, the past is always to be sentimentalized, inevitably, […] The waves of the past batter at the sea defences of my sandy sanity, need to be safely pictured, still, romanticized, prettified'.[12] Problematizing the very essence of remembrance and a commitment to faithfully record the 'truth' of experience, contrary to his own organising impulses, led Johnson to adopt a radicalizing form best equipped to convey such a complex dynamic.

The aleatory quality of this formal experiment with chance is primarily revealed in the compromise between compositional intent and positioning chance within set boundaries (a supposedly paradoxical endeavour). The enclosure of twenty-five shuffleable signatures within the bookends of prescribed 'First' and 'Last' sections applies limitations to the chance procedure so that the reader is faced with an apparently open choice, but within a broadly determined frame. Just as with the roll of dice, there are prescribed parameters to the

[11] B.S. Johnson, *Travelling People* (London: Transworld, 1964), p. 39.
[12] B.S. Johnson, *The Unfortunates*, 'I had a', p. 2.

possibilities, so that while the animation of chance is unpredictable and produces uncertain effects, it is nonetheless contained within comprehensible bounds of possibility. Reflecting the provisionality of the throw of the dice, the process is mediated by the compositional intentions of the author, who despite offering the reader the responsibility of enacting chance on the details of the text, maintains the broader control through determined boundaries. Johnson preserves the outer resemblance of a conventional book – or in this reading, the 'dice box' – to tether a response to an appraisal of the general limitations of a novel. The gesture invites the reader to activate, engage with, and animate the very concept of chance from the outset, foregrounding its effects on the text with each reading. As Martin Ryle describes, such aleatory works 'disrupt unitary plot by way of discursive and/or material devices that oblige the reader to experience narrative as an arbitrary choice from among multiple possibilities'.[13] However, I contend that the experience serves to heighten the possible significance of each choice. Foregrounding a consideration of the ambiguities and complexities that characterized a contemporary understanding of chance, the aleatory procedure aligns each arbitrary narrative choice with a possibility for positive meaning, however unstable or transitory such meaning might prove to be. It goes some way toward representing Johnson's perceived chaos of reality, and personal responses to it, so that the project reflects an aesthetic perspective described by Frank Kermode whereby: 'the book, to contain truth, needs to be a model of the author's mind, or of the universe'.[14] Johnson's worldview was seemingly characterized by an unsteady interrelationship between chaos and pattern: 'While I believe (as far as I believe anything) that there may be (how can I know?) chaos underlying it all, another paradox is that I still go on behaving as though pattern could exist'.[15] In this chapter I suggest that, for Johnson, such 'pattern' reflects a possibility for meaning in flux, and therefore a certain positivity, despite the apparent randomness and disorder that appears to be signified in this use of the term 'chaos'. It reflects a negentropic disposition, a hopeful proclivity toward order and subjective meaning despite a perception that 'life is chaotic, fluid, random; it leaves myriads of ends untied, untidily'.[16] Contrary to an apparent cognisance of the network of seemingly infinite random associations and chance encounters that characterize an objective and meaningless 'reality', the unbound novel reflects a compromise between chaos and pattern.

Though the first major British example of an unbound text, Jonathan Coe suggests, in his biography of Johnson, that the 'boxed format was by no means unprecedented'[17] and that Johnson would have been aware of another shuffleable text, that of Marc Saporta's *Composition No.1* (1961), even as early as 1962. Rather than the independently bound

[13] Martin Ryle, 'Contingency in/of the text: Aristotle, Hardy, Perec', *Textual Practice*, 32:3 (2018), pp. 455-469, p. 464.
[14] Frank Kermode, 'Retripotent', *London Review of Books,* 26:15 (2004), pp. 11-13.
[15] B.S. Johnson, 'Introduction' to *Aren't You Rather Young to be Writing Your Memoirs?*, p. 18.
[16] Ibid, p. 14.
[17] Jonathan Coe, *Like A Fiery Elephant* (Basingstoke and Oxford, Picador, 2004), p. 230.

signatures of varying lengths proffered in *The Unfortunates*, Saporta's novel is compiled entirely of loose leaves. Johnson considered his revised approach as enabling him to convey each disjointed episode in what he believed to be its natural length, and thereby preserve an element of control over the display of chance. Johnson's rationale is documented by Coe, who notes that:

> [Johnson] now found himself obliged to refer to it as 'a modified form of Saporta's technique'. But he had already worked out why his own experiment would be more successful; because the Frenchman's device of 'separate, unbound pages [...] seems to impose another arbitrary unit – the page and what type can be fitted on it – on the material', whereas the '*separate signatures'* which Johnson preferred, could extend to 'whatever length the material dictates'.[18]

Johnson's method meant that the fragments of his memory maintained their own internal logic, and their representation on the page was not contained by strict structural limitations. Indeed, whilst Saporta's denotation of chance is centred on the loose pages in themselves – each a fixed unit – Johnson's signatures appear more representative of the 'truth' of the material resurfacing by chance. They offer their own complex dynamic effect in relation to the length of the material and other episodes. While, for example, the longest of the signatures (at twelve pages) contains notes on the football match and an admission that 'Now I must hack this into some shape',[19] others appear as loose fragments. Interestingly, Glyn White quotes the scene where Tony's wife, June, rings to tell the protagonist that a planned trip was unnecessary as her husband has died. White adds 'My quotation here falls very short of the effect of the original in which the reader is left holding a frail single sheet of paper of mostly white paper.'[20] The isolated experiences that emerged spontaneously, or were consciously mined out, in Johnson's retrieval of the past are responsive to chance but preserve a natural flow according to the content. Just as with the loose moments of Saporta's fragments, the involuntary memories and trawled remembrances generate meaning and temporary significance in the shuffling, offering interrelationships that occur between the multiple moments. However, the independent signatures of *The Unfortunates* combine this open rearrangement with a comprehensible narrative logic and pronounced compositional integrity.

The instructions of *Composition No.1* manipulate the reader toward an exaggerated perception of their influence over the events of the novel. Saporta requests that the reader 'shuffle these pages like a deck of cards; to cut, if he likes, with his left hand, as at a fortuneteller's. The order the pages then assume will orient X's fate'.[21] The implication of

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[18] B.S. Johnson cited in Jonathan Coe, *Like A Fiery Elephant*, p. 231.
[19] B.S. Johnson, *The Unfortunates, '*The pitch worn', p. 9.
[20] Glyn White, *Reading the Graphic Surface,* p. 116.
[21] Marc Saporta, *Composition No.1*, trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1963), Inside Cover.

determining the protagonist's fate suggests that the temporality of the events depicted impact upon the character and fortune of what befalls X. This is furthered in Saporta's claim that 'Whether the story ends well or badly depends on the concatenation of circumstances. A life is composed of many elements. But the number of possible compositions is infinite'.[22] There is a discernible mockery of the reader, one that preys on a natural disposition toward the significance of linear causality. The order of events in fact has little potency over the outcome of X's life, or even of the internal temporal arrangement of the character's experience, as we learn that X is experiencing delirium whilst recovering from a car accident in hospital. Ultimately, he emerges as an unreliable narrator whose essential characteristics are impervious to chance reconfigurations and are confined by the narrative of hallucinations or memory. Reinhold Grimm notes that the reader:

> assumes he is dealing with an aleatory novel, that is, a novel with a plot determined by chance [...] it then becomes apparent that these assumptions lead nowhere [...] wherever it has a plot it cannot be aleatory.[23]

However, what Saporta achieves in this dynamic is an articulation of the effect of chance on interpretation rather than with regard to any impact on events. Just as with Johnson's novel, in which the death of Tony is inescapable, the chaotic memories of experience carry the potential to forge connections and impact upon the understanding of the past but cannot change the ultimate essential occurrences.

Returning to Meyer-Eppler's definition, the course of Saporta's text is therefore determined in general, but the details are subject to chance. The musicological definition proposed in the introductory chapter suggests that unlike indeterminism, there is an inherent compromise operating in the fundamental interactivity of an aleatory work. Therefore it is not the essential plot that is responsive to chance, but the perception of the details. The independent moments of the plot are intrinsically designed, but the open potential for their interaction with each other is determined by the actions of the reader. The aleatory form thereby amplifies the reader's self-reflexive encounter with associative meaning and the significance of an interpretive role, forging a collaborative process. Saporta's deception of the reader ultimately enables a revelatory encounter with the aleatory form explicitly, but implicitly denies an openly collaborative process. Furthermore, an encounter with the loose leaves of the text has a disorienting effect, in which there are 150 possible beginnings and therefore 5.7133839564 × 10262 combinations.[24] The reader of *The Unfortunates*, however, is

[22] Marc Saporta, *Composition No.1*, Inside Cover.
[23] Reinhold Grimm, 'Marc Saporta: The Novel as Card Game', trans. by Helene Scher, *Contemporary Literature,* 19:3 (1978), pp. 280-299, p. 287.
[24] For effect:
571338395644585459047893286526105400318955357860112641825483758331798291248453983931265744

introduced to the interactive reconstruction of Johnson's experience by way of the familiar introductory 'First' signature, and met by a factorial of 25 thereafter.[25] As Nicholas Tredell notes, in the process of reading *The Unfortunates* 'the reader will endeavour to retrieve the *fabula* by mentally reordering the events of the narrative'.[26] Johnson himself acknowledges an inclination to seek the correct order, 'how the mind arranges itself, tries to sort things into orders, is perturbed if things are not sorted',[27] and in doing so aligns himself with the reader. The candid depiction of his experience and the desire to reveal the chaos solicits the reader to collaborate in the activation of chance processes so as to reveal the 'truth'. Johnson's use of the unbound form therefore invites the reader to 'participate in a task normally left wholly to the novelist: the construction of the *syuzhet*'.[28] The articulation of the way in which storytelling contributes to the understanding of experience, and the complexities of comprehending a Bakhtinian organization of the essential story, are therefore foregrounded in the shuffling procedure, in which the reader collaborates in handling the fragmentary raw materials: the fabula.

The disordered memories of *Composition No.1,* which emerge as kaleidoscopic elements of hallucinatory unconscious, are unsettled by the perspective of the dislocated X, and are therefore veiled in the presentation of multiple characters set apart from the individual perspective. Marianne, for example, is seen composing a novel, one that appears to mirror Saporta's own. She is depicted:

> at her desk. The scribbled papers accumulate around her, covering each other. The writing is almost a shriek. Illegible. No single letter is actually formed. No sentence seems finished. Some sheets show only a few words. Others are completely covered. Once the page is filled, Marianne has written in the margins, vertically. The text is full of crossings-out and rewritings. No sheet is numbered; she can't possibly find where she is in all this mess.[29]

There is an enclosure to the potential interpretation of the experience, and an opaque quality to the thoughts of the central figure. X is at the crux of every fragment and is the veil behind which we glimpse at each disjointed experience, but his presence is experienced as a dizzying thread beneath the projected moments. In Johnson's novel, however, each experience is depicted through the exclusively 'truthful' quality of an intensely personal perspective. A comparative encounter with a character in the act of writing, is configured in Johnson's novel with the fallibility of memory and uncertainty maintained: 'He worked in the front room, had his

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886753111453771078787468542041626662501986845044663559491959220665749425920957357789293253572904449624724054167907221184454371222696755200000000000000000000000000000000000000000

[25] A much less overwhelming – though still practically inexhaustible – 155112100433309859840000000 combinations.

[26] Nicholas Tredell, *Fighting Fictions: The Novels of B.S. Johnson* (Nottingham, Paupers' Press, 2000), p. 99.

[27] B.S. Johnson, *The Unfortunates*, 'Southwell, the Chapter', p. 1.

[28] Nicholas Tredell, *Fighting Fictions*, p. 99.

[29] Marc Saporta, *Composition No.1*, 'Marianne is at'.

books all around him, did he say for the first time all his books were with him, now they had a house?'.[30] Johnson's intention appears to fervently resist fabrication, and the imposing of predetermined meaning onto the experiences, to refrain from 'telling stories', so that they may assume new connotations dependent on the connections made with the reader and the other moments. The attempt at a loyal depiction of his experience, characterized by an intensely solipsistic position spanning the mundane to the portentous – even reflecting the mind's blanks – affords the reader a heightened interpretive role: 'all memories are curious, for that matter, the mind as a think of an image Two days I was ill'.[31] The visceral truth of Johnson's personal voice, its vulnerability, in turn openly invites a recognition of the authorial fallibility, and leaves space for the reader's insertions and associations. Johnson's own solipsism is therefore aleatorically responsive to the notion of the reader's own personal 'truth' of experience being equally significant to the meaning of the moments depicted.

Johnson's attempt to portray the chaos of experience has frequently inspired a critique of the inherent contradictions within his unconventional structural 'experiments'. Judith Mackrell, for example, states that Johnson was:

> unwilling to see that structure may be as basic a part of the human condition as chaos is, and that fiction, although not literal truth, is justified by its capacity to offer us new forms and structures through which to comprehend our experience.[32]

This thesis intends, however, to redeem the contradictory elements of Johnson's attempt to celebrate the 'truth' of chaos and its inconsistency. Johnson's rejection of conventional structure was in response to what he considered to be obsolescent literary forms, and a means of rejuvenating the portrayal of 'the human condition'; he sought to initiate a more representative structuring form. Johnson's unbound novel does not dispel structure, nor deny narrative intelligibility, arguably its structural scaffolding is more pronounced and its metanarrative resistance foregrounds its own narrative machinations. Instead, the unbound text offers – in its variously stratified enclosures – a pronounced structural framework. *The Unfortunates* in its resistance to a linear fixity reflects an absence of a stabilizing centre, contained within certain comprehensible bounds of form and structural possibility. One might align this with a 'structurality of structure' and the emergence of the 'event' that Jacques Derrida proffered in the 1966 lecture on 'Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences':

> up until the event which I wish to mark out and define, structure—or rather the structurality of structure—although it has always been involved, has always been

[30] B.S. Johnson, *The Unfortunates*, 'Then he was', p.1
[31] Ibid, 'The estate. That', p.5
[32] Judith Mackrell, 'B.S. Johnson and the British Experimental Tradition: An Introduction', *Review of Contemporary Fiction,* 5:2 (1985), pp. 42-64, p. 51.

> neutralized or reduced, and this by a process of giving it a center or referring it to a point of presence, a fixed origin. The function of this center was not only to orient, balance, and organize the structure—one cannot in fact conceive of an unorganized structure—but above all to make sure that the organizing principle of the structure would limit what we might call the freeplay of the structure. No doubt that by orienting and organizing the coherence of the system, the center of a structure permits the freeplay of its elements inside the total form. And even today the notion of a structure lacking any center represents the unthinkable itself.[33]

Johnson's shuffleable internal form is anchored by its perimeter, and by a centrality of the (Johnsonian) subject and its subject matter of mortality, that invites play within a comprehensible logic. However, the form resists an absolute centre. Johnson's innovative approach to the novel offers a mutable central structurality, so that the aleatory form is neither an exhaustive explanation nor an utterly random constellation, its structural comprehensibility instead offering a means of entry. This dynamic instability reflects a burgeoning appreciation of attitudes around chaos, and the complexity of non-linear systems. For Michel Serres, such an experience of chaos manifests as a third space characterized by the instabilities between monotony and white noise. Aligned with Lucretius's aforementioned concept of the clinamen, which denotes the unpredictable swerve of atoms, Serres suggests these haphazard deviations are responsive to the design of influences, in teleonomic fashion rather than as teleologic order. The instability of the third space resists an eidetic nucleus, but affords a nexus for the vagaries of meaning to tether.

One might align Saporta's *Composition No.1* as a clamouring that comes closer to 'white noise' in the reader's encounter with the form. Indeed, for Serres, the 'most difficult art is that of infinite melody […] wandering on the path that it itself invents and that never returns to itself, whose leap is sustained only by its restlessness, exposed, exploring unceasingly another fragment of the earth, flapping like the edge of a flag in the wind'.[34] It might be suggested that the reader activates Saporta's text, but also encounters its restless meandering as a frenzied path through the perpetually chaotic fringes of disorder, and are presented with an inexhaustible novel. However, to gain a foothold within the expansive realm of presenting the chaotic 'truth', Johnson's text can be aligned to a third space that encourages a sustained provisionality in its animation (rather than an activation, only) of chance between opposing poles, by way of entangled interactions that move toward order. For Serres, a third space can be characterized by such flux, in its mutability and mobility:

> the third does not cease oscillating – scintillating – between good and bad news, profit and derision, indifference and interest, information and pain, death and life, birth and

[33] Derrida, Jacques 'Structure, Sign, and Play in . Writing and Difference. Trans. Alan Bass. London: Routledge, pp. 278–294, p. 278

[34] Michel Serres, *The Troubadour of Knowledge*, trans. by Sheila Faria Glaser and William Paulson, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press , 1991), p. 101.

> expulsion, everything and nothing, zero and infinity, the point of which one never speaks, between the two foci, the solar and the black, and the universe that is sows.[35]

The aleatory form engages the contradictory space between limits while simultaneously offering resistance to a stable centre, thus representing a potentiality between thresholds. *The Unfortunates* promotes a perception of chaos as the emergent 'real' in its invitation made to the reader's reflexive encounter to operate within framing logics of experience. Indeed, Serres suggests that 'the encounter of determined reason with chaos never ceases. A certain disorder favors synthesis'.[36] The act of reading the aleatory novel can arguably be distilled to a process of synthesizing subjective encounters between fragmentary elements towards a picture of the complex system as a whole.

Umberto Eco's analysis of the 'open' text as embellishing the role of the reader signifies the potential for work to simultaneously realize a complete picture, whilst equally remaining unstable and responsive. He notes that the aleatory novel is marked by an essence in which:

> Every performance *explains* the composition, but does not *exhaust* it. Every performance makes the work an actuality, but is itself only complementary to all possible other performances of the work. In short, we can say that every performance offers us a complete and satisfying version of the work, but at the same time makes it incomplete for us, because it cannot simultaneously give all the other artistic solutions which the work may admit.[37]

The Unfortunates therefore depicts a structural flux, mirroring a potentiality that exists in nature for complex logic to spring from apparent chaos. Johnson's representation of this instability is contained within a comprehensible form, one that satisfies a complete performance but expands an awareness of the divergent possibilities. There is an inherent tussle in the aleatory novel between the attempt to consciously consider the role of chance and maintain a quality of flux in any active representation of it within a novel, which appears fundamentally contradictory. Yet, this supposedly diametric opposition is the boundary that frames the novel, with its animation forging a third space between these two poles. Indeed, in the 'First' signature we are introduced to the 'random' mind of Johnson and the 'order' of Tony as organising principles. The aleatory shock of the reader's task to shuffle the signatures is immediately preceded by a rumination on the task to memorialize Tony's 'fine mind, a need to communicate embodied in it, too, how can I place his order, his disintegration?'.[38] There is a fundamental juxtaposition between representing the orderly nature of Tony and a faithful account of (what Johnson appears to perceive as) his entropic disintegration as caused by cancer. This manifests, in the aleatory novel, as involving an inevitable imposition of order or system onto

[35] Michel Serres, *The Troubadour of Knowledge*, p. 44.
[36] Ibid, p. 41.
[37] Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader*, p. 58.
[38] B.S. Johnson, *The Unfortunates*, 'First', p.4.

chance events, despite attempts to depict their fragmentary and temporary characteristics. He does so while at the same time, accommodating chance and the potential for disorder into the very structural makeup of the text, as representative of experience.

Johnson's approach to the contradictory nature of contemporary experience, and his recognition of the need to depict the conflicting forces at work, is revealed in his response to the charge laid down by Samuel Beckett, who proclaimed:

> there will be a new form and that this form will be of such a type that it admits the chaos and does not try to say that the chaos is really something else. The form and the chaos remain separate. The latter is not reduced to the former. That is why the form itself becomes a preoccupation, because it exists as a problem separate from the material it accommodates. To find a form that accommodates the mess, that is the task of the artist now.[39]

Johnson's rejoinder to Beckett's task is revealing in its development of the idea of chaos as unrepresentable; considering that any act of observation 'impos[es] patterns on the chaos'.[40] This conflict is central to *The Unfortunates*, in which Johnson is simultaneously attempting to transcribe his memories and represent the randomness of experience, in a process that appears to resist a disposition to control the narrative and impose order or meaning. Perhaps Johnson can be accused of failing to fully comprehend that his methods ultimately result in a linear and causally determined narrative. Though he absolves himself of the responsibility of arranging the signatures, any act of shuffling the parts still sets an order in which the fragments are read, however temporary or transitory they may appear. Judith Mackrell suggests that, in light of this, Johnson's endeavour to represent chance falls short of its intentions, stating that 'neither the form nor the material of the novel offers more than a superficial experience of indeterminacy'.[41] I contend, however, that Johnson's resistance to order should be specifically considered in terms of a 'proper order', an absolute, fixed, objective reality that is stable and utterly determined. The order that arrives from the practice of reading *The Unfortunates* is characterized by instability, an emergent perception of flux as offering potential for chaotic dynamics and apparent order. Just as Serres declares, 'the flux is no longer a metaphor, I am speaking of the flux, the laminar flow that is sown, here and there, with turbulence'.[42] Johnson's text thereby offers a mediated structural amplification of the complex interrelationship between chance and order rather than a delineation of apparent randomness. For White, Johnson is 'Breaking the back of the book, de-inventing the wheel rather than re-inventing it, [which] defamiliarises the experience of reading and foregrounds the sections which Johnson couldn't

[39] Samuel Beckett quoted in Tom F. Driver, 'Beckett by the Madeleine', *Columbia University Forum*, 4 (1961), pp. 21-25, p. 23.
[40] B.S. Johnson, 'Introduction' to *Aren't You Rather Young to be Writing Your Memoirs?,* p. 18.
[41] Judith Mackrell, 'B.S. Johnson and the British Experimental Tradition: An Introduction', p. 55.
[42] Michel Serres, *Genesis*, trans. by Genevieve James and James Nielson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), p. 95.

randomise.'[43] Rather than a superficial encounter with a novel that has been composed through indeterminate means – with its engagement with chance exhausted before the reader's encounter – the aleatory novel invites interactivity in its containment of chance within determined bounds, only to be temporarily fixed.

Julia Jordan allies Johnson's understanding of chaos, and the interplay between chance and order, with the 'chaogenous'[44] in particular reference to the death of Tony as having seemingly sprung from the randomness of cancer and of Johnson's personal project to celebrate the chaos. Comparably, Umberto Eco's analysis of *Finnegans Wake* (1939), draws upon the synthesized term, 'chaosmos', in James Joyce's text, signalling the shift in theoretical understanding and contemporary consciousness towards 'a continuous polarity between Chaos and Cosmos'.[45] I would suggest that Johnson's attitude to chance, and the intention behind the aleatory form, is characterized by a conscious response to the emergent complexities of chance that underlie the notion of chaosmos; a position which Phillip Kuberski identifies as 'the paradoxical coincidence of order and disorder, cosmos and chaos [...] an endless realm of chance which nevertheless displays a persistent tendency toward pattern and order. Everything in the world can be seen as chaosmic'.[46] Rather than the celebration of the chaos-born, the aleatory novel amplifies the chaosmic nature of reality, thematically furthering the apparent turbulence between chance and order in the dialogue surrounding the impact of chance on experience. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari identified the movement towards this representation, in the contemporary novel, as a process by which the 'world has become chaos, but the book remains the image of the world: radicle-chaosmos, rather than root-cosmos. A strange mystification: a book all the more total for being fragmented'.[47] The fragmentary signatures of the text – which Serres might refer to as islands in the turbulent sea of chaos – offer an instability in structural order once shuffled, their complex dimensions of turbulent meaning arising from the interrelationships that may materialize.

Serres employs the image of the Northwest Passage as an oblique and complex structure of space between culture and science, a disorientating path through which the potential for relations between junctures opens to forge meaning. Serres lyrically invokes the manner in which border crossing and 'passages' between isolated states or islands carve new possibilities. In so doing, he instigates the notion of traversal as the pursuit of meaning and of weaving networks between seemingly separate positions. Johnson's attempt to forge a temporary synthesis between the fragmented parts of *The Unfortunates*, to reveal the

[43] Glyn White, *Reading the Graphic Surface*, p. 116.
[44] Julia Jordan, *Chance and the Modern British Novel*, p. 111.
[45] Umberto Eco, *The Aesthetics of Chaosmos: The Middle Ages of James Joyce*, trans. by Ellen Esrock (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 3.
[46] Philip Kuberski, *Chaosmos: Literature, Science and Theory* (Albany: State University, 1994), p. 5.
[47] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (London Continuum, 2004), p. 6.

interdisciplinary relationship between chance and narrative, is a mediated carnival reflected in this Serresian milieu. The animation of the fragmented signatures offers the potential for seemingly infinite reappraisal, so that connections between the continuously evolving present (both of the narrator, but also of the reader's environment) and the resurfacing of past experiences can collide to form experience as a site of reinterpretation. This foregrounds the issue of whether the truth is ascertainable, if the fluidity and openness of the text in fact renders any absolute unobtainable. Furthermore – as Maurice Merleau-Ponty explored in *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945) – a fixity of meaning and thus a representation of any singular stable truth is a fiction in itself:

> How can anything ever *present itself* truly to us since its synthesis is never completed? How could I gain the experience of the world, as I would of an individual actuating his own existence, since none of the views or perceptions I have of it can exhaust it and the horizons remain forever *open*? [...] Consciousness, which is commonly taken as an extremely enlightened region, is, on the contrary, the very region of indetermination.[48]

The relationship between the disjointed signatures of the author's fragmented self and the reader's involvement furthers the understanding of the complex dynamics of meaning and the flux of significance. Henri Pousseur's evaluation of his aleatory music suggests that 'Since the phenomena are no longer tied to one another by a term-to-term determination, it is up to the listener to place himself deliberately in the midst of an inexhaustible network of relationships'.[49] Becoming embroiled in what Umberto Eco describes as an 'open text'[50] thus heightens the reader's sense of their own vagaries of consciousness. Johnson does not just offer readers an open work to be completed by the performance of chance procedures, but a text that resists the finality of structural determinations and remains continually responsive to chance insurgences in its reception.

Eco's study, *The Role of the Reader*, explicates the much cited essay, 'The Death of the Author' by Barthes, which suggests that 'To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing'.[51] Certainly representative of the contemporaneous shift in attitudes on chance and meaning, Barthes famously articulated the turn from the traditional 'Author-God' imposition on the text, to a modern approach – which Barthes identifies first in Mallarmé's articulation of 'hazard' – as a movement toward the multiple 'entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not as was hitherto said, the author'.[52] The aleatory novel intensifies this quality, encouraging a reflexive reading of the

[48] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. by Colin Smith (London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 381.
[49] Henri Pousseur cited in Ernesto Eco, *The Role of the Reader,* p. 55.
[50] Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader*, p. 48.
[51] Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', p. 147.
[52] Ibid, p. 148.

potential for the multiplicities of interpretation to arise in the associations between the author's open work and the transitory experience of the reader. While traditional readings perceived the Author-God to have conceived of the 'past of his own book: book and author stand automatically on a single line divided into a *before* and an ***after',***[53] the open text resists such linear fixity by problematizing this relation, for the aleatory novel foregrounds the networks between moments as principally dependent on the present experience of each and every contingent reading. It thus amplifies the potential for the reader's constant reappraisal and vagaries of self to be manifested. As such, an aleatory novel is inexhaustible, not for the number of permutations inherent in the shuffling of the parts, but for a heightened awareness of that potential to interact with the reader. Dependent on the chance nature of their own past and present experience, the aleatory intensifies such a dynamic (found in all literary texts) by foregrounding the influence of the involuntary associations that arise from sensory, conceptual and historical correlations.

The aleatory form of Johnson's *The Unfortunates* encourages the reader to engage with chance on both a practical and conceptual plane so as to expose a more 'truthful' consideration of experience whereby the intersection of chance and order appears to exist in a state of flux. The form invites the reader to realize the order in a temporary fashion, but not to negate its fluidity by imposing a finality. Eco's exploration of the open text suggests:

> the author offers the interpreter, the performer, the addressee a work *to be completed*. He does not know the exact fashion in which his work will be concluded, but he is aware that once completed the work in question will still be his own.[54]

Johnson retains compositional and authorial control within a text that offers interactivity between defined boundaries (ones instituted by him), so that the chaos depicted is contained within a broadly composed system. Furthermore, a reading of the shuffleable book will actualize the numerous coincidences that are woven into the text. Johnson inscribes a heightened perception of chance in the relationships that form between signatures, with their interlaced themes of time, eating, illness and the mechanics of writing. For example, an episode might end 'the other man stopped in time'[55] or 'Tony, at the same time, at that time',[56] from which the next signature may begin with: 'Time! It's after two! I must get to the ground'.[57] The kaleidoscopic rearrangement of a schematic palette of themes and motifs further Johnson's presentation of the contradictory reality at the intersection of chance and order. Articulating the potential connections that arise in the mobile space between

[53] Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', p. 145.
[54] Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader*, p. 62.
[55] B.S. Johnson, *The Unfortunates*, 'Southwell, the Chapter', p. 3.
[56] Ibid, 'The opera singer', p.1
[57] Ibid, 'Time! It's after', p. 1.

common experiences in daily life mirrors Eco's analysis of 'the discarding of a static, syllogistic view of order, a corresponding devolution of intellectual authority to personal chance, choice and social context'.[58] This process celebrates the resistance to fixity that a compromise between chance and order dictates, but preserves the authorial influence as inscribed in conscious coincidence. The representation of a personal significance, or meaning, is thereby maintained as an anchor for the denotation of Johnson's complex identity, but is established through the frames of collaborative experience.

The importance of the reader's activation of chance and the exaggerated role of subjectivity is furthered in the moments of inactivity incorporated into the internal narrative voice, represented by the typographical space. Kaye Mitchell considers that:

> The frequent textual blanks suggest gaps in knowledge, imagination or inspiration, the mind's own blanks; such gaps apparently wilfully diminish the authority of the author, inviting the reader to fill them in; they imply a necessary interactivity, communication as exchange, and the incompletion of any text.[59]

The amplification of interactivity that aleatoricism incites generally charges such moments of inactivity with the potential for chance insurgences to forge order from the chaos. The reader is embroiled in the performance of Johnson's desire to express the reality of the day in Nottingham: 'I need comforting, why do I need comforting? Comforting, indeed',[60] and asked to place themselves in the midst of that process. His attempt to honestly portray how memories of Tony came to surface is furthered in the acknowledgement of the way his surroundings also provoke reflections on the everyday, or indeed induce silence and nothingness. Philip Tew suggests that 'Johnson's narrative thought and perspective is intensely personal, risking the accusations of solipsism and of merely chronicling the domestic and the mundane'.[61] Yet, in Johnson's incorporation of mundane instances there is an implication that these moments carry the potential to assume significance on account of the weight of the potential associations that may form between the shuffled moments, by way of the reader's response (often in visceral fashion, one supposes, given the overarching subject matter of an illness and premature death). Their depiction invites the reader to activate the spaces left open, offering the potential for the reader's responsive interpretations and chance insurgence to force their way into the space left between chaos and design, and to temporarily resolve the enquiry. The solipsism of Johnson's position is tempered by his aleatory form and by the communion of grief that circles the loss of a stable self.

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[58] Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader*, p. 58.
[59] Kaye Mitchell, '*The Unfortunates*: Hypertext, Linearity and the Act of Reading', *Re-Reading B.S. Johnson,* ed. by Philip Tew and Glyn White (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 51-65, p. 61.
[60] B.S. Johnson, *The Unfortunates,* 'Yates's is friendly', p. 1.
[61] Philip Tew, *B.S. Johnson: A Critical Reading*, (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2001) p. 78.

There is a constant battle within Johnson's novel between the memory of Tony's logic, always geared towards causality and reason, and his own view: 'For him it was too much to believe that there was no reason, not for me, it is all chaos, I accept that as the state of the world, of things, of the human condition, yes, meaningless it is, pointless'.[62] Yet despite this insistence, the novel is evidently a search for understanding and for a means of allowing the chaos to become an accomplice in the act of remembrance. Rather than being an artefactual proof of the meaninglessness of the chaos of experience, the novel is evidence to the contrary. It is an inexhaustible array of meaning arising through association and active remembrance, so that even inconsequential moments assume significance in their association to the death and memory of Tony:

> The pub was on the cliffs, neon signs, a jukebox. Nothing else? Nothing else. Yes, I drove, he was not strong enough, or confident enough, to drive, for some reason, again I could not understand, but I did not drive so often then, I had no car of my own, that I did not welcome the opportunity [63]

The perpetual pursuit of objective truth is an open exploration for signs that gives rise to new associations and accidental meanings to arise. The form of the novel not only heightens the reader's engagement, but may be read as an inverted *ars moriendi*, through which Johnson can aleatorically explore his own grief in a manner that both re-enacts and facilitates the mourning process. The expulsion of painful experience characterizes much of his oeuvre, and is inexorably linked with his philosophy of truthful representation. The intentions inherent in this approach are again explored in his polemical 'Introduction' to *Aren't You Rather Young to be Writing Your Memoirs?*:

> I write especially to exorcise, to remove from myself, from my mind, the burden of having to bear some pain, the hurt of some experience: in order that it may be over there, in a book, and not in here in my mind.[64]

The novel as a physical expression of his experience therefore possesses a duality of purpose. It is an artefact of memory and pain, set apart from him as a strategy for coping, but is also an apt means of unravelling the random experience in a controlled engagement so that he can instigate a collective trawl for meaning in the chaos.

The notion of collaborative redemption is furthered in Johnson's discussion of Wendy's 'betrayal', in which he states that 'I preserved it, wished not to have it exposed to people who might tell me a truth about it I had not seen, or which I did not wish to know'.[65] In allowing his vulnerability to be exposed, and in the search for the 'truth' of the loss of Tony, his aleatory

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[62] B.S. Johnson, *The Unfortunates*, 'Just as it', p. 3.
[63] Ibid, 'For recuperation, after', p.2.
[64] B.S. Johnson, 'Introduction' to *Aren't You Rather Young to be Writing Your Memoirs?*, p. 18.
[65] B.S. Johnson, *The Unfortunates*, 'I had a', p. 6.

approach reveals a degree of hope in the way in which new meaning can be found in the collaborative response to his experience. In the televised documentary, 'Fat Man on a Beach' (1973), Johnson reflects that 'even if it is all chaos, then let's celebrate the chaos. Let's celebrate the accidental. Does that make us any worse off? Are we any the worse off? There is still love; there is still humour'.[66] Despite Johnson's inability throughout *The Unfortunates* to uncover hope in the meaningless nature of Tony's fate, there is ultimately some optimism that persists in the offering of an open and 'truthful' text, an aesthetic consolation. Clearly, Johnson places faith in the reader's capacity to fulfil the potential for shared experience and inject a natural disposition of love and humour into the exposed messiness of life. Revealingly, John Berger's description of Johnson illuminates the significance of his vulnerability, remarking that:

> in the remorseless tide of life, as *he* saw it, there are moments of respite, when some small hope can be constructed, some exchange can take place and the poignancy of this also comes from the lack of protection.[67]

Johnson's optimism, in *The Unfortunates*, is manifested in a reliance on the reader to faithfully experience the loss of Tony, to assume responsibility in the chance enactment of Johnson's therapy, and to give this absence and the fractured memories a temporary shape. The randomness encircling the loss of Tony therefore assumes a potentially meaningful quality. The painful 'truth' that Johnson agonized over is set at a distance from him, exorcised and purged in a physical form that is repeatable and responsive to change, yet simultaneously reified with new meaning on each aleatoric performance. His promise to Tony is fulfilled. The closing statement of the novel – fixed in the 'Last' signature of the otherwise unbound book – encapsulates Johnson's aleatory approach to writing his experience of loss and expresses what he aimed to achieve in such a difficult and contradictory endeavour. After a lengthy typographical pause, which enshrines the preceding solipsism and fear of telling lies, the reader's empathic realization of the preceding material is implored: 'Not how he died, not what he died of, even less why he died, are of concern to me, only the fact that he did die, he is dead, is important: the loss to me, to us'.[68] The resistance to resolution in the absence of a concluding full-stop, juxtaposed with the ultimate finality of death, is coupled with a need to share an experience and maintain the openness that characterizes his novel.

Whatever the aesthetic reasons for Johnson adopting such a system predicated on his notions of truthfulness within a chaotic world, he also clearly employed the aleatory form because he believed it revealed, with the greatest efficiency, the 'truth' of his understanding of a state of inner and outer contradiction, a fundamental instability. However, it is simultaneously

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[66] B.S. Johnson, 'Fat Man on a Beach', in Gordon G (ed.) *Beyond the Words: Eleven Writers in Search of a New Fiction* (London: Hutchinson, 1975), p. 169.
[67] John Berger cited in Jonathan Coe, *Like a Fiery Elephant*, p. 415.
[68] B.S. Johnson, *The Unfortunates*, 'Last', p. 6.

a recognition of the reader's own corresponding experience, and a means of amplifying the space left for the reader to encounter their own 'truth' of experience. Johnson's sensibility is characterized by a sense of helplessness, chaos, dislocated moments and reawakened emotions, his mind disrupted by fragmented memories with a disordered (seemingly random) chronology. His friendship with Tony had offered him the comfort of an ordered and critical eye over his writing: 'that it had passed the scrutiny of someone whose opinion I respected'.[69] Yet, suffering with cancer, Tony could no longer contribute to Johnson's writing in the same way, 'his comments were not really constructive [...] Nothing he said, after this draft was finished, made me change a word'.[70] In light of this, *The Unfortunates* can be read as a system by which Johnson trawls his memories of his mentor so as to grasp at the lost influence of an academic and his critical mind. Tredell suggests that 'the narrator himself is assuming the critical function performed by Tony for his earlier novels'[71] yet, in the subsequent section, I will suggest that the aleatory form of *The Unfortunates* places its emphasis on the ordering structurality of the reader as an agent of a collective, social, animation of Tony's ordering influence. Johnson's aleatory form invites the reader to reify the chaos, a negentropic potential that enables Tony's critical mind to resound within the text without Johnson having to fabricate what his continuing presence would have meant, something that opposed his view on the necessity of truth in the novel.

Johnson and the Academy

Johnson's reliance on Tony's academic and constructive guidance belies a long-term and committed agitation against literary criticism and what he considered to be the conservatism of the literary academy. This position is pithily summarized in the prediction that – regarding his vulnerability in his novels – that 'some academic cunt will produce a study on it'.[72] Indeed, questioning the role of criticism, and the weight of its influence on the reception of literature, Johnson recalls, in *The Unfortunates,* an occasion in which he told Tony that 'the only use of criticism was if it helped people to write better books'.[73] In response to what he considered to be the limiting traditionalism of the academy, and its celebration of a stagnant literary canon, Johnson further suggests that Tony should embrace the new 'rather than expend himself on

[69] B.S. Johnson, *The Unfortunates*, 'again the house', p. 1.
[70] Ibid, 'sometime that summer', p. 3.
[71] Nicholas Tredell, 'Telling life, telling death: The Unfortunates', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 5 (1985) pp. 4-41, p. 37.
[72] B.S. Johnson quoted in Jonathan Coe, 'Prefatory Essay: B.S. Johnson and Academia' in *Re-Reading B.S. Johnson*, ed. by Philip Tew and Glyn White (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. xvi-xviii, p. xvi.
[73] B.S. Johnson, *The Unfortunates*, 'the opera singer', p. 1.

dead men's work. Let the dead live with the dead, I must have said, too'.[74] This statement is reiterated in his introduction to *Aren't You Rather Young to be Writing Your Memoirs*, in which Johnson attacks the literary establishment:

> today the neo-Dickensian novel not only receives great praise, review space and sales but also acts as a qualification to elevate its authors to chairs at universities. On reflection, perhaps the latter is not so surprising; let the dead live with the dead.[75]

The notion of academic literary criticism solely celebrating past exploits, purveying the dead weight of such traditions, and offering little contribution to contemporary cultural advancements, perhaps originates from Johnson's own unsatisfactory experience in reading English Literature at King's College London. He considered his studies to have offered little toward his pursuit of learning the writer's craft: 'the course I was following unexpectedly seemed insufficiently related to the reasons for which I was following it'.[76] Yet the critical tools that Tony possessed, entrenched in an academic environment, were cherished by Johnson: 'his criticisms were nearly always constructive, and after he had read it I was more confident in what I had done'.[77] Similarly contradictory is the impact that the works of Laurence Sterne and James Joyce had upon Johnson's writing, and his search for new forms. His university education had furnished him with a fuller understanding of the literary canon, and although he came to agitate against the establishment that supported a backward-oriented literary conservatism, there was however 'an implicit recognition that his three-years' study of English literature in an academic environment (an environment to which he had struggled long and hard to access) played a crucial part in shaping him as a writer'.[78] The dogged pursuit of acceptance in conflict with a pronounced class-consciousness, a fealty to his working class origins, manifests throughout his writing.

As depicted in *Trawl*, Johnson became acutely aware of his working-class identity from an early age, particularly during his formative experience as an evacuee. This antagonized position is evident throughout his career, held in collusion with a position of marginalization from the academy.

> In my research to trace the causes of my isolation: I now realise the point at which I became aware of class distinction [...] The class war is being fought as viciously and destructively of human spirit as it has ever been in England: I was born on my side, and I cannot and will not desert: I became an enlisted man consciously but not voluntarily at the age of about seven.[79]

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[74] B.S. Johnson, *The Unfortunates*, 'the opera singer', p. 2.
[75] Johnson, 'Introduction' to *Aren't You Rather Young to be Writing Your Memoirs?,* p. 15.
[76] B.S. Johnson, 'The Happiest Days?', *Education & Training*, 15:3 (1973), pp. 92-93, p. 92.
[77] B.S. Johnson, *The Unfortunates*, 'again the house', p. 1.
[78] Jonathan Coe, 'Prefatory Essay: B.S. Johnson and Academia', p. xvii.
[79] B.S. Johnson, *Trawl*, p. 53.

In *The Unfortunates*, the most telling example of Johnson's working-class allegiance is in his discussion of football, which for Johnson appears as a potent metaphor for the chaosmos of life and the possible synthesis between chance and meaning. Indeed, Coe suggests that Johnson considered football 'a paradigm of (to use his own favourite terminology) "the human condition"'.[80] Much like his discussion of class allegiance, Johnson's love of football and support for Chelsea Football Club are essentially products of his upbringing, part of an experiential legacy that mean he can be considered an enlisted Chelsea supporter, 'consciously but voluntarily'. In *Albert Angelo*, Johnson reveals that football enabled a more profound and communicative father-son relationship to form: 'the first time I heard my father swear, at a football match, how somehow it made us closer, me having heard him swear, as though against the women, the two of us, closer'.[81] However, despite Johnson's performance of conventional masculinity, and working-class practices, his passion for football is equally aligned with his literary ambition and signals a deeply unconventional position. As a football journalist, Johnson agitated against the stultifying conventions and clichés of 'the Heavy Mob' reporters, who made the 'football fit whatever it is they imagine their readers want them to say'.[82] Reflecting Johnson's approach to the novel itself, his insistence to resist the conventions, the tropes and norms of writing practice, is aligned with a commitment to presenting the 'truth' of the game. Johnson describes a reliance 'on the chance of real words which may come in only the two hours of a match and the writing about it'.[83] His response to football is representative of a broader dynamic, potentially contradictory in effect, between his militant class-consciousness and his experimental ambitions. Johnson agitates against 'the directors, the owners who just siphoned off all the money but […] let their chief supporters, the sixpences of the masses, stand out in all weathers',[84] and places himself amongst the throng of the masses: 'we flow across the bridge toward the ground, our pace hurried, urgent, for some reason, our flow, tide, mass, as we go past the buttresses of the bridge'.[85] Yet, Johnson's place within the stadium is in the press box, above the throng, reporting for 'a so-called posh paper',[86] a position that removes him from the crowd and separates him from those 'well-paid pseuds who write their reports from prepared telling phrases'.[87] Johnson's resistance to the conventions of the establishment, his negation of journalistic praxis, manifests as a position of marginalization, operating in the liminal space between the masses and the elite.

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[80] Jonathan Coe, *Like a Fiery Elephant*, p. 213.
[81] B.S. Johnson, *Albert Angelo*, p. 25.
[82] B.S. Johnson, *The Unfortunates*, 'Time It's after', p. 5.
[83] Ibid, 'the pitch worn', p. 7.
[84] Ibid, 'Time It's after', p.5.
[85] Ibid, 'Time It's after', p.4
[86] Ibid, 'Time It's after', p.5
[87] Ibid, 'Time It's after', p.5

The agitation between Johnson's class consciousness and literary ambitions – manifested in experimental efforts that appear to appeal for socially responsive communicative action – is revealing of the complexities in Johnson's identity and sense of self, and the resistance to the imposition of a singular explanation of the multifarious systems at work in his representation of the truth of experience. This dynamic instability can be unpacked by way of Pierre Bourdieu's engagement with the concept of 'habitus', which stipulates a unifying system of acquired sensibilities, tastes, and natural responses to everyday encounters. These dispositions are internalized embodiments resulting from social structures and complex fields of identity, expressive of affiliations. Johnson's working-class origins appear, therefore, as his primary habitus, an ingrained schema from which intrinsic characteristics and inclinations materialized. However, there may be more resistance to the structural stratifications of the habitus – shifting perspectives on which I'll argue correspond to broader reflections of a paradigm of chance in crisis – particularly as Bourdieu has been criticized for having 'underemphasised working-class freedom (versus constraint) and the culturally creative energies that can come from underneath'.[88] For Johnson, this creative energy can be traced to the vibration between multiple thresholds of social stratification, but thoroughly tethered to a sense of rising agitation 'from underneath'.

Bourdieu's concept indicates a determined cyclical system, in which the actions of a social agent are formed by the habitus, but that the agent may equally contribute to the structure of the habitus. However, there is a discernible inertia in this configuration, as the contributory responses are justified and characterized by the feedback loop of other agents. The social schema from which we learn from, and contribute to, are therefore simultaneously 'structuring structures' and 'structured structures' that impact on and are impacted by social practice. Despite the overarching determinisms of Bourdieu's initial assessment of habitus, there is a sense in which the boundaries and partitions of each social field offer the potential for an aleatory configuration of the seemingly infinite possible structural frames of social fields:

> The dispositions associated with a certain social origin cannot be fulfilled unless they are responsive in the shape they take to, on the one hand, the structure of possibilities opened up by the different positions and position-takings of their occupants, and, on the other hand, to the position occupied in the field.[89]

Such dispositions are responsive to a 'doxa' of collective social understanding or common beliefs that define a general perception of the world, creating a 'space of possibles'. Johnson's employment of an aleatory form to depict what he saw as the emergent doxa of a synthesis between chance and order – of what one might now consider a paradigm of chance in crisis

[88] Bridget Fowler, *Pierre Bourdieu and Cultural Theory* (London: Sage Publications 1997), p. 4.
[89] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, trans. by Susan Emanuel (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), p. 264.

and a reflection of a burgeoning 'chaos' – can therefore be read as a structural representation of his internalized response to his habitus. A generalized reading of Bourdieu's theory stresses the social origins and collective formulation of the individual, who can therefore never truly be totally autonomous. Identity is therein the picture of natural, ingrained responses to everyday experience. Crucially, however, Johnson's depiction of the role of chance in the formation of personal and collective experience can be aligned with Bourdieu's ultimate development of the concept of habitus

Reformulated throughout Bourdieu's career, the theory of habitus increasingly accommodated aspects of contingency. The structural fixity that characterized its early appearance was displaced by a consideration of the 'generative spontaneity which asserts itself in an improvised confrontation with ever-renewed situations, it obeys a *practical logic*, that of vagueness, of the more-or-less, which defines one's ordinary relation to the world'.[90] The habitus is thenceforth read as a process of mobile interaction, which constrains but does not determine action, from which the agent acts in response to the structuring elements of the habitus, but is in turn able to manipulate and influence the structure of it from within; a 'structuring structure':

> Systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to functioning as structuring structures [...] objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends [..] collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor.[91]

Bourdieu's orchestral imagery amplifies the significance of an aleatoric reading of agency, in which the individual assumes freedom of choice set within the parameters of social structures. The dichotomic relationship between structure and agency is articulated in aleatory art through the offering of an open work, without the over-arching determinations of a rigorous conductor, but within determined bounds provided by the composer. The performers of the aleatory work realise the general compositional intentions, but reflexively complete the work by way of personal engagement as a structuring structure.

The aleatory form mirrors this responsive systemization of the vagaries of potential experience and the contradictory connections these form in social stratification. For instance, In *Trawl,* Johnson is even unnerved by his own recollections of his younger self with regard to schooldays and the very different environment, stating 'All? No, but go on now to Scale Lane, enough of the earlier past, this works in chronological order as far as it can, if it works. I begin to suspect I shall wish I had never started this examination: I keep surprising myself with my

[90] Pierre Bourdieu, *In Other Words: Essays towards a Reflexive Sociology*, trans. Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), p. 77–78.
[91] Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. by Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 72.

own nastiness, with my own limitations'.[92] The mobile moments of *The Unfortunates* are responsive to the doxa of the individual, who reorganizes fragments to establish the syuzhet, but the signatures themselves act as a structural product of the fabula. The aleatory reader encounters the contradictory elements of Johnson's social position in reference to their own doxa, and animates the possibility for belonging to several fields of influence simultaneously. Johnson's solipsistic position and associated employment of the aleatory form is revealing of a disjuncture with a traditional identity of social belonging, in which the open form is representative of an inability to find a fixed structural representation of his position within the fields of social stratification. In its deeply personal and fragile articulation of loss and the essential contradictions of selfhood, *The Unfortunates* reflects what Bourdieu describes as, 'Narratives about the most 'personal' difficulties, the apparently most strictly subjective tensions and contradictions'.[93] Indeed, Johnson's text is suggestive of Bourdieu's proposed ability of such a dynamic to 'frequently articulate the deepest structures of the social world and its contradictions'.[94] Johnson's aleatory representation of self illuminates a conflation of the multiple social fields and the complex intersections between the nuances of each. The aleatory form gestures towards this responsive systemization of the vagaries of potential experience and the contradictory connections that form in social stratification. The reader activates the contradictory elements of Johnson's social position, in reference to their own doxa, and animates the interplay of several fields of influence simultaneously. At a fundamental level, Johnson's representation of his identity resonates with the conflict between his working class ideals (and past) and a cultural position that can be accused of elitism. Johnson's working-class cultural aesthetic is discernible throughout his oeuvre, traceable in his appreciative depiction of football, pub-culture and other such 'common' pastimes, in which issues of masculinity and labour frequently surface. Yet, despite the personal struggles involved in such pursuits, Johnson's formative working-class identity was in many ways dislodged by his university education and avant-garde approach to writing. This perceived difference is most apparent in Johnson's consideration of his intellectual ability having isolated him from an early age. He recalls, for example, how he 'was in some way at least better than others, that though I was working-class and embarrassed by my clothes, I was yet better than some others at some things'.[95] Dislocated from his class origins by his (self-described) difference, yet not gaining acceptance into the upper echelons of society and the literary elite, Johnson assumed the position of a liminal figure, operating between the thresholds of stratification.

[92] B.S. Johnson, *Trawl*, pp 82-83.
[93] Pierre Bourdieu et al, *The Weight of the World: Social Suffering in Contemporary Society*, trans. by Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson et al (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), p. 511.
[94] Ibid, p. 511.
[95] B.S. Johnson, *Trawl*, p. 85.

The internal conflict between formative class identity and an assumed intellectual position, as a result of higher education and entering an academic field, was considered by Bourdieu in the developments of his theory around the habitus. He proposed the notion of a divided identity, a 'habitus clivé', in analysis of the young Algerian intellectuals during the struggle for independence from France. This dynamic is revealed as a state of complex marginalization:

> Constantly being faced with alternative ways of behaviour by reason of the intrusion of new values, and therefore compelled to make a conscious examination of the implicit premises or the unconscious patterns of his own tradition, this man, cast between two worlds and rejected by both, lives a sort of double inner life, is a prey to frustration and inner conflict, with the result that he is constantly being tempted to adopt either an attitude of uneasy over identification or one of rebellious negativism.[96]

This formulation is particularly pertinent as a way of reading Johnson's isolated position, in which his social identity became a divided habitus as result of his literary ambitions and education and his response is arguably of a pronounced over identification. His writing depicts an attempt to cling to working-class identity, despite the dislocation that a university education forged, and a growing awareness that he was no longer representative of his origins. For Bourdieu, the working-class student assumes a secondary habitus in entering the academic field that displaces the first, so that 'the primary habitus is devalued as the student acquires the secondary habitus associated with education'.[97] However, in Johnson we can chart a self-referential problematization of the conflict and contradiction between these two positions, a resistance to stratification and to absolutes that is mirrored by an aleatory approach.

In Johnson's pursuit of higher education and literary acceptance, he felt he must battle against an establishment forcing him 'down', hindering his access to education and limiting the reach of his writing. Arguably, though, he had the same opportunities for social mobility afforded to his contemporaries, the 'scholarship boys'. As a result of the Education Act of 1944, known as the 'Butler Act', working-class students were able to sit eleven-plus examination and gain entry to grammar school education. In turn, this saw the rise of the 'Red-Brick University' and fostered a new strain of educated young, who were characterized in literature by the emergence of the 'Angry Young Men'. The clustering of supposedly dissentient writers, such as John Osborne, John Wain, Kingsley Amis, and Alan Sillitoe, represent an unsteady positioning between the traditional strata of cultures and class. Richard Hoggart, for example, depicts these 'scholarship boys' in *The Uses of Literacy* (1957) as the 'anxious and uprooted' who are at 'a friction point between two cultures',[98] representing an individual that is 'unhappy

[96] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Algerians*, trans. by Alan C. M. Ross. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), p. 144.
[97] Deborah Reed-Danahay, *Locating Bourdieu* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005), p. 32.
[98] Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (London: Penguin, 2009), p. 239.

in a society which presents largely a picture of disorder, which is huge and sprawling'.[99] The post-war rejuvenation of cultural subsidy and welfare reform in education and working conditions paved the way for increased possibilities of social mobility, reflected by such tropes as the 'red brick intellectual'. Yet, as Johnson records bitterly in *Trawl*, he failed the eleven-plus examination and was denied access to the grammar school system, thereby falling at the first hurdle in the path toward upward social mobility. As Nicholas Tredell reveals:

> His wartime evacuations, his eleven-plus failure, his rejection for National Service, his late start both as a student and (in an age of Angry Young Men) as a published writer, his movement away from his class origins, all these elements perhaps contributed to a sense of isolation.[100]

Johnson thus appears as an outsider to the already established narrative of the 'Angry Young Men', a new class faction of young intelligentsia who held a position of 'instinctive Leftism', encouraged by easier access to higher education and countercultural exploits. Such 'scholarship boys' held the position of an acceptable disenchantment with the establishment, an inoffensive critique that was contained within the conventions of the literary canon. Johnson's own branch of agitation against the canon alienated him from this emergent rhetoric, furthering a sense of his otherness.

Johnson had to carve his own route to higher education, achieved by way of evening classes at Birkbeck College. By the time he gained access to an undergraduate programme at King's College London, Johnson was much older than the other students and perhaps this exaggerated his perceived difference. The culture of academic traditionalism that Johnson seemingly encountered inspired his desire to uproot the norms. He sought to agitate against a perceived dominion of the outworn conventions of the nineteenth century realist novel, which were symptomatic of the entrenched establishment. Despite his rejection of its wider value, Johnson's university experience did contribute to his encounter with the *nouveau roman* and the French literary avant-garde's ideological vision for dismantling the conventions of reading. The *nouveaux romanciers* were seemingly led by Alain Robbe-Grillet, who described the term as 'merely a useful epithet that can be used to include all those writers who are trying to find new forms for the novel'.[101] Responding to existentialism and particularly the works of Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre, the *nouveau roman* – comprising those such as Michel Butor, Nathalie Sarraute and Claude Simon – 'perceived instability and relativity where Sartre and Camus assumed the ground to be firm'.[102] In their quest for a new form, the movement experimented with the fundamental relationship between the supposed objectivity of the author

[99] Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy*, p. 244.
[100] Nicholas Tredell, *Fighting Fictions*, p. 10.
[101] Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Snapshots and Towards a New Novel*, trans. by Barbara Wright (London: Calder and Boyars, 1965), p. 45.
[102] John Fletcher, *Alain Robbe-Grillet* (London and New York: Methuen, 1983), p. 14.

and the subjectivity of the reader, reflecting on the conventional practice of writing as inconsistent with an experience of modern life in which existence and meaning are disjointed and uncertain. Adam Guy's comprehensive study, *The nouveau roman and Writing in Britain After Modernism* (2019), demarcates the impact of the French 'anti-novel' on British avant-garde literary innovation. The study reveals how the reception of the *nouveau roman* in Britain was typically characterized by a perception of its self-indulgence, associated with elitism. Yet B.S. Johnson evidently recognised in their innovations potential for a new form to best communicate his ideas, socially, and to reflect a broader development in the understand of 'life as chaos'.

In his fulminatory essay rebuking the state of the British novel, Johnson draws upon Nathalie Sarraute's metaphor of literature as a relay race, when he accused the 'vast majority of British novelists' as having 'dropped the baton'.[103] The need to resume the race, as he saw it, suggests a desire to return to the innovations of the pre-war Bloomsbury group. This reflects a wider regard of the novel during the post-war period as one characterized by parochialism. Indeed, Bernard Bergonzi suggests that 'English literature in the fifties and sixties has been both backward – and inward-looking'.[104] In his essay, however, Johnson identified Rayner Heppenstall as one of the few authors that he considered to be revitalizing the British novel. Indeed, as G.J. Buckell identifies, Johnson keenly sent Heppenstall his first novel asking if it 'had anything in common with the new French novel'[105] because Heppenstall was considered the British representative of the *nouveau roman*. Heppenstall, whose own aleatorical techniques will be discussed in Chapter Three, critiqued the conventionality of the British literary canon in *The Fourfold Tradition*, suggesting that the 'French understand that their tradition is twofold. Here we speak of "the English tradition" as of something recognisably single'.[106] Despite noting the success of such British writers as Lawrence Durrell and William Golding, whose work went 'some way towards non-conformity', Heppenstall's overall perception was that 'In this country, there is too little technical enterprise. We have endless conventional novels',[107] further stating that a 'second tradition must always be, in a broad sense, non-conformist'.[108] Therefore, for B.S. Johnson and the few compatriots he considered to be showing signs of challenging the tired conventions of the novel form, the French avant-garde tradition offered fertile ground for redevelopment of a non-conformist British tradition. However, in their response to the continental innovations, both Johnson and Heppenstall appear to arrive at an attitude characterized by compromise, one that might indicate a characteristically British novelistic style.

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[103] Johnson, 'Introduction' to *Aren't You Rather Young to be Writing Your Memoirs?*, p. 30.
[104] Bernard Bergonzi, *The Situation of the Novel* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1979), p. 56.
[105] G.J. Buckell, *Rayner Heppenstall: A Critical Study* (London: Dalkey Archive, 2007), p. 83.
[106] Rayner Heppenstall, *The Fourfold Tradition,* p. 90.
[107] Ibid, p. 270.
[108] Ibid, p. 92.

Johnson's approach to innovation was seemingly tethered to a consideration of the possibilities for a more representative form and technique to reveal the shared comprehension of 'present-day reality'. Though the fiercely introspective aspect of his writing has the potential to be considered alongside elitism and insularity, it is evident that for Johnson this solipsistic approach was a commitment to sharing the 'truth'. Rather than the oblique strategies that might characterize an avant-garde tactic – and indeed the works of the *nouveau roman* – Johnson's novels display a responsibility to the social responsiveness of the form, and the openness of the text to interactivity. So, for Johnson, 'To dismiss such techniques as gimmicks, or to refuse to take them seriously, is crassly to miss the point'.[109] The structural and thematic 'experiments' were imperative, in Johnson's view, for a comprehensible discourse with the active reader. Certainly, Johnson identified with the *nouveau roman* as an approach to form that could impact and articulate the present situation, as a structuring structure. Robbe-Grillet's statement that the 'discovery of reality can only continue its advance if people are willing to abandon outworn forms',[110] is mirrored in Johnson's own perception of the 'clapped out' form of the nineteenth century novel, about which he stated: 'No matter how good the writers are who now attempt it, it cannot be made to work for our time'.[111] Aligning this sensibility with an avant-garde position, such as that discussed in Peter Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-garde*, reveals an approach to form as a calculated newness of temporary relevance, so that if a form 'no longer conveys a new view of reality, [it] is replaced by a new one that *can* accomplish this until it too becomes 'mechanical' and must be replaced'.[112] Johnson's development of an aleatory form can, in light of this, be read as seeking 'the destruction of art as an institution set off from the praxis of life'[113] and an experiment targeting a more representative structural form of realism.

Georg Lukács's defence of traditional realism, in 'Realism in the Balance' (1938), declares that 'the broad mass of the people can learn nothing from avant-garde literature'.[114] The effect of modernist literature, in his view, stultified revolutionary possibilities. However, a neo avant-garde recognized the potential for innovation to communicate collective concerns, employing open compositions of personal everyday experience. Johnson's methods upheld the fragmented and introspective examinations typical of the avant-garde, representing disjointed personal temporalities and a rejection of absolute truth. However, as Renato Poggioli identifies in *The Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1962), the neo avant-garde responded to the notion that 'even the avant-garde has to live and work in the present, accept compromises and

[109] B.S. Johnson, *Albert Angelo*, p. 174.
[110] Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Snapshots and Towards a New Novel*, p. 154.
[111] B.S. Johnson, 'Introduction' to *Aren't You Rather Young to be Writing Your Memoirs?*, p. 14.
[112] Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde,* trans. by Michael Shaw (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2007), p. 60.
[113] Ibid, p. 83.
[114] Georg Lukács 'Realism in the Balance' in Adorno et al, *Aesthetics and Politics* (London and New York: Verso, 2007), p. 57.

adjustments, reconcile itself with the official culture of the times, and collaborate with at least some part of the public'.[115] It is this sense of reconciliation, of a mediation between avant-garde pursuits and comprehensibility, that further characterizes Johnson's employment of aleatory forms and furthers an engagement with chance. For Peter Bürger the 'adaptation' to incorporate chance into art was 'the only possible form of resistance',[116] and it was therefore in the very contingencies of the burgeoning aleatory novel that such a possibility was made manifest. As established, the aleatory novel agitates against an exhaustive definition of experience, and doing so conveys a resistance to the norms of the British literary canon and the demonstrative organization of the conventional novel and its impositions of pattern and meaning. Instead, aleatory techniques seek to celebrate the flux of experience, its multiplicity and to perform its mutability. The shuffleable novel is thereby a site of negentropic potential, formed from disruption and contradiction, one that 'joins fragments with the intent of positing meaning (where the meaning may well be the message that meaning has ceased to exist)'.[117] The individual signatures of *The Unfortunates* possess a weight of influence in their isolation, that is representative of the avant-garde ideal, and are essentially autonomous. They carry a potential to impact upon the personal experience of the reader in their own singular emancipation. However, that they can be configured within a broader work as constituent parts of the whole, animated by the reader, suggests 'the contradictory relationship of heterogeneous elements'[118] that enables the independent sign to act as a statement on the praxis of life while simultaneously affording 'momentous consequences for the place of engagement within the work as a whole', even though they appear as 'effective in isolation'.[119] Such fragmented moments assume a greater significance when assembled, as the temporary interrelationships that are forged reveal the maelstrom of memory and experience as unique to its temporary reification. The aleatory method advances the reader's perception of their impact on the reception of art, and is therefore drawn towards a reconsideration of the possibilities for the novel to reflect the flux of life.

The customary avant-garde resistance to convention is, in Johnson's approach, reinterpreted as a challenge made to the reader to engage with a new kind of narrative realism, to interact with the reconsideration of form as a more incisive configuration of contemporary reality as it presents itself to each reader. In such a challenge lies Johnson's perception of the institutionalization of the 'common reader', manipulated toward the false realism celebrated by the academy, or even the increasingly outdated innovations of the Bloomsbury group. Indeed, John Carey's *The Intellectuals and the Masses* (1992) argues that: 'the principle around which

[115] Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. by Gerald Fitzgerald (London and Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 79.
[116] Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, p. 67.
[117] Ibid, p. 70.
[118] Ibid, p. 82.
[119] Ibid, p. 90.

modernist literature and culture fashioned themselves was the exclusion of the masses […] What this intellectual effort failed to acknowledge was that the masses do not exist. The mass, that is to say, is a metaphor for the unknowable and invisible.'[120] Johnson's incorporation of chance procedures in the reception of his novel is an act of agitation against the canon, but in conjunction with an entreaty made to the mutable reader towards the possibility for new meaning and a new manner of reading. The loose signatures of *The Unfortunates* are thereby offered to situate and instigate the reader's impact on the text, as a social object. David James, for example, discusses the heightened cognitive role the reader must embrace in reading Johnson, and states that in *Albert Angelo* Johnson was 'challenging his readers to 'prove' their 'existence' as they interact with the variability and volatility of his words in type'.[121] An aleatory realization of this possibility for a new mode of depicting reality was, for Johnson, one that 'celebrates the chaos'. It had to be an admission of the paradoxical conflicts that determine the potency of the resistance to art as institution. Johnson's structural innovations became the site of his attempt to appeal to a broad audience, so that whilst he embraced avant-garde techniques, they were mediated by a desire to reinterpret the novel as a vehicle for a rejuvenation of popular modes of understanding. The solipsistic quality to this approach is redeemed by the pursuit of raw truth, of collective trauma, and a faith in the interactive engagements of the reader, concomitant with the aleatory. Indeed, such collaborative processes are at the heart of an aleatory form in which the reader animates the details contained by a broader structurality. The representation of Johnson's complex solipsism offers the potential for social Impact and revelatory communication in the structural resistance to fixity. Tew claims that 'throughout every text Johnson foregrounds a consciousness and narrative pattern as that of a very self-aware and theoretically engaged social agent'.[122] Evidently, Johnson's reflexive social position – responsive to a split habitus and liminal position – is simultaneously 'structured' and 'structuring' experience. For Johnson, his avant-garde tendencies were a means of enabling more comprehensive collective dialogue, apparent in each of his structural innovations that make demands on the reader's active engagement.

The Unfortunates can therefore be read as a development of the thematic achievements of *Trawl*, in which the seemingly random potential of memory was purposefully mined out. In working at the retrieval of memory, arriving at a form that initiates the randomness of remembrance, Johnson found a means to unravel complex identity without imposing a narrative. *The Unfortunates* thereby offers the potential for transitory and mutable meaning, characterized by a state of flux, through the strenuous process of explicating the apparent

[120] John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992), p. 21.
[121] David James, 'The (W)hole affect: Creative Reading and Typographic Immersion in *Albert Angelo'* in *Re-Reading B.S. Johnson*, ed. by Philip Tew and Glyn White (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 27–37, p. 28
[122] Philip Tew, *B.S. Johnson: A Critical Reading*, p. 77.

paradox, enabling a rigorous excavation of the vibrating strands of personal identity. As Coe explores:

> [it] was because he *agonized* over those novels, hovered endlessly on the brink of thinking them completely worthless, that they quiver with nervous energy even now; pulse with doubts about their own legitimacy[...] a self-questioning urgency that keeps them thrillingly alive.[123]

The physical aleatoricism of an open text, only temporarily reified, illuminates the significance of the constantly evolving process of identity as a palimpsestic multiplicity of reinterpretation and toil. Johnson strives towards understanding by reconfiguring each memory, either in the ratifying of interrelationships that arrive between the fragments, in the nexus of their constellation, or as an independent representation.

Even at the level of selecting the most appropriate aphorism, Johnson reveals the mutability of his mental processes, and of the need for truth of the moment to be gleaned. Julia Jordan identifies that: 'Each sentence contains its own first – and sometimes second and third – draft. The cumulative effect is to suggest that memories come upon us partially, and only give themselves up in perfect mimesis after a certain amount of work'.[124] I suggest, however, that the exposure of such toil within the fabric of the novel does not suggest an arrival at a 'truth' that might be considered a perfect mimesis. Instead, such pronounced effort toward truth heightens the reader's perception of the variability of understanding and the instabilities of the text, foregrounding the reader's interpretive encounter. The inherent mutability of even such minor revisions as 'London pork pies, better, more meat is it, less bland, tastier, more pepper'[125] does not necessarily fix the final version as the most mimetic. Instead, the apparent pursuit for a proper description and the preservation of each version simultaneously reflects an instability and an openness. The reader is faced by a multiplicity, encountering the choice of which possibility to tether their interpretive response to, or indeed to a chaotic assembly of them all, and thereby to animate an aleatory procedure in the structural flux of the syntax. Ultimately, the palimpsestic quality to the mounting clauses, is suggestive of a broader uncertainty, both in the fallibility of memories and in the representation of a reality itself characterized by uncertainty and chaos. While Jordan aligns Johnson's approach with 'a logic of accretion to eliminate imprecision',[126] an alternative reading of the technique may instead suggest a wilful proliferation of information, a chaotic dynamic that resists a precise explanation and invites the reader to animate the flux between possible strands of meaning in the aleatory instability. Further, one might align such a sensibility with Peter Bürger's assertion in *Theory*

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[123] Jonathan Coe, *Like A Fiery Elephant*, p. 452.
[124] Julia Jordan, ''For Recuperation': elegy, form and the aleatory in B.S. Johnson's *The Unfortunates*' *Textual Practice,* 2014, pp. 745-761, p. 745.
[125] B.S. Johnson, *The Unfortunates*, 'The pitch worn', p. 5.
[126] Julia Jordan, ''For Recuperation': elegy, form and the aleatory in B.S. Johnson's *The Unfortunates*', p. 745.

of the Avant-Garde, that 'It will never be possible to seize the meaning being searched for in chance events, because, once defined, it would become part of means-end rationality and thus lose its value as protest'.[127] The negation of precision and certainty is representative of the broader resistance to the residual cause-and-effect realist tradition of the British literary canon and the tendency to impose a pattern. However, the fundamental impression of the mounting revisions reaffirms Johnson's essential position as one of hope, despite the apparent lack of 'pattern' as order. As Johnson states:

> Perhaps there is nothing to be understood, perhaps understanding is simply not to be found, is not applicable to such a thing. But it is hard, hard, not to try to understand, even for me, who accept that all is nothing, that sense does not exist.[128]

Both the aleatory structure of the physical form of the novel and its internal revisions and typographic spaces suggest a hopeful quality in the effort itself. Therein lies a possibility of gleaning some meaning, an understanding, from within the maelstrom of apparent disorder.

This chapter has explored structural representations of dynamic instabilities within private and public perception; solipsism and the social; order and disorder; meaning and the indiscriminate; fragmentary disruption and comprehensible arrangement. The structural problematizations of chance, truth and the fallibility of memory in *The Unfortunates* articulate a vibrating potentiality between a seemingly contradictory plurality of social and personal positions and monolithic dichotomies. Their depiction, contained within an open form, thereby activates 'a third between two poles, shining and dark, the center, from nowhere goes everywhere, in space and time, and, from nothing, becomes multiple'.[129] Readerly animations of chance as contained by such structural dynamics and encounters with open forms further problematize structural impositions and thereby reveal the potentiality of interactive efforts. The reader is asked to actively place themselves within seemingly inexhaustible networks of interactivity and possibilities. The temporary resolution of this threshold is representative of chaosmic potential, an aleatory foregrounding of interactive and subjective encounters between personal meaning and the mess of reality. The provisional resolution animates a sensitivity to chaos as an emergent doxa of social understanding and the structural complexities of personal agency. It is therefore the aleatory form, of composed chance within structural boundaries, which most readily reveals the chaosmic moment between supposed dichotomies and contradictory forces and enables a more faithful representation of contemporary reality to comprehensibly achieve renewed significance on each reading. The aleatory novel amplifies a perception of unpredictability, while firmly situated within the realm of the possible, and foregrounds the subjective encounter of the reader and the possibilities

[127] Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, p. 66.
[128] B.S. Johnson, *The Unfortunates,* 'for recuperation, after', p. 2.
[129] Michel Serres, *The Troubadour of Knowledge*, p. 41.

for mutable meaning more representative of an everyday experience increasingly characterized by notions of ‘chaos’, of indeterminacies and complex structural dynamics. In discussion of these elements this chapter has suggested implicit convergences between everyday understandings of the science of chaos and the underlying cultural dynamics reflected in experimental literature, from a vantage in which the paradigm shifts in approaches to chaos have coalesced, allowing a rereading of texts equipped with the subsequent perception of a paradigm of chance in crisis. This chapter has raised questions of aleatory procedures as both collaborative responses to personal trauma and individual agitations against objective social constructs and monolithic certainties. In the chapter that follows, I unpack such positions and further suggest that the aleatory novel is inexorably linked with a seemingly contradictory logic that circumscribes an internalised, textual understanding of chance, both in ontological and epistemological terms, that animates a chaotic rupture with the notion of knowledge as fixed and absolute.

Chapter Three
Aleatorical Styles: Fragmentation and Trauma

This thesis suggests a burgeoning everyday understanding (implicitly, at least) of how systems that appear disorderly might manifest deep structures of complexity, and that beneath apparent order a turbulent flow of chaotic influence might be uncovered. Such a reimagining of the world as predictably unpredictable, reflecting its dynamic nonlinearity, corresponds to the assertion that paradigms of chance were in crisis concomitant to the emergence of 'chaos theory'. This dynamic shift signifies a fundamental instability regarding structures of knowledge, a loss of an absolute fixity, and necessitates a re-evaluation of what constitutes experience and our 'encounter with the real'. This thesis seeks to explore aleatory techniques interacting across various aspects of (and in effect innate mechanisms that animate) literary fiction – form and structure, style and voice, language and genre – as well as in the thematic, political and social reflections undertaken by writers of British experimental novels between 1959 and 1979 and their correlations to a shift in attitudes in relation to chance. Crucially, such a transformation does not necessarily result in any explicit arrival or announcement of a new paradigm across the sciences relating to indetermination and chaos, or of a cultural reconceptualization of our comprehension of the nature of chance events in the world at large. Instead, a turn to chaos and a burgeoning appreciation of the dynamic complexity of experience has been aligned with *tyche* (rather than *automaton*) and the effect of everyday encounters with the vagaries of chance in its impact upon personal experience.[1] Such complex encounters are experienced variously as matters of personal contingency, indeterminate appearances with dynamic instabilities, set against a wider terrain in which ontological security is fundamentally disrupted. In this chapter, these aleatory elements will be unpacked in the works of Rayner Heppenstall, Ann Quin, Wilson Harris and Doris Lessing to explore aleatorical stylistics in the treatment of chaotic concerns regarding fragmentation, trauma, and the representation of a pronounced agitation against homogenizing ideologies.

The previous chapter discussed B.S. Johnson's structural innovations and experimental approach to the form of the novel as an attempt to model an emergent reality characterized by apparent chaos. The analysis of *The Unfortunates* began with its explicit shuffleable form, as an aleatory shock in any encounter with the text, which gave way to a more nuanced representation of chance and emergent chaotics also apparent in the style, language and conceptual terrain of the novel. The chapter considered the 'open text' as offering an aleatory dynamic, specifically an invitation made to the reader to reify the details of

[1] In such a context it might well be argued that the Freudian uncanny ought to be read as a cultural manifestation reaching to incorporate such chaotic and random encounters, as might Jung's concept of synchronicity, both terms far more culturally familiar than the aleatory.

the experience, extending beyond the very shuffleability of the unbound book-in-a-box. In this chapter the focus narrows to tease out aspects of what might be termed aleatorical styles, exploring some of the aleatory dynamic in/of a text that foreground the reader's engagement with chance and its animation. This chapter focuses on a selection of the few writers[2] of the period that Johnson considered to be 'writing as though it mattered',[3] and who showed that 'only when one has some contact with the continental *avant garde* does one realise just how stultifyingly philistine is the general book culture of this country'.[4] Indeed the analysis explores how Rayner Heppenstall likely first introduced – to those such as Johnson – the potential in the *nouveau roman's* innovation for a renewal of British literary *style*. [5] Such an analysis of the structural and stylistic approaches that encourage aspects of chance in readerly animations of narrative will be further unpacked in consideration of an aleatory style that foregrounds the representation of writing as an uncertain endeavour – drawing upon the fallibility of authorial voices and problematizing ideological grand narratives that might be construed as a breakdown of structural order – to instead offer a dynamic complexity in various aleatorical stylistics. This approach to 'style' is considered as both 'voice' and 'event', positioned by the writings of Maurice Blanchot and Jacques Derrida, and building upon Mario Aquilina's study of *The Event of Style in Literature* (2014), which proffers a poststructuralist theory of style as 'a performative event, as openness to the aleatory'.[6] Indeed, Aquilina's study comments on the aforementioned Derridean 'event' as suggestive of an interruptive animation of style, so that 'rather than stylistic indeterminacy, Derrida is interested in undecidability, which is not indetermination but différance or non-identity with oneself as a condition of determination'.[7] It is therefore possible to consider an aleatorical style – as will be explored below – if an event of style is not simply an embellishment or a voicing, but rather a voice that is a generative force of meaning disseminated across the text and found in the 'aporias' as a free play of meaning itself. In effect, such a project will be traced in this chapter as aleatorical manipulations of stylistic conventions and tropes to disrupt norms and open possibilities for the reader's animation of contradictory and complex dynamics. This effect, conjoined with a voicing of fragmentary experience and dislocation from supposed order, problematize and efface stable

[2] Johnson names: Samuel Beckett, John Berger, Christine Brooke-Rose, Brigid Brophy, Anthony Burgess, Alan Burns, Angela Carter, Eva Figes, Giles Gordon, Wilson Harris, Rayner Heppenstall, Robert Nye, Ann Quin, Penelope Shuttle, Alan Sillitoe, and Stefan Themerson.
[3] B.S. Johnson, 'Introduction' to *Aren't You Rather Young to be Writing Your Memoirs?*, p. 29.
[4] Ibid, p. 29.
[5] At its simplest level style is what Hans-Georg Gadamer describes, in *Truth and Method* (1989), thus: 'Different modes of speaking and writing are appropriate to particular purposes and contents, and their special demands. These are called different styles' (494), but the generic cultural quality he notes (495) is disrupted by the novels featured in this thesis, albeit these narratives do still offer what Gadamer describes as 'the way in which an artist's characteristic mode of representation distinguishes him from any other' (495) and a means whereby 'An artist creates a style when he is no longer just engaged in imitation but is also fashioning a language for himself' (495).
[6] Mario Aquilina, *The Event of Style in Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 162.
[7] Ibid, p. 191.

monoliths of meaning in any act of reification, presenting an open text that is responsive to an aleatorical style.

So as to tease out the particularities of what might be termed an aleatorical style, this chapter pays particular attention to the voicing of trauma, both personal and collective. Beginning with a discussion of the stylistic representation of traumatic happenings in Heppenstall's *The Woodshed* (1962) and *Two Moons* (1977), I then turn to stylistic articulations of individual trauma in Ann Quin's *Three* (1966) and of personal and collective trauma in *The Eye of the Scarecrow* (1965) by Wilson Harris. The exploration of trauma within aleatorical texts in this chapter offers a lens through which to approach the, potentially, more speculative terrain of chance and chaotics and of the ruptures in paradigmatic understanding. Trauma and chance, as expansive literary terrains, summon similar conceptual concerns regarding meaning, memory, causality and effect. Revealingly, 'trauma theory' in the humanities is widely considered to have become a paradigmatic norm that has experienced a conceptual crisis. Indeed, Roger Luckhurst argues that 'Trauma has become a paradigm because it has been turned into a repertoire of compelling stories about the enigmas of identity, memory and selfhood that have saturated Western cultural life'.[8] Indeed, one of the most significant theorizations of trauma and its representation in the literary text is delineated in Cathy Caruth's *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) and furthered in *Unclaimed Experience* (1996), the paradigmatic legacy of which is ongoing. Arguably one of the 'first wave' of literary trauma theorists – that also includes Shoshana Felman and Geoffrey Hartmen – Caruth suggests that literature can "speak" trauma, where victims may be otherwise unable to verbalise traumatic memories. The meaning of 'trauma' in this theoretical framework has been broadened so much as to be associated with a collapse of meaning, aligned with a poststructuralist concern with the referential limits of language. Much like the potential to over-extend this thesis to perceive the dynamic complexity of structural chaos and the possibilities of reader response as representative of aleatory configurations of chance and chaos in *all* texts, the previously accepted notion (in literary criticism) of trauma as unspeakable, unregistered and even unclaimed experiences that elude verbal expression could be described as overemphasizing the abstract elements of trauma to the detriment of our understanding of (what should be considered) more concrete traumatic experience. Caruth, for example, identifies the 'knowing and not knowing' of the traumatic past, which is extrapolated to reveal the 'traumatic nature of history'[9] itself. Similarly, there is a temptation to conceptualize the aleatory in such a way as to reveal the "chaotic nature of history" and to read chance into all the spaces left open to interpretation.

[8] Roger Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), p.80.
[9] Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 18.

This chapter focuses on the voicing of 'known unknowns'. If, as N. Katherine Hayles suggests, 'In the Western tradition, chaos has played the role of the other – the unrepresented, the unarticulated, the unformed, the unthought',[10] then one might explore chaos in literature through its absence, with the very essence of a novel's containment of 'story' and a selective narrativizing from the plethora of information offering fertile grounds for discussion of the significance of a response to chaos. Indeed, this chapter's focus on fragmentation as an aleatorical style might be characterized by a considered foregrounding of the dynamic instability between fragments, a voicing of the void. Crucially, however, rather than drawing attention to the lacunae of the fissured text and concentrating on how such spaces *might* be interpreted – and their inherent aleatory possibilities – this chapter will instead focus on the aleatorical dynamics of what *is* expressed. Doing so aims to concentrate on the explicit challenge made to the reader to animate the possibilities of a text, and the invitation made to engage with such explicit representations of 'chaos' in the fragments offered. This approach hopes to draw particular attention to the explicit fragments of the novel that, in their dynamic interrelationships, create new spaces of further potential meaning in being so conjoined in unexpected ways. As such, this chapter pointedly positions itself – in a reading of fragmentation and trauma in aleatorical styles – according to Joshua Pederson's assertion that 'critics seeking to engage trauma in literature should turn their focus from gaps in the text to the text itself'.[11] To this end, the chapter concludes – in a discussion of Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* (1962) – that stylistic fragmentariness and aleatorical dynamics are self-reflexive techniques, stylistically voiced in a text, that activate the fissures (made especially open to readerly animation) that conventional narrative order and ideological monoliths would otherwise deny.

Rayner Heppenstall and a Second Tradition

Rayner Heppenstall is key to understanding an experimental and aleatorical style in the British novel that emerged after 1959, principally because his aforementioned critical study, *The Fourfold Tradition*, tasked his compatriots with rediscovering an anglophone tradition that was open to innovation. Heppenstall's agitations against British conventions and norms of the literary and cultural establishment were fiercely rooted in his working-class provincial experience: 'I had been brought up otherwise. If that was the English tradition, I had no part in it and wanted none'[12] and the aforementioned middlebrow of the Angry Young Men did little to

[10] N. Katherine Hayles, *Chaos Bound,* p. 173.
[11] Joshua Pederson, 'Speak, Trauma: Toward a Revised Understanding of Literary Trauma Theory'. *Narrative*, 22:3 (2014), pp. 333-353, p. 338.
[12] Rayner Heppenstall, *The Intellectual Part* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1963), p. 148.

satisfy what he saw as a need to emulate the continental tradition of innovative and experimental writing. In his autobiography, *The Intellectual Part* (1963), Heppenstall remarks that 'the *nouveau roman* had given me courage, that [Alain Robbe-Grillet] had provided me with a moral example, that suddenly, about a year ago, I had felt able, without misgiving, to do what I had long wanted to do'.[13] Indeed, the preceding year saw the publication of two novels that radically differed from not only his earlier writing, but those neo-realist fictions that seemingly dominated the previous decade. Heppenstall's *The Connecting Door* (1962) and *The Woodshed* (1962) are perhaps his most explicit nod to the *nouveau roman,*[14] reflecting a conscious attempt to record the experience of seemingly chaotic remembrances and offer texts that reflect a pronounced search for meaning and a probing of personal identity, while inviting the reader to encounter the aleatory and disordered space of the psyche. The protagonist/narrators of both novels are thinly veiled representations of the author, with the recurring alter ego of Harold Atha manifesting as three discontinuous versions of the self in *The Connecting Door*.

Harold, a first person narrator and Atha represent three distinct aspects of the self that encounter one another across temporalities in the Rhineland, each of them there for a journalistic assignment. They chastise themselves for not recognising their multiplicity of time and space, with the narrator reminding the alternate subjectivities that they occupy space in his temporal frame of experience: 'In the past seventeen years, you've lived in occasional flickers, when I had you in mind. You forget, or rather, you haven't quite realised, that without me you don't exist'.[15] Extending beyond the swirling temporalities, colliding reflexively within a narrative, the location is characterized by its own state of political flux being on a changing Franco-German border. Even in the most stable 'present' of 1948 the narrator describes how 'In London, the future of the Rhine is under discussion'.[16] Given these states of flux, the novel appears to experiment with the possibilities of objective description of uncertainty. Indeed, G.J. Buckell identifies the stylistic similarities between *The Connecting Door* and the *nouveau roman*, drawing upon how the text 'rarely states the narrator's opinions on exterior objects, ideas or characters, which contrast markedly with Heppenstall's previous narrative style'.[17] I contend, however, that while the narrative style is certainly influenced by a desire to emulate the innovative 'second tradition' of the French so-called 'anti-novel', it might be more fruitful to reflect on an implicit desire in Heppenstall's oeuvre to forge a British alternative tradition, with its own unique characteristics. Indeed, Heppenstall's style is not explicitly concerned with the exactingly descriptive or pointedly objective qualities that are typically associated with the

[13] Rayner Heppenstall, *The Intellectual Part*, p. 210.
[14] See Adam Guy, *The nouveau roman and Writing in Britain After Modernism (2019)* for a comprehensive study of the influence of the *nouveau roman* on Heppenstall.
[15] Rayner Heppenstall, *The Connecting Door* (London: Barrie & Rockliff, 1962), p. 121.
[16] Ibid, p. 17.
[17] G.J. Buckell, *Rayner Heppenstall: A Critical Study*, p. 60.

nouveau roman. In fact, I suggest that the continued insistence on Heppenstall's fealty to the continental project might in fact stem from the publisher's original marketing tactic, there being a cultural cachet for the French 'anti-novel'.

There is a discernible exploration of the interaction between objective encounter and subjective 'reality' that operates within Heppenstall's narrative style, that might reflect a characteristically 'British' concern for the realist novel. Rather than becoming embroiled in a reductive analysis that foregrounds nationhood, I wish to suggest that unlike the characteristics of the *nouveau roman,* Heppenstall sought to foreground uncertainty and possibility within personal responses to experience. Arguably, the style of this pair of interlinked novels prioritise the subjective terrain so as to convey an objective uncertainty in the encounter with the self. Revealingly, stylistic influences beyond the *nouveau roman* are readily apparent. For example, David Leon Hidgen makes a convincing argument for the influence of Søren Kierkegaard on *The Connecting Door* – particularly the similarities to the novelistic style of *Repetition* (1843)[18] – and how the self might be conceptualised in a perpetual state of becoming, in a present that is infinite and characterized by the potentiality of the void. Through such representations of a concern for the faithful representation of the flux of self, comparable to above discussions of B.S. Johnson's concern for the 'truth' of experience, Heppenstall arrives at a textual foregrounding of otherwise hidden relations between objective and subjective encounters with a world increasingly characterized by indetermination (and apparent flux). This dynamic instability is articulated in – what I suggest as being – a burgeoning aleatorical style that becomes more apparent in *The Woodshed,* a voicing of uncertainty that is more expressive than *The Connecting Door*, and which further develops towards an increasingly fragmentary and chaotic style in *Two Moons* (1977), offering a 'performative event' and an aleatorical openness.

Heppenstall's *The Woodshed* might be considered a sequel to *The Connecting Door* in that it begins by situating itself within the same narrative perspective, with Harold Atha remarking in *The Woodshed* that 'A fortnight ago, I was still in the Rhineland. It would be *that* Thursday afternoon when I went for a last walk'.[19] Furthermore, in *The Connecting Door*, the narrator remarks 'A thing which the near future held in store for me was that my father died'[20] and indeed *The Woodshed* depicts its narrator (Harold Atha) on a train journeying to his childhood home in Hinderholme, Yorkshire, to visit an ailing father, arriving to find him 'dead already some nine hours'.[21] The text spans the four days in which Atha arranges the funeral, but the narrative delves into a nonlinear series of remembrances that assume a kaleidoscopic form in their tethering to the narrative present. Adam Guy identifies in the temporal and spatial

[18] See David Leon Higdon, *Shadows of the Past in Contemporary Fiction* (London: Macmillan 1984), p. 52.
[19] Rayner Heppenstall, *The Woodshed* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1962), p. 10.
[20] Rayner Heppenstall, *The Connecting Door*, p. 133.
[21] Rayner Heppenstall, *The Woodshed*, p. 34.

treatment of the train journeys – which signify a trip into the recesses of the mind – a particular influence on Heppenstall of Michel Butor's *L'Emploi du temps* (1955) and *La Modification* (1957), pointing to their pronounced reflexive style and to how Heppenstall 'generates a typological similarity'.[22] Yet, while the influence of the *nouveau roman* is clear, I would again draw greater attention to their concerted differences, and the significance of such conscious alterity. Unlike the second-person narrative mode of Butor's *La Modification*, and its recurrent questioning of the protagonist – 'Can you hear me?', 'Where are you going?' – the first-person narration of *The Woodshed* is fiercely solipsistic, foregrounding possibilities for generating meaning within more conventional narrative bounds. Further, the objective description of the train in Butor's text possesses a characteristically exacting style associated with the *nouveau roman*. Conversely, the descriptions of Heppenstall's novel appear to reflect a compromise in stylistic innovation, and a pattern of narration that simultaneously suggests a stream-of-consciousness within a broadly fragmentary and dislocated style. The narrator indicates he is recording the flood of his remembrances – 'In a train, your consciousness streams like a cold'[23] – while explicitly resisting the temptation to frame his memories within a conventional neo-realist narrative, that would reduce his narrative to 'looking for coincidence and a pattern [...] there is no causal connection of a natural kind'.[24] Yet, the narrative appears to purposefully contain the potential effects that such manifold associations might have. In order to convey a degree of openness it incorporates a sense of chaotic potential, but in offering such an impression, clearly the elements are contained within bounds of the possible, thus limiting their possible extrapolations. Indeed Harold Atha supposes that, sat with his notebook, the other passengers 'might think I was doing my accounts. I am, in a way'.[25] While such remembrances might arrive haphazardly, the reflexive text appears to comment on the inclination of the author to 'form patterns' within the chaos.

In Heppenstall's approach to remembrance there is a pronounced inclination towards ordering experience, to systematically excavate and sift through their memories for significance. This is characteristic of the subsequent novels by B.S. Johnson, as previously discussed. Indeed, Philip Tew identifies that 'certain key stylistic and perspectival innovations in narrative incorporated in Heppenstall's fiction are sufficiently radical that they were to influence an often underrated […] group of younger experimental writers'.[26] The influence on B.S. Johnson, in particular, is evident in the solipsistic approach to narrative style and the

[22] Adam Guy, *The nouveau roman and Writing in Britain After Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 38.
[23] Rayner Heppenstall, *The Woodshed*, p. 17.
[24] Ibid, p. 23.
[25] Ibid, p. 23.
[26] Philip Tew, 'Aspirations Inevitably Failing. Hope and Negativity in Rayner Heppenstall's Experimental Fiction of the 1960s' in *British Avant-Garde Fiction of the 1960s*, eds. by Kaye Mitchell and Nonia Williams (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), pp. 210-230, p. 211.

representation of writing as an uncertain endeavour embroiled in the conscious excavation of memory and the associations that subsequently lead to a stream-of-consciousness and problematization of meaning-generation. Revealingly, Heppenstall's influence on Johnson is especially apparent in the allusion to trawling that both employ to symbolise the dive into their past. Indeed, on the final page of *The Woodshed,* Atha describes his return journey to London as if at sea, again offering potential to 'let down the deep trawl of memory'.[27] The novel's closing imagery foreshadows Johnson's decision to experience life on a trawler; an endeavour explicitly chosen to provide a fitting setting for *Trawl* and its author/narrator's attempt to delve down and work through his memories of an alienated existence in a search for meaning. Like Johnson, Heppenstall's allusion to the labour of trawling reflects Bourdieu's notion of a habitus clivé (discussed in the previous chapter) which describes his protagonist's vacillation between an educated and literary milieu and a fealty to a working-class identity, trawling the latter to redeem elements of his life. Indeed, *Trawl* and *The Woodshed* reveal a similar concern for personal explorations of memory, identity and social heritage reformulated through an educated and writerly frame. In Johnson and Heppenstall's approach there lies a similar perception of the notion of systematic labouring at the 'truth', to represent the complex chaos of the experience that requires a new style to faithfully represent. Indeed, for Heppenstall such complex reality was denied by the contrivances of the conventional British realist novel:

> What I meant is that I should have liked to write, from day to day, simply about the moment and its concerns and any past matters which pressed on the memory, the prose being merely careful, transparent, exact, easy on the eye and ear, varied only by the variety of the mind's approach to what is scrupulously dealt with, utterly shameless, wholly personal. That it was quite impossible is due to the rigid formality of British literary concerns.[28]

It is within this context that Heppenstall pursued an alternative tradition of innovation in the British novel to represent the self, and I suggest a distinct, often overlooked aleatorical style might be recovered from experimental British fiction of the period. Such fiction incorporates at its core a search for both innovation and a stylistic voice that might be representative of contingent experience. The writers featured in this chapter attempt to conjoin these two elements with a considered attempt at an approachable communicability, thus creating a challenging mode of narration that is nevertheless textually open to the reader, one that avoids the simplistic notions or assumptions of neo-realism. In Heppenstall the central problematization of memory and meaning are manifested in a style that foregrounds the constitutive nature of the reader's encounter with the fragments of the text and reflections of their significance for the narrator and his selfhood. This diffusion of a splintering of personal

[27] Rayner Heppenstall, *The Woodshed*, p. 189.
[28] Rayner Heppenstall, *The Intellectual Part*, p. 87.

experience is both confusing and yet operates as a way of drawing attention to the complexity of both life as experienced as a whole and of the limited focus upon them in a novelistic framing, because the conventions of the form haunt Heppenstall's attempt to free himself from them.

Ostensibly, *The Woodshed* documents the personal grief of a son's initial response to the death of his father, and recollections of a relationship that appear fractured by shifting attitudes in class and masculinity, and of the boy's access to education. Having gained a scholarship to a grammar school, the narrator recalls a growing disjunct between him and his working-class father. Indeed, the protective instincts of the father following a case of so-called 'ragging' – in which Harold Atha as a new pupil has boot-polish forcefully smeared on his face – signals an emergent cultural difference. Life is permeated here by narrative form, shaping the boys' beliefs and interactions, a source of framing denied the father. Harold comments that 'My father had never read *The Magnet* or *The Gem*. Codes of honour which had filtered down by literary channels from the public schools meant nothing to him'.[29] Given the journalistic and literary milieu of the narrator, as a thinly veiled version of the author himself, Harold's comment that his 'father left school at the age of twelve. Since then, he boasted, he had not read a book'[30] has an element of contempt. Indeed, this memory triggers an occasion in which the young boy attempts to share an interest in Physics, excitedly explaining 'theory of light […] the revelation of all that underlies so much of the philosophy I have read since'.[31] Suggesting to his father that the kettle was not really black, only to be met with derision, results in a reckoning of how 'I should never again try to interest my father in any preoccupation of my own. The offence and the resolution stuck. Thereafter, I sometimes treated my father with inward disdain'.[32] Curiously, reflecting on the class division, Harold's remembrances appear to stem from a traumatic occasion in which – acting as 'class monitor' – the schoolboy is met with derision from the teacher and the class for his working-class accent:

> The School got ready to laugh.
> 'Huntley absent, sir,' I repeated.
> '"Oontleh"?' said the Boss. '"Obsunt"? Never heard of 'em.'
> […]
> 'Hantlee ebsint, sir,' I said, as it sounded to me.[33]

The internalization of such classist attitudes leads to the harbouring of 'inward disdain' for the father, animated by the author's self-reflection and the constellation of memories that arise in the journey home to face his father's death. Yet, while representing the essential plot of the

[29] Rayner Heppenstall, *The Woodshed*, p. 115.
[30] Ibid, p. 144.
[31] Ibid, p. 144.
[32] Ibid, p. 145.
[33] Ibid, p. 121.

novel and the crux that vitiates his introspection, the loss of the father – which might otherwise be expected to be manifested as an oedipal release – results in the summoning of quite unexpected remembrances of trauma and death seemingly unconnected to the paternal loss. Foreshadowing this unexpected turn, the novel introduces the peculiarity of how two days before the father's stroke, 'A'ntie Jean had also collapsed with a "stroke" at about the same time of the evening […] At first, she was put to bed where my father now lies […] When he collapsed, she had to be moved'.[34] Commenting on the unlikelihood of this occurrence, the narrator glibly suggests that 'One is accustomed to imitative crimes and "waves" of suicides. It is difficult to see mere coincidence in these two parallel calamities'.[35] The logical significance of these supposed correlated occurrences foreshadows the explication, toward the end of the novel, of a latent trauma that has seemingly lain dormant in the narrator's psyche.

The significance of the novel's title is amplified by the young Harold Atha curiously exploring his aunt and uncle's shed, there being no answer at the front door. Harold recalls the naive vision of his uncle through the kitchen window – 'It was as I stepped out of the shed that I saw Uncle Gordon […] I smiled at him. He put his tongue out at me'[36] – it gradually becomes apparent to the reader that young Harold has stumbled upon his uncle engaging in autoerotic asphyxiation. In this darkly comic episode, in which the young character is unaware of the gravity of the situation, there lies a spectre of the possibility that Harold's intrusion may have contributed to the accidental suicide. Gordon is evidently disturbed while at the critical point of hanging himself, thereby appearing in a 'towering rage. He glared. His eyes almost popped with fury. His side was more darkly congested than ever. He shook his head angrily and then moved decidedly from side to side'.[37] The narrator, however, decides that he 'must have offended him by what I had said ten days ago about not being very interested in footballers any longer',[38] and leaves the scene only to be informed later that his uncle 'hanged himself. Gertie came in from her shopping and found him there, still in his mill clothes. He hanged himself with his braces from a meat-hook in the kitchen'.[39] Atha's latent recognition of the significance of the situation is comically extended in the reference to the likelihood of his uncle's homosexual exploits with Law Barraclough. Having seen them together two days prior to Uncle Gordon's wedding, Atha reflects that he also 'said nothing later, when the homosexual scandal about Law Barraclough and Hinderholme United broke'.[40] While the traumatic encounter of the accidental suicide may not have registered with the child in its immediacy, its connection to sexual exploration and to latent homosexuality appears to have forged a natural

[34] Rayner Heppenstall, *The Woodshed*, p. 34.
[35] Ibid, p. 35.
[36] Ibid, p. 176.
[37] Ibid, p. 177.
[38] Ibid, p. 177.
[39] Ibid, pp. 182-3.
[40] Ibid, p. 182.

correlate. Arguably, the quietude surrounding the trauma of the autoerotic asphyxiation is associated with Harold's own relative quiet navigation of (what he briefly refers to as) a 'phase' of homosexual intrigue. The narrator makes only a passing admission of having supressed an encounter: 'I suppose I must have kissed Peter Holmes. I don't remember doing it, and one thing I find about memory is that, given some associated face or name, I remember all the kisses of my life'.[41] Indeed, the apparent incidental detail assumes the potential for significance only in the reader's animation of the associations between the fragments of memories. While Tew describes the stylistic effect of the novel as 'an intense cascade of intercalated quotidian and domestic memories […] that seem random, even discontinuous, apart from the vehemence of retrospective authorial reflection which provides a visceral framework',[42] there are such instances of seemingly throwaway narrative elements (almost like titbits) that appear to fall outside of the narratological frame, the effect of which is to offer possible alternative threads of significance.

Permeating the remembrance of the traumatic event, the associated unravelling of supressed experience emerges as an 'encounter with the real' that I contend reflects an aleatorical dynamic of trauma. The acts of memory therefore emerge as a heightened encounter with a nonlinear 'network of signifiers'. Indeed, for Jacques Lacan, chance and trauma are essentially intertwined in that the clinamen swerve of chance – discussed in the first chapter, and identified as an emergent comprehension of chaotic complexity – and this represents the essential 'primary trauma'. Relating to automaton and tyche (*tuché*) as the personal encounter with chance, Lacan suggests that 'If development is entirely animated by accident, by the obstacle of the tuché, it is in so far as the tuché brings us back to the same point at which pre-Socratic philosophy sought to motivate the world itself. It required a clinamen, an inclination, at some point'.[43] If 'trauma' denotes an anomalous 'stressor' event, inherently uncertain and disorderly, then any narrative representation – and more broadly, any conscious reflection on its effects – is a considered foregrounding of the chaotic potentiality contained within otherwise comprehensible parameters. Any narratological and stylistic expression of trauma is therefore a framing of uncertainty that foregrounds the horror of the unexpected, within certain bounds of possibility. It is important to note the fundamentally contingent nature of cause and effect relating to trauma, and the alternative imagining of how things might have been different. Yet, the significance of an event that has, for Lacan, 'always already' happened must be encountered on a differing causal and temporal plane to a conventional linear and causal perception (or explanation). Furthering Sigmund Freud's notion of *nachträglich* as the belated nature of trauma, Lacan's understanding of trauma as a

[41] Rayner Heppenstall, *The Woodshed*, p. 158.
[42] Philip Tew, 'Aspirations Inevitably Failing. Hope and Negativity in Rayner Heppenstall's Experimental Fiction of the 1960s', p. 221.
[43] Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis,* p. 53.

'textuality' and as a 'logic of the signifier' suggests a retroactive temporal logic that assumes an aleatory dynamic in our encounters with the self. Indeed, Colin Wright identifies that:

> Lacan showed that even rule-bound, logical puzzles can only really be resolved by subjects who act, not because they subordinate themselves to the rules of the game, but because, in and through acting, they retrospectively create the certainty that allows them to leap into the unknown[44]

In addition to the correlations here between an aleatory dynamic of chance contained within comprehensible bounds, there is an aleatorical foregrounding of the inherently paradoxical element of reflections on trauma. Any expression of its effects situates, limits and curtails its significance. If, as Derrida suggests, the 'effects of chance appear to be at once produced, multiplied, *and* limited by language',[45] then a style of writing that encourages the reader to engage with chance, to animate its effects, must offer personal choice and agency rather than unbridled chaos (whose elements the reader may reorder).

The apparent ease and humour of the situation in *The Woodshed*, in which Aunt Gertie – who had suffered her husband's sexual disinterest – 'might well have found Gordon's *membrum virile* in a potentially more satisfactory condition than heretofore',[46] perhaps reflects a characteristically British compromise of innovation and communicability, in a treatment of emergent concerns regarding uncertainty and the increasing indetermination of experience. Set against the broader project of a writerly figure navigating the flow of memory and recording the experience and traumatic encounters of the past, the apparent banality and humour of the revelations affords the reader a sense of security. Indeed, the novel's stylistic compromise, and tendency toward more conventional voicings of personal experience and traumatic events ameliorate the reader's potential discomfort whilst retaining a sense of aleatory dynamics. Indeed, the 'coda' of *The Woodshed* depicts the narrator on their return journey to London, again surveying the landscape from the train window and deciding that 'I have finished with Hinderholme. It won't matter. That is not the centre of my life'.[47] There is quality of calm to this resolution, which might be perceived as having exorcised the trauma of youth and of his having been released from some of the disquiet associated with the father. Indeed, the narrator suggests that the chaotic maelstrom of memory has been calmed, for 'if consciousness streams, it is backward. Or, rather, it is like the slack tide in an estuary'.[48] However, the narrator also suggests that 'no doubt new urgencies will begin'[49] and the novel concludes with an

[44] Colin Wright, 'Lacan on Trauma and Causality: A Psychoanalytic Critique of Post-Traumatic Stress/Growth', *Journal of Medical Humanities,* 42 (2021), pp. 235-244, p. 239.
[45] Jacques Derrida, 'My Chances, Mes chances: A Rendevouz with Some Epicurean Stereophonies' in *Pysche: Inventions of the Other*, eds. Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenburg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), pp. 341-377, p. 345.
[46] Rayner Heppenstall, *The Woodshed*, p. 182.
[47] Ibid, p. 188.
[48] Ibid, p. 189.
[49] Ibid, p. 189.

admission of the tumultuous and chaotic potential like that beneath the surface of the water, with its ebb and flow. Yet, as Tew identifies, the tone of the novel's ending 'denies the reader any such convenient and balanced traditional resolution', rather being open-ended, and inconclusive.[50] Despite the apparent tranquillity on the surface, it is clear that any further act of such 'trawling' would return another portentous haul. Indeed, the novel's final line (itself stylistically odd, and inconclusive) suggests that 'The catch would only be to throw back'.[51]

If the resounding stylistic effect of *The Woodshed* is of an articulation of the chaotic possibilities of meaning and memory lying beneath surfaces that appear so orderly and placid, *Two Moons* (1977) achieves the opposite. Its style reflects a chaotic swell of information that seems to require sifting, pulsating with a complexity that denies any perception of stability. Between 1962 and 1977, of course, there had been many variations of style in Heppenstall's oeuvre[52] and I do not seek to draw some linear progression in such a developing aleatorical project. Yet the differing approaches to the themes of a tragic accident in the family and the proliferation of meaning in the confluence of memories and their impact on the self reveal a great deal about a broader shift in attitudes surrounding chance and chaos. In the period after publishing *The Connecting Door* and *The Woodshed*, Heppenstall became – what he describes as – 'an experimental father figure' for the aforementioned circle of writers led by Johnson, and yet Heppenstall's posthumously published journals reveal that he felt 'out of touch with my juniors and disciples, in that they believe in a sort of progress in the novel, their sort of novel superseding the traditional novel, as socialism or (for Alan [Burns]) anarchism supersedes capitalism'.[53] The political conservatism of the novelist and the increasingly reactionary political views that are revealed in the journal entries of *The Master Eccentric*, all point to what Tew identifies as, 'an Augustinian ideology and aesthetics that is essentially pessimistic about human nature'.[54] Yet, I would suggest that in his association with the group, supposedly led by Johnson, Heppenstall may have gained cause for positivity at the prospect of a second tradition; of stylistic innovation in the British novel.

Just as the shuffleable form of *The Unfortunates* amplifies the reader's perception of the chaotic resurfacing of memories and events through a representative structure, in the pursuit of understanding chance and its quotidian effects, Rayner Heppenstall's *Two Moons* (1977) stylistically foregrounds a chaotic swell of information and a disruption of stable frameworks of conventional understanding, in effect tasking the reader with overcoming a vision of existence

[50] Philip Tew, 'Aspirations Inevitably Failing. Hope and Negativity in Rayner Heppenstall's Experimental Fiction of the 1960s', p. 223.
[51] Rayner Heppenstall, *The Woodshed*, p. 189.
[52] *The Shearers* (1969), for example, is principally concerned with the psychological exploration of the Shearer family and their murder trial, a novel that is uncharacteristically written almost entirely in the third person.
[53] Rayner Heppenstall, *The Master Eccentric*: *The Journals of Rayner Heppenstall, 1969-81*, ed. by Jonathan Goodman (London: Allison & Busby, 1986), p. 71.
[54] Philip Tew, 'Aspirations Inevitably Failing. Hope and Negativity in Rayner Heppenstall's Experimental Fiction of the 1960s', p. 214.

imbued with pessimistic futility. Indeed, while Heppenstall's novel presents an aleatory technique that differs from Johnson's explicit shuffling, its treatment of memory and trauma and a problematization of narrative fixity reveals a similar faith placed in the reader's interactions with an open text towards some collaborative rehabilitation and reinterpretation. The parallel plotting of two primary temporalities shapes the structural appearance of *Two Moons*, so that the events of one lunar cycle materialize on the left-hand pages of the novel, and the consecutive cycle appears concurrently on the right-hand pages. This disruption of the conventional form of a text establishes an aleatory shock – much like the "gimmick" of the unbound novel – that foregrounds the reader's self-reflexive encounter with the significance of their reading practice. This system is openly responsive to the reader's animation of the text by way of the persistent choice offered in the possibilities of reading such analogous strands. The reader is informed that the two narrative timelines can be read in parallel, independently, or indeed each quarter of the two lunar cycles can be returned to on completion of one half of the narrative. However, the writer/protagonist of *Two Moons* (Harold Atha, the figuration of the author previously encountered in *The Connecting Door* and *The Woodshed*) suggests that 'something is bound to be lost by such unilinear reading'.[55] Indeed, the expectation is that the reader embraces two narrative cycles in a parallel reading, which results in flitting between the two strands and encountering reflections between them as a complex whole. Green suggests an implicit expectation that the reader alternate between the two narratives, reading in conventional left-to-right, so that the reader 'becomes caught up in the task of tracing connections, parallels and patterns across the two chronicles, an effort of ordering analogous to that taken up by the protagonist'.[56] Indeed, the reader is encouraged to become embroiled in the same project of unravelling the experience that the protagonist attempts to chart, but I would contend that the pathways of the reading practice are much more complex. Quite flexibly and responsive to the moment, a reader might follow one narrative strand for several pages, before turning back. The aleatory heightening of self-reflexive interactivity, in this dynamic, reflects Pierre Boulez's formulation (discussing the similarities between his work and the *nouveau roman*), that 'The actual route taken is left to the initiative of the performer, who has to pick his way through a close network of paths. This form, which is both fixed and mobile, is thus situated at the centre of the work as a pivot, or centre of gravity'.[57] The two narrative strands of *Two Moons* therefore run in series, while simultaneously interwoven thematically, but reflect their own temporal disruption and the primacy of the reader's selection.

On reading the left-hand, 'If the reader does in fact choose this way of proceeding',[58] the

[55] Rayner Heppenstall, *Two Moons* (London: Allison and Busby, 1977), p. 11.
[56] Jeremy Green, 'Rayner Heppenstall and the Politics of Cultural Memory', *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies*, 5:2 (1999), pp. 95-108, p. 105.
[57] Pierre Boulez, *Orientations*, p. 151.
[58] Rayner Heppenstall, *Two Moons*, p. 11.

reader is often subjected to numerous interventions of chaotic information reporting current events, akin to news headlines. Within these, the reader learns that the protagonist's son is paralysed by an accident that appears unremarkable in the context of the other reports. Indeed, just as with the incidental inclusions discussed in *The Woodshed*, the magnitude of the personal significance is reduced to a banal description of the 'bad news' in the context of wider happenings. With much of the novel in the first person, the shift to a dislocated third-person narrative account coldly describes how, walking home at night, 'Lewis had blundered on to private ground and, rebounding from a low brick wall, had fallen down twelve feet of turf wall'.[59] Given that the right-hand pages typically delve deeper into ruminations on memory and experience, offering a discursive dynamic on some of the elements encountered in the left-hand narrative, the reader might be forgiven for glancing to the opposite page at this pivotal scene. In this instance, the first-person narrative ruminations on the right-hand pages reflect on the financial investment of Harold Atha's mother which fell to a third of their value. Indeed, as Jeremy Green notes, a bicursal reading of the novel often encourages 'The reader's gradual awareness of how personal catastrophe fits into the desolate, disordered panorama of Heath's Britain, convulsed by industrial strife and violence'.[60] The novel's juxtaposition of personal tragedy and violent events in the wider world foregrounds the perceived absence of control over tragic accidents. Harold Atha attempts to situate his experience in a constant tethering of the accident to the manifold events in the news, of violent and unexpected acts and the vehement class struggles. These interjections into the narrative reveal an additional system by which the author/narrator demonstrates the impossibility of understanding personal misfortune.

Harold Atha pulsates with the need to unravel some causal explanation, to attribute blame and to achieve meaningful retribution for the accident: 'There was nobody at all evidently to blame [...] If it had been a motorist, I could have gone after him with a knife'.[61] Instead, Atha appears to turn to increasingly convoluted and complex strategies in a search for meaning and to write a narrative explication. Akin to the central concern of the *The Unfortunates*, Heppenstall's novel problematizes his project in an attempt to faithfully record subjective experience while resisting the innate narratological desire to impose a fixed meaning. Indeed, Harold Atha charts the memories of his son's marriage and new home, attempting to forge a faithful constellation of events, but also incorporate an acute awareness that Lewis 'remembered nothing of the past three months'.[62] Faced by the unreliability of memory, and a personal responsibility to record the experience faithfully, Harold Atha turns to a confluence of systems that might contain his efforts and temporarily explicate the chaos. Despite apparent

[59] Rayner Heppenstall, *Two Moons*, p.70.
[60] Jeremy Green, 'Rayner Heppenstall and the Politics of Cultural Memory', pp. 105-6.
[61] Ibid, p. 104.
[62] Rayner Heppenstall, *Two Moons*, p. 168.

self-awareness at the futility of such a pursuit, the desperate need to explain offers chaotic potential for associations and lines of significance to be drawn between the fragments. Indeed, *Two Moons* appears to suggest that its protagonist has found a route toward meaning and pattern within the chaos of experience. Indeed, the novel self-reflexively problematizes its own compositional process, resisting the traditionalism and rigidity of the conventional novel form, and charting the pursuit of a more representative form. The narrative suggests a breakthrough in a confluence of the *nouveau roman* and astrology:

> I could, I felt, by the regular deployment of certain linguistic, syntactical and even typographical tricks, produce a narrative flow as distinctive as that of the best French exponents of the *nouveau roman*. An element I did not then consider introducing was that of the movement of the planets or that, simply, of the moon. Before I came to that, I had to despair of finding any meaningful pattern in what had happened.[63]

Astrology offers Atha a useful delineation of macro events as an orderly cosmos, one that offers particular significance when drawn alongside the stylistic innovations of the *nouveau roman* and its attention to the objective micro details of experience. Together, the unlikely confluence of subjective pseudoscience and the objective techniques of the *nouveau roman* are espoused as ultimately offering further hope for comprehending experience.

Together the two open systems of delineation appear to offer potential to overcome the so-called meaningless event of the accident. The attempt to contain chaotic local events within a comprehensible system of absolute explanation, however, ultimately results in causal fallacies. Indeed, the astrological descriptions manifest as direct causal explanations for the proliferation of reported accidents:

> In Hampshire, as the sun formed a square with Neptune, a boy of nine was swimming in the harbour. The current dragged him into a culvert which ran fifty feet underground. A beneficent trine of the moon with Venus intervening, he emerged and that evening improved in hospital at Portsmouth. [64]

Green suggests that the broader effect of this, in the novel, is to represent a 'consciousness of the absence of agency, bleakly inscribed in the peculiar form of the book'.[65] However, in attempting to draw lines of significance between seemingly disconnected events, manifesting as chaotic information, there exists a potential for meaning, emerging as if tangentially from any such effort at spiritual comprehension. Describing one of many disconnected happenings, the narrator notes that this 'otherwise unedifying narrative could be thought pertinent to our main narrative. It supplies what might be taken as evidence for the possibility that traditional

[63] Rayner Heppenstall, *Two Moons*, p. 129.
[64] Ibid, p. 108.
[65] Jeremy Green, 'Rayner Heppenstall and the Politics of Cultural Memory', p. 106.

astrology may sometimes adumbrate a pattern where all at first seems meaningless'.[66] Indeed, Atha appears as a particularly self-aware problematizing agent of the reductive and fallacious causal explanations of astrology and even of the limitations that narrative style place on the underlying truth of experience in its attempt to inscribe that essence, however imperfectly. Yet, despite the apparent futility at unravelling a singular meaning, the novel suggests a therapeutic quality to the possibility that a meaning of sorts might be generated. Indeed, the narrator, on having turned to astrology, reflects that 'I have quite enjoyed playing that old game'.[67] Framing experience in such a manner engages with it in effect. However, as Martin Buber states in *I and Thou* 'The *It* is the eternal chrysalis, the *Thou* the eternal butterfly—except that situations do not always follow one another in clear succession, but often there is a happening profoundly twofold, confusedly entangled'.[68] Indeed, Atha concedes that 'I am no nearer finding a meaningful pattern in the worst thing that ever happened in my life, the worse in that it did not happen to me'.[69] Otherness further complicates the conundrum of meaning. Atha in effect reflects the frustrations faced in any search for fixed meaning that is rooted in an essential need for grand narratives as an explanatory framework, leading to the ultimate frustration at the absence of any structural and objective absolute to explain the event. The lack of logical causation, within which one might otherwise appropriately place blame or a fixed manner of comprehension, emerges as a fundamental traumatic aspect of the novel. Yet there remains a curiously ludic possibility in the interpolations between the two open systems of the *nouveau roman* and astrology. The effect of their confluence is to foreground the possibilities of the reader's interpretative impact on the world. Indeed, set against the objective reality of the accident and the lack of any linear causal logic, astrological faux-causality and the anti-novel's exacting description of the experience are offered as a possible avenue toward a residual comprehension, a co-permeation of variable, seemingly chaotic eventfulness. The reader's animation of the two simultaneous narrative strands, and consecutive lunar cycles, creates a space of potentiality between the macro events of world news and the very personal tragedies that ground the text, implying experiential immersion and depth.

Ann Quin's Reanimations of Fragmentary Selves

In the subsequent section of this chapter, I turn to Ann Quin, another writer associated with the informal group of experimental British writers, to unpack her aleatorical style. Quin's stylistic approach to narrative representations of uncertainty and experience suggest a

[66] Rayner Heppenstall, *Two Moons*, p. 82.
[67] Ibid, p.188
[68] Martin Buber, *I and Thou,* trans. by Ronald Gregor Smith (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1959), pp. 17-18.
[69] Rayner Heppenstall, *Two Moons*, p. 188.

particular influence of the *nouveau roman* that is reflected in (what might be deemed) a characteristically British compromise. Quin's oeuvre is of particular interest because of her voicing of chance and a chaotic turn which are manifested variously throughout her work. Indeed, while *Berg* (1964) may be more aligned with the continental *nouveau roman* project, her last two completed novels, *Passages* (1969) and *Tripticks* (1972), reveal the influence of the American cut-up novel associated with William S. Burroughs.[70] Indeed, Tew compares Quin's fourth and last novel with *Dreamerika: A Surrealist Fantasy* (1972) by Alan Burns and *Tornado Pratt* (1977) by Paul Ableman.[71] All of this reflects (I would suggest) an indeterminacy of chance in compositional practice found in the work of John Cage rather than an aleatory practice – aligned with the open compositions of Pierre Boulez – that invites enactments of chance procedures in the animation/performance of the compositional piece, which in Quin becomes narratival and textual. In her second novel, *Three* (1966), Quin's style and fragmentary representations of personal trauma foreground an aleatorical opening that heightens and encourages the reader's animation of the various possible strands of the text. Unlike the indeterminate and indiscriminate proliferation of copy that interjects in the compositional practice of the cut-up technique, the style of *Three* might be better aligned with the techniques of *bricolage*, in that the narration is made to appear as a collage of fictional notes, impressions and even newspaper clippings; together with intrusive readings of journal entries; aural encounters with tape recordings transposed to the page like free poetry; and the projection of a voyeuristic film. Indeed, the novel begins with a newspaper fragment reporting that a 'man fell to his death from a sixth-floor window',[72] with the protagonist couple, Ruth and Leonard, reassuring themselves that 'hers wasn't like that – I mean we can't really be sure could so easily have been an accident'.[73] From the outset, the novel presents itself as an unconventionally styled mystery novel (the key focus being the two deaths, one of which is highly significant, that of the unnamed girl, the other probably not), encouraging the reader to scour through the varying textual forms and synthesize their clues. Yet, the uncertainty and

[70] William S. Burroughs pioneered the 'cut-up technique' in collaboration with the artist, Brion Gysin. Having previously written *Naked Lunch* (1959) – in which multiple narrators and shifts from first to third person create a disorienting readerly experience, set apart from any development of plot – the cut-up technique provided Burroughs with a means of treating the leftovers of his project. The method emphasizes the randomness of experience, and the chance insurgence of signs and media in daily life. Yet, while the preface of *Naked Lunch* (located, in fact, at the novel's close) suggests an aleatory potential, stating 'I do not presume to impose 'story', 'plot', 'continuity' […] You can cut into *Naked Lunch* at any intersection point' (200), the cut-up technique has in effect enacted the chance procedure already. Indeed, in the texts of the Cut-Up Trilogy that follow – *The Soft Machine* (1961), *The Ticket that Exploded* (1962) and *Nova Express* (1964) – the practice has already been performed, encountered by the reader after the fact. As such, the cut-up technique is an indeterminate compositional method offered to the reader to perform separately. While the readerly response is a hyper-awareness of the contingency of the practice, it is an awareness of the slashing that has already occurred to create the artefact.

[71] See Philip Tew 'Turbulent Times: Conflicts, Ideology and the Experimental British Novel, 1969–1979' in *The 1970s: A Decade of Contemporary British Fiction,* eds. Nick Hubble, John McLeod, Philip Tew (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014).

[72] Ann Quin, *Three*, p. 1.

[73] Ibid, p. 1.

trauma that permeate the text are foregrounded in an open aleatorical style that manifests in erratic, permutable, even slippery first/third person narration; varying textual voicings; a resistance to closure and finality; and an intertextuality that foregrounds representations of discordance, uncertainty, meaning and ontological insecurity. The effect of this confluence embroils the reader in unravelling threads of stylistic significance, placing themselves within an inexhaustible network of potential meaning, that seems to perpetually unravel toward increasing mystery.

The fluctuating narrative modes and intersecting perspectives disorientate the fixity of a reading of the text, which the nonlinearity of the text's chronology extends so as to disrupt any readerly expectations. The effect is a kaleidoscopic constellation of seemingly fragmentary moments and different textual forms tethered to Ruth and Leonard's attempts to make sense of the death of a character referred to only as 'S' or 'she'. The apparent suicide, as the reader first understands matters, appears increasingly suspicious throughout the course of the novel, and it remains an unresolved mystery. The unsettling nature of this is furthered (without wishing to become entirely entrenched in a biographical reading of the text) in what I would suggest as a potent inclination for any reading of the novel after 1973 to carry the shadow of the author's own apparent suicide, swimming out to sea near Brighton's Palace Pier when she was thirty-seven. This spectral dynamic heightens an unsettling and voyeuristic style of the novel, in which the reader is embroiled in animating various private journals and personal recordings. In a bleak foreshadowing of Quin's demise, these fictional journal entries reveal a recurrent fascination with drowning that might point to the author's own troubled psyche: 'How easy for a body to drift out, caught up in a current, and never be discovered, or for anyone ever to be certain'.[74] The unsettling dynamic of a novel that invites the reader to reanimate the constellation of events surround its character's potential suicide is heightened given the intimate relationship with the authorial context. Furthermore, this chapter's analysis extends from an uneasy interpolation in which Heppenstall's concern with suicide and the accident in *Two Moons* are displayed in the novel's reference to B.S. Johnson calling to relay the news that 'a young woman novelist of our acquaintance had swum out to sea from Brighton, with no thought of crossing the Channel but to drown'.[75] That Johnson himself committed suicide weeks later is not featured in Heppenstall's novel, but instead a discussion on the frequency in which suicides are reported as accidents in Britain compared to France, who are 'more inclined to publish its suicides than we are'.[76] Given this context, *Three* might be read with greater significance placed on the spaces of instability and uncertainty that occupy space between the relatively stultifying effects of the third person narration. Indeed, the reporting of

[74] Ann Quin, *Three*, p. 139.
[75] Rayner Heppenstall, *The Woodshed*, p. 165.
[76] Ibid, p. 167.

events is problematized, the effect of which is a destabilizing of any mediation of personal truth surrounding the accident.

The third person narration of the opening section of Quin's novel has a disquieting effect, the apparent banality offering a stark juxtaposition with the underlying trauma and crisis that characterise the personal voices that the narrative voice slips between. Indeed, Nonia Williams identifies how throughout the novel 'domestic scenes between Leonard and Ruth are strangely still and unreal'.[77] The effect of this dynamic is to encourage readerly interest and the traditional faith that conventional readers place in the value and significance of first-person revelation. The comparatively unmediated transcript of S's oral journals disrupt the narrative present and appear to offer potential for unravelling the truth of the supposed accident (although the possibility of something far darker lurks in the interstices of the text). Seemingly transcribed in the narrative, with typographic space reflecting the silences, the oral journals of S appear to be an exaggeration of Quin's own writing style. Indeed, Jennifer Hodgson notes that Quin's 'prose is infused with the ambiguity, indeterminacy and rhythms that are, traditionally, the domain of that which is enshrined as the poetic'.[78] The profound shift in style from the more conventional third person narration forges a sense of authenticity that characterizes the truth of personally recollected experience seemingly not intended for anything beyond personal reflection before composition of a formal text or narrative, captured in the apparently recorded voice of S. The typographic representation of the oral journal heightens the poetic flow of sensory impressions and associations that accentuate the intimacy of the voice, one that might draw similarities to an experimental style or voicing aligned with surrealist automatic writing. The first appearance of the journal follows a scene in which Leonard and Ruth uncover the tapes, which instils a sense of aural voyeurism on the subsequent transcript and heightens the impact of moments in which drowning is alluded to:

> Anticipation
> Then. Sand integument. Grains blown into navel. Stone-studded
> Between toes. Laughter. Swallowed by waves
> Slow-moving
> Bodies chase white whales. Gulls. Hovered near. Not crying
> That day [79]

The transposed aural journals have a simultaneous effect of a voyeuristic intrusion into the private musings of S, before her apparent death, and of offering a glimpse of what may well have been the half-formed notes and inspiration for the novel prior to any editorial or

[77] Nonia Williams, 'Ann Quin: 'infuriating' Experiments?' in *British Avant-Garde Fiction of the 1960s*, eds. by Kaye Mitchell and Nonia Williams (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), pp. 143-159, p. 149.
[78] Jennifer Hodgson, *'She finds a metaphor for her condition without defining it': Ann Quin and the British "Experimental" Novel of the Sixties.* (PhD thesis, Durham University, 2014), p. 28. Available at Durham E-Theses Online: http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/10906/
[79] Ann Quin, *Three*, p. 19.

compositional rigour. This dynamic manifests in a foregrounding of style[80] as a self-reflexive or performative voicing, one that heightens the reader's self-awareness in encountering the various textual modes of the novel as an 'event' in style within the broader whole.

The interruptive quality of the journals and the frame within which the reader encounters them, through the lens of the protagonist couple's voyeuristic impositions, illuminates the aleatorical dynamic between styles. Williams, for example, identifies the 'constructedness of the narrative […] an unease that precisely comes about from the dissatisfaction of reading impenetrable surfaces and irreconcilable narratives'.[81] Yet, I would argue that the apparent contradictions and resistance to fixity create spaces of possibility between the fragments, offering an aleatory dynamic across the novel as a whole that operates across (or permeates) the terrain of style, which as Roger D. Peng and Nicolas W. Hengartner point out includes 'significant features,' 'interesting structures' and matters of vocabulary, including flow and frequency, as well as a curious quality.[82] Hans-Georg Gadamer perceives the recuperative power of retrospective, belated knowledge that narrative seems to offer:

> Where we have a written tradition, we are not just told a particular thing; a past humanity itself becomes present to us in its general relation to the world. That is why our understanding remains curiously unsure and fragmentary when we have no written tradition of a culture but only dumb monuments, and we do not call this information about the past 'history.' Texts, on the other hand, always express a whole. Meaningless strokes that seem strange and incomprehensible prove suddenly intelligible in every detail when they can be interpreted as writing—so much so that even the arbitrariness of a corrupt text can be corrected if the context as a whole is understood.[83]

Such dynamics Quin incorporates into this highly voyeuristic element of her novel, although haunted by a quality Gadamer identifies: 'When it is interpreted, written tradition is brought back out of the alienation in which it finds itself and into the living present of conversation, which is always fundamentally realized in question and answer'.[84] However, to further unpack aleatorical style, this dynamic might be considered according to Aquilina's aforementioned study, *The Event of Style in Literature,* which insists on the 'non-teleocratic possibilities of style as a performative event'.[85] Indeed, such a conceptual reconsideration of style and its open qualities, removed from goal-oriented and functional appropriations toward external functions, stresses the possibilities in every singularity of an event of style. Style is a generative force of

[80] The layout in itself is a feature of the style. As Roger D. Peng and Nicolas W. Hengartner identify in 'determining which sets of features in a text most accurately summarize an author's style' (175). However, unlike them my own approach to style in this thesis remains qualitative and impression-based rather than quantitative.
[81] Nonia Williams, 'Ann Quin: 'infuriating' Experiments?' in *British Avant-Garde Fiction of the 1960s*, p.150
[82] Roger D. Peng and Nicolas W. Hengartner, 'Quantitative Analysis of Literary Styles', *The American Statistician,* 56:3 (2002): pp. 175-85, p. 175.
[83] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*. 2nd. Rev. ed. trans. by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), p. 392.
[84] Ibid, p. 362.
[85] Mario Aquilina, *The Event of Style in Literature*, p. 87.

meaning at the same time as it is employed as a structural interruption within the conventional patterns of the novel. This interruptivity foregrounds the complex dynamic between content and form and heightens the reader's encounter with the text as an 'event', that is engaged with in its specific animation only at that instance. As Aquilina identifies, 'style has a substantive, performative and creative role, bringing into being conceptuality, which paradoxically, it also expresses'.[86] Therefore, while style signals the voicings of the author, in its rupture of expectations it also cleaves spaces for the possibility of interaction and of performance. Our encounter with style in a work of art is one that might be best perceived, according to Gadamer, as an encounter that plays 'itself out by trying out possibilities' so that it is 'continually becoming a new event'.[87] Style, in this conceptual positioning, should be considered as the interruptive and aleatory foregrounding of possibilities in the reader's animation of the text. Thus far, the aleatorical possibilities for an interpretation of *Three* have been discussed within bounds of the death of S, and the revelations that an animation of their voice might offer in its various reconfigurations. However, the dislocated voice of S is portrayed as posing an interruptive quality, variously voicing an otherness that has disturbed the quotidian norm and introduced a fundamental ontological uncertainty into the apparent stability.

S appears to have consciously sought to dismantle the bourgeois middle-class and parochial relationship between Ruth and Leonard, to disrupt the conventional order of things and appear as a chaotic influence. For example, one fragment from her diary entries reveal a desire (on that Thursday, at least) 'To see their cotton wool faces, zipper mouths expand, shrivel, contract. To throw their salt-cellar out of the window, drill through their soundproofed walls'.[88] Even in less visceral moments, S represents an interloping third in the binary logic of normative behaviour, an 'other' that becomes the subject of sexual desire, fascination and generally a transgressive influence. It is curious to note that this fictionalized scenario may have been inspired by Quin's own intimate relationship with Alan and Carol Burns, and a desire to open up and occupy space between the intimacy of a couple – a dynamic that Williams suggests is discernible in Quin's relationships with Robert and Diane Sward, as well as with Bob and Bobbie Creeley – which adds particular potency to some of the scenes in which S describes the sexual tension between the three as 'a situation I long to wade in right up to the very limits of imagination if possible. [89] Gain another level, and added dimension, preferably bringing them both with me'.[90] Indeed, *Three* might be best considered as a performance of Quin's desires, a celebration of how far a couple can be disrupted and transgressions

[86] Mario Aquilina, *The Event of Style in Literature*, p. 33.
[87] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 454.
[88] Ann Quin, *Three*, p. 63.
[89] Nonia Williams-Korteling, *'Designing its own shadow' – Reading Ann Quin*, (PhD thesis, University of East Anglia, 2013), p. 75.
[90] Ann Quin, *Three*, p. 62.

encouraged. For example, Ruth's journal reveals a routine and passionless marriage, in which she is trapped in a stultifying domesticity:

> At least everything here around us has substance gives security. A home we have built up together. But lately I have felt almost an intruder. Why? I look at myself and see what I might be like in five ten years time. Will things be any different from now? The toleration politeness that brings a basic relationship a certain smoothness in day to day living. But never laughter.[91]

The influence of S on this passive existence has been to open the possibility of imagining alternatives to the norm, and yet such possibilities repeatedly manifest as violations of private spheres and transgressions. The risks and seductions of transgressing thresholds in decency manifest in a confluence of sexual desire, violence, personal trauma and the carnivalesque.

In the novel's exposition, in which the couple separately explore the deceased's personal effects, Ruth is described trying on the girl's clothes and jewellery and becoming aroused: 'Undid her dress, put a dozen necklaces on, some draped over her breasts. […] Her tongue slithered over lower lip, drew it in. She licked the beads, replaced them on the extended nipple'.[92] This scene is the first of many unsettling confluences of morbid fascination, sexual desire, and violation that permeate the narrative present, following the death of S. Indeed, varying representations of the couple's sexual desire manifest throughout the novel as voyeuristic violations of privacy and personal exploration in the animation of another's personal recollections and artefacts of selfhood. Both the tape recordings and the written journals become objects of sexual discovery for Ruth and Leonard, in their reanimation of the influence of S. The interloping character appears to have disrupted the couple and awakened previously repressed elements of their libido, herself uncovering these qualities through intrusions. Indeed, S reveals a homosexual intrigue in Ruth that is concealed from her husband, apparent in the intimacy between the two women, but also uncovered in S having 'discovered some photos of a girl'[93] in Ruth's cupboard. These pictures are later destroyed by Ruth, who 'tore them into little pieces, put them in an ash tray, and struck a match',[94] before proceeding to masturbate. Throughout the novel such significant moments of self discovery are compounded by a voyeuristic intrusion. Indeed, Ruth is soon disturbed by Leonard whose own sexual advances are rejected. Yet, discussions on the 'morbid stuff' of S's death, and Ruth's asking 'Do you think she was in love with you', amplifies Leonard's sexual desire. Despite Ruth's continued rejections, 'not now – not like this', [95] Leonard proceeds to force himself on her, in a

[91] Ann Quin, *Three*, p. 124.
[92] Ibid, p. 12.
[93] Ibid, p. 65.
[94] Ibid, p. 76.
[95] Ibid, p. 78.

scene that has the bleak imprint of marital rape and a desperate attempt to reanimate S projected on to Ruth.

The sexual violence and transgressive drive to revitalize the fantasies associated with S, perhaps even exaggerated after her death, are grotesquely recalled towards the novel's end. Indeed, having discovered that Ruth is wearing S's dress, 'one of hers only one that fits',[96] Leonard again forces himself on her in a desperate bid to reanimate S. Furthering the effect of distorted echoes and threads of significance, the reader might harrowingly recall the same foreboding expression of 'not like this',[97] which Ruth utters before the rape ensues; viscerally described in the narrative:

> You're hurting oh Christ it's hurting me don't – no Leon are you mad? She tried bringing her legs together. His knees pressed them further apart, his hands planted either side of her arms. She dug her nails in until her fingers were covered in his blood. Going to fuck you fuck you fuck you until … She screamed out as he went deeper in. She tore at his hair, face. He paused, turned his head away, began again, moved faster, until her bare thighs, belly smacked against him, and the springs of the bed creaked. Her body limp, head alone moved, twisted, came up, sank back, her mouth open, but no scream came [98]

The horror of the scene reflects a culmination of the repressed sexual desires, the violence and violations that have been played out in the strangely carnivalesque private world of the novel. After all the varying intrusions on private space, Leonard's ultimate violation of Ruth's privacy in the sexually aggressive act of domestic violence results in her turn to the public. Initially seeking medical attention, Ruth's post traumatic encounter with the public realm is an unnerving carnival of faceless figures that compound her isolation: 'The Woman met Ruth's gaze, pulled a scarf round her neck, until it covered half her face',[99] 'A headless snowman',[100] 'An old couple […] faces averted'.[101] The concealed faces reflect Ruth's lack of support and a haunting manifestation of a trauma unrecognised, particularly given that spousal rape was not formally considered a criminal offence.[102] The faceless visions offer stark contrast to the apparent freedom of the earlier theatrical 'masks', and their playful exploration of dark fantasies. Yet, even in those, Ruth appears to have been othered and perhaps victimized. Indeed one of S's journal entries reveals how 'At my suggestion L made a platform, with steps leading from either side, in the empty swimming pool. We both write little scenarios which R

[96] Ann Quin, *Three*, p. 126.
[97] Ibid, p. 126.
[98] Ibid, pp. 127-8.
[99] Ibid, p. 130.
[100] Ibid, p. 131.
[101] Ibid, p. 131.
[102] While physical assault was a chargeable offence, it was not until the case of *R v R* [UKHL 12] in 1991 that marriage as an exemption to the law of rape was overturned by the House of Lords.

half-heartedly joins in'.[103] On this 'stage' they enact dramas, usually in mime form, wearing masks and costumes to explore fantasies and navigate their new triad dynamic.

The masked plays are the most explicit instance of an event of style as interruptive, offering a stage on which their becoming as a new event can be performed. Within the plays, the characters explore their interrelations and traverse complex situations and desires in a ritualised form. S comments, for example, that 'My favourite one with masks is just the three of us, two reject one, or one rejects two, or all three reject each other, or equally accept'.[104] Indeed, Joseph Darlington suggests these "mime plays" possess 'Artaudian faux-mystical overtones' that draw on Quin's theatrical training to situate a turn to ritual as 'a means of imposing transcendental structures without recourse to the ideology of "progression"'.[105] He further interrogates Quin's 'ability for an abject style to invert or else render arbitrary the usually ideologically conservative functioning of narrative'[106] as aligned with the proliferation of theatrical "happenings" and the movement of underground theatre. Julia Jordan suggests the stylized constraint 'gives the reader a contrast with the muddiness of the uncertainty elsewhere'.[107] One might extend this to suggest that the garden theatre offers an aleatorical arena in which the characters explore their desire without bounds of formal possibility, performing fantasies, taboos, and realising distorted versions of selfhoods. Such instances offer the reader the possibility for extrapolation, a choice to reanimate the scenarios in the context of the wider narrative world. S's journal recounts one instance, for example, in which Leonard explores the confluence of sexual desire and the death drive, performing auto-asphyxiation: 'he jumped from the chair, his head rolling, tongue lolled out. He collapsed on the floor, laughing, […] They say one gets an erection that way. He shouted at R'.[108] The violence of his sexual fantasies, encountered by the reader after reading the rape scenes, heightens their significance in relation to subsequent events. Indeed, these theatrical happenings spill out from the 'stage' that has been created in the drained swimming pool and take shape in the real world. It is again tempting to attach significance to the safe stage of an empty pool and the continuing spectre of drowning that extends beyond the death drive, into very real 'event' of traumatic experience in the novel. Indeed, Jennifer Hodgson suggests that Quin's allusions to drowning represent a possibility 'of transgressing human limits, of accessing a register of experience characterised by freedom and formlessness, the falling away of everything except the innermost self, and thereby the sweet relief from the inexorably reflexive

[103] Ann Quin, *Three*, p. 66.
[104] Ibid, p. 66.
[105] J. A. Darlington, *Contextualising British Experimental Novelists in the Long Sixties* (PhD Thesis, University of Salford, 2014) p. 118.
[106] Ibid, p. 122.
[107] Julia Jordan, *Late Modernism and the Avant-Garde British Novel: Oblique Strategies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 154.
[108] Ann Quin, *Three*, p. 138

dilemma of human self-consciousness'.[109] Further, the mounting possibility of Leonard's disturbed and violent sexual fantasies having played a part in the death of S are tethered to the recurring image of S emerging from the sea. Her apparent sexual freedom and uninhibited performance are captured on video by Leonard, in which 'a mask covered her face. She danced away to the edge of the sea […] dived into a huge wave, bobbed up, hair and seaweed caught in spray'.[110]

The expressive video recording of S, reanimated after her death by the obsessive Leonard, and the revelations of her journals are starkly juxtaposed by Leonard's own personal records. Comparatively the voice of his journals is profoundly repressed, with apparent objective fragments briefly detailing the events of each day. Indeed, the days surrounding the death of S are listed as:

> October 18th Boat found capsized. Coat identified.
> Also note in pocket looks like suicide
> October 19th Two hours questioning by police sergeant.
> River and coastline dragged.
> October 20th R in bed all day. Translation completed.
> October 21st Dinner with the Blakeleys. A good hock.[111]

Leonard's journal suggests a particular awareness of possible intrusion into the private sphere. Indeed, the curious additions of 'little black marks' that are indicative of 'Far more personal' events are discovered by S and described as 'some kind of code'.[112] An early conversation with Ruth suggests these may correspond to days that Leonard has had sexual intercourse, which he relates to her 'temperature chart love same thing in a way',[113] a possible nod to reproductive attempts or concerns. It is therefore an utterly harrowing recall, in the scene following the novel's final rape, for the attentive reader to encounter Leonard having again marked his journal in the same way: 'He closed his diary, opened it again, stared at the solitary black mark on the page'.[114] The disquiet of the reader's possible correlation between these markings and the violent act is compounded by the impassive description of Leonard having 'paused over a small item' in the newspaper that reads: 'The unclothed body of an unidentified young woman, with stab wounds in back and abdomen, was found yesterday by a lake'.[115] Here, the reader is seemingly invited to arrive at the conclusion that Leonard might have murdered S. Yet the final journal entry of S that immediately follows this revelation, and closes

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[109] Jennifer Hodgson, *'She finds a metaphor for her condition without defining it': Ann Quin and the British "Experimental" Novel of the Sixties*, p. 38.
[110] Ann Quin, *Three*, p. 90.
[111] Ibid, p. 41.
[112] Ibid, p. 65.
[113] Ibid, p. 42.
[114] Ibid, p. 131.
[115] Ibid, p. 131.

the novel, acknowledges the sexual 'fantasies reexplored' between the two and reasserts that S planned to commit suicide: 'the boat is ready, as planned. And all that's necessary now is a note. I know nothing will change'.[116] As such, before any conclusive position is established in the mind of the reader, Quin has pulled the reader back into a state of flux. Jordan suggests that ensuring the death of S remains indeterminate, simultaneously both suicide and murder, 'emphasizes the importance of interpretation […] Leaving possibility unexplored and unutilized, and the self multiple and unhoused, is ideal'.[117] On the contrary, however, I contend that possibility has variously been explored throughout the novel, each event of style and textual form revealing choices and versions of the self contained within bounds of the possible. Rather than establishing an anguished externality to the reader's encounter, the indeterminate ending invites a rereading of the possibilities within the authorial limits. Its lasting impulse, I contend, is a compulsion to intrude again on the private journals in a search for some truth of experience and a desire to reanimate the aleatorical possibilities of the fragments of the selves delineated across the novel's bricolage style and its textual forms. The stylistic effect reflects the obsessive manner in which Leonard and Ruth have reanimated S, and their having welcomed chaos into their private sphere. The interruptive quality of the fragmentary accounts that make up the complex whole of *Three* open the text to an aleatorical process of becoming that foregrounds the event of style.

Wilson Harris: Fragmentary Remembrance of Colonial Trauma

Following the thread of reanimations of fragmentary recordings of the self, and the chaotic instabilities of traumatic experience, this chapter now seeks to enfold collective trauma and personal remembrance into the constellation of aleatorical animations of style and event. The following section thereby considers the postcolonial and migratory experience of Wilson Harris and the varying textures of collective uncertainty, trauma, and chaos that pulsate beneath the surface of a text that promulgates and simultaneously problematizes a postcolonial attitude. Indeed, in its broader historical and political context, the timeframe explored in this thesis denotes a period characterized by the dissolution of the British Empire (formally constituted in 1949) and the arrival of the Commonwealth, signified by the shift in nomenclature from 'Empire Day' to 'Commonwealth Day' in 1959 and a national coming-to-terms with Britain's comparative weakness on the 'world stage'. Indeed, Margaret Thatcher – whose election as Prime Minister in 1979 corresponds to the time period of this thesis – stated that following the Suez Crisis of 1956, 'the British political class […] went from believing that Britain could do

[116] Ann Quin, *Three*, p. 143.
[117] Julia Jordan, *Late Modernism and the Avant-Garde British Novel: Oblique Strategies*, p. 159.

anything to an almost neurotic belief that Britain could do nothing'.[118] Indeed, beyond the paradigm shifts emergent in the sciences and the destabilizing of order, there was collective reckoning of the breakdown of grand narratives. The most profound disruption of the entrenched 'order of things' in the post war British psyche is of the destabilized colonial position and the emergence of post imperial anxieties. Of course, 1959 and the shift from 'Empire Day' to 'Commonwealth Day' does not mark a curtain call for the British Empire. Despite a burgeoning mood of anti-imperialism in British society, there was also a desire to construct a narrative of new global citizenry and of a reimagined influence. Instead of signalling a shift toward decolonization, one might instead approach the early years of the Commonwealth identity as a rebranding of Empire, and a quietude that persists today.[119]

Wilson Harris was born in British Guiana, but his first published works coincided with his relocation to London in 1959. His first novel, *The Palace of the Peacock* (1960), began a theme of journeying into the unconsciousness of the rainforest, to cogitate on the trauma of Guyanese colonial history.[120] Indeed, Harris entered a career as a land surveyor for the Guyanese government, during which time he surveyed the rainforests, commenting that 'The rain forest made an enormous impact on me. I learned that one should not attempt to — indeed one cannot — colonize the unconscious'.[121] Following the 'Guyanese cycle' of his first five novels, published between 1960 and 1964, *The Eye of the Scarecrow* (1965) marks a new phase of his oeuvre characterized by a shift in stylistic expression and a pronounced self-reflexivity. The novel is set in both Georgetown and the Amazon rainforest, narrated from London as an epistolary delineation of non-chronological recollections of the narrator's youth. With the diary entries dated across a nine-month period between December 1963 and September 1964, the remembrances span between 1929 and 1948, ending in the year of the Guyanan Strikes. This industrial action – in response to British plantation management – was met by the government's use of the police to suppress the unrest, resulting in the death of five sugarcane workers at the Enmore plantation. The victims have since become known as the Enmore Martyrs, and are considered to have triggered the Independence Movement, and are annually commemorated on 16 June with the nationally observed Enmore Martyrs' Day.[122] In Harris's 'Authors Note' to Faber's 1974 paperback edition, he stresses:

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[118] Margaret Thatcher, *The Path to Power* (London: Harper Collins, 1995), p. 91.
[119] At present, there are 14 overseas territories under British sovereignty and 53 member states of the Commonwealth of Nations.
[120] Guyana was seized by the British in 1796, from the Batavian Republic, and consolidated as British Guiana in 1831. The colony constituted part of the British sugarcane empire and the British West Indies. Guyana became an Independent Commonwealth dominion in 1966 and remains connected to the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) of British Overseas Territories in the region.
[121] Charles H. Rowell and Wilson Harris, 'An Interview with Wilson Harris', *Callaloo,* 18:1 (1995), pp. 192-200, p. 194.
[122] See Odeen Ishmael, *The Guyana Story: From Earliest Times to Independence* (Bloomington: Xlibris, 2013)

> Over a span of forty years there occurred a series of grave conflicts between capital and labour, between parties and powers, between institutions and masses that set up a convulsion in the psyche of ordinary men and women which it is difficult to describe. (Those who lived through it were often inclined to turn away from it as from a nightmare of history.) Still that difficulty, in essence, needs to be faced. For it is related to an implicit necessity for change in which the imagination is cornered by the very claims of historical narrative to be identical with universality.[123]

This pronounces the fundamental project of *The Eye of the Scarecrow* as an agitation against structures of realist historiographic narrative and disruptions of universality. In the novel he seeks to disturb and overturn what Gadammer says is unique to writing in that 'only a written tradition can detach itself from the mere continuance of the vestiges of past life, remnants from which one human being can by inference piece out another's existence', while developing a new relation to the colonial past and postcolonial present.[124] Further, as Paul Sharrad identifies, Harris actually embarks upon 'a double task: on the one hand, imaginative liberation from the tyranny of a history which denies them a past (and thus a presence), and, on the other, immersion in history to recover/recreate a past'.[125] *The Eye of the Scarecrow* refuses any reductionist account as regards the colonial history of Guyana while seeking, at the same time, to confront the trauma of a collective experience and explore its personal significance.

The text foregrounds the problematic division between involuntary memory and narrative memory, which has a restorative and therapeutic quality to its ordering and reconstructive processing of events. The pursuit of seemingly therapeutic enquiry involves an act of remembrance hindered by the narrator having turned away from a nightmarish history. This results in a project that performs – as the narrator states – a trawl through the unconscious in which: 'One can go on and on firing at the shadowy long tail of memory ….The truth is – *I can't remember*. Evolution. Revolution. Regeneration. Collapse. All I can honestly say is that the potential fragments of recollection before and after GOD KNOWS WHAT are *alive* in a way I never suspected before'.[126] Returning to Pederson's challenge made to engagements with literary trauma theory introduces a possibility for re-evaluating the way in which such fragments might establish a temporary confluence of narrativized significance. Pederson's engagement with McNally's *Remembering Trauma* (2003) proffers a revaluation of the 'myth' of 'traumatic amnesia' and the previously accepted notions of the unspeakable, unregistered and 'unclaimed' experiences of trauma that elude verbal expression. Instead, Pederson asserts that trauma is both memorable and describable, that 'Traumatic memories, then, are not elusive or absent; they are potentially more detailed and more powerful than normal ones'.[127]

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[123] Wilson Harris, 'Author's Note' in *The Eye of the Scarecrow*, pp. 8-9.
[124] Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method,* p. 393.
[125] Paul Sharrad, 'The Art of Memory and the Liberation of History: Wilson Harris's Witnessing of Time', *Callaloo, Wilson Harris: A Special Issue,* 18:1 (1995), pp. 93-108, p. 93.
[126] Wilson Harris, *The Eye of the Scarecrow*, pp. 100-101.
[127] Joshua Pederson, 'Speak, Trauma: Toward a Revised Understanding of Literary Trauma Theory', p. 339.

Indeed, that Harris's traumatic memories are more 'alive' corresponds to this new framework but should also be considered for their revelations of collective trauma and the social construction of meaning. Hirschberger suggests, for example, that 'collective trauma, transforms into a collective memory, and culminates in a system of meaning that allows groups to redefine who they are and where they are going'.[128] This position, however, assumes a monolithic correlation between trauma and meaning in collective memory. Given that *The Eye of the Scarecrow* delineates a collective trauma experienced under the dominion of a monolithic and imperial structuring force, the novel appears uncomfortable with its own narrative structures.

Harris's strategy throughout the text is the articulation of a *conception* and subsequent *delivery* of an aleatorical style of traumatic consciousness. The narrator's journal begins with the declaration of the project as an attempt at 'an open dialogue within which a free construction of events will emerge in the medium of phenomenal associations all expanding into a mental distinction and life of their own'.[129] The act of beginning the journal is, for our narrator, the 'misconception' of hope that begins a nine-month gestation of remembrance towards a 'life of its own'. Indeed, such a problematic conception is considered to represent, at points, 'the tragic misconceived beginning (one now dreams to return to with a different paradoxical vision of hope)'.[130] Yet the struggle against the colonial organizing structures means that throughout the novel we encounter our narrator 'like a Child in a womb of ancestral fantasy whose every unborn move is a refusal to bow to an inventory of mechanical fates and imprints'.[131] Ultimately, the maelstrom of misconceptions throughout the text circumscribes the supposed correctness of the historiographic. Instead, what emerges is an embrace of hybridity, complexity and contradiction that is celebrated and conceived of as hopeful in the literal unravelling or disintegration of the novel form:

> 'The counsellors of past and present generations might possess – in the midst of the fruitless noise of conflict they appeared to make, the abracadabra of gesture and sound – an element of indistinct dialogue which survived within their vociferous arts of force and persuasion […] the utterly retrenched and flashing instinct of the purest severance and witness of a consciousness of mute self-revolving parts in endless dialogue.[132]

The agitation against the universalism of narrative and of empire, evoked here as the 'vociferous arts of force and persuasion' and thereby redolent of violence and coercion, is pregnant with hope and meaning in the very destabilizing plurality of the consciousness that emerges. Such a position is reminiscent of Homi K. Bhabha's assertion in *The Location of*

[128] Gilad Hirschberger, 'Collective Trauma and the Social Construction of Meaning', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9:1441 (2018), p. 1.
[129] Wilson Harris, *The Eye of the Scarecrow*, p. 13.
[130] Ibid, p. 35.
[131] Ibid, p. 89.
[132] Ibid, pp. 69-70

Culture, that 'new forms of identification that may confuse the continuity of historical temporalities, confound the ordering of cultural symbols, traumatize tradition'.[133] We must therefore move 'beyond theory' claims Bhabha, to 'create space for the contingent, indeterminate articulation of social "experience" that is particularly important for envisaging emergent cultural identities'.[134] Reflective of this, the traumas that punctuate the narrator's experience of Guyana are recalled and narrated from London in a manner that opens up the narrative(s) to contingency.

In *The Eye of the Scarecrow*, time and sequence are unreliable and the characters prove to be interchangeable, depending on the connection with the *present* moment. Indeed, following the scene in which we learn that the narrator has pushed the character of L- into the East Street Canal, the narrator finds himself confused as to the pronouns of each consciousness that have been entwined – and are often interchangeable – throughout:

> Was it he who crept and crawled that last mile to save me or I to unlock him? I still like to think it was I who saved L—'s life, and not he mine, in the nick of time […] For on that afternoon when I (it was on the tip of my tongue to say *he*) succeeded – more dead than alive – in finding a way through the jungle, nine months after I had been left for dead, I arrived in time to prove to the authorities I was a living soul and not the dead beast they swore they had seen. L– was released from the prison hospital (which was all that was standing between him and execution), the conviction against him quashed. The violent quarrel we had had over the woman Hebra the day before I was killed, so it was consistently reported, had weighed heavily against me (my mind still wanders in a trap); I should have said – against him.[135]

The passage above is worth quoting in full, since this scene foregrounds and illustrates the mutability and interchangeability of the consciousnesses that we encounter in our reading throughout the novel. The reader is emphatically presented with – what has been foreshadowed as – 'self-revolving parts in endless dialogue'[136] enveloping the revisionism of the history conveyed. There are multiple interpretations of the events made possible throughout the text, but the excerpt responds to the emergence of events in Book II in which we learn that the narrator's stepfather sought to absolve the narrator's father of a wrongfully accused crime. This prompts the narrator to journey into the rainforest with L– to seek the truth in the town of Raven's Head. In Book III we learn that both L– and the narrator crash in a 'reconnaissance vehicle' – a 'car, plane, call it what you will'[137] – which supposedly kills the narrator and causes L– to be accused as the murderer of the prostitute Hebra, about whom the two had their 'violent quarrel'. The aforementioned nine-month gestational period is

[133] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (Abingdon: Routledge Classics, 2004), p. 257
[134] Ibid, p. 257.
[135] Wilson Harris, *The Eye of the Scarecrow*, pp. 77-78.
[136] Ibid, p. 70.
[137] Ibid, p. 85.

mirrored in the narrator's journey to correct the wrongful accusation of his companion, L–, a quest that is resolved with the Scarecrow's confession that ends the book, signing his testimonial as 'Idiot Nameless'.

Just as with the interrelations of the narrator and L–, the image of the Scarecrow assumes a complex hybridity. It appears to characterize the oppression and trauma of Guyana at the hand of the British Empire, while also emerging in the form of a mediating figure between the various consciousnesses reflected:

> who *it* was no one could say: a crumbling scarecrow perhaps, the key to…? *It* possessed nevertheless a backbone and a single eye which turned and looked – without appearing to make any effort to see – both ways in the same blank crude instant: […] the medium of place (the scarecrow declared) had never died as was popularly depicted in the fictions of the day'[138]

The scarecrow becomes a heterogenous spectre existing across space-time. It becomes the contradictory product of Harris's refusal 'to attempt to confine or draw an exact relationship or absolute portrait of what everything was before the stroke fell and created a void in conventional memory, I would have succumbed to the dead tide of self-indulgent realism'.[139] As with the novels of Heppenstall and Quin, Harris's text incorporates machinations toward representing the hybrid complexity of experience and the destabilizing of conventional notions which are played out in the unreliability of structures and authority. The narrator, in *The Eye of the Scarecrow*, learns:

> to question, things and persons I had accepted too easily (it seemed now, once again) for what they were supposed to be and what they were instinctively supposed not to be. Things and persons whose life of obsession lay less within themselves and more within myself, within my lack of a universal conception.[140]

The repetition and mutability of the term 'conception' is reconfigured here as a way of perceiving the world, a problematization of 'knowing' identity and the 'real'. Similarly, we find another term recurrently warped throughout the text in repeated reference to the Scarecrow: 'the conviction drove him – and had been driving him all along though he had never seen it – into a sphere of reduction and an arm of extensive feeling; the meeting ground of two, and he was indelibly associated with one'.[141] A reading of the reconstituted 'conviction' suggests the scarecrow is a characterization of the dialectical possibilities inherent in the absence of, and the demise of, universalism. As such, this spectral rag-bag figure is the signifier and performance of the *misconception* of *conviction* and occupies the space as a non-excluded

[138] Wilson Harris, *The Eye of the Scarecrow*, pp. 75-6.
[139] Ibid, p. 15.
[140] Ibid, p. 53.
[141] Ibid, p. 74.

third. It is, perhaps, only in the book's close – in which the reader learns of the Scarecrow's confession – that a ludic strategy becomes readily decipherable, amplified in the Scarecrow being convicted for the crime. The Scarecrow assumes the shape, quite literally, as the proverbial 'Straw Man' that distorts and warps the oppositional 'truth' of dialectical positions of 'knowing'. In convicting the straw man for the crime (a scapegoating of sorts), the endless dialogue of the 'self-revolving parts' are allowed to persist in the space of recollection, returning cyclically to the beginning of the novel. On returning to the temporal space of narratorial remembrances, the traumatic tyranny of history again imposes itself on experience. Yet, in the novel's own self-revolving narratives, hope is found in the mutability of remembrances of radically different understandings: 'I knew the changeless ground of it all would yield ultimately, of its own accord, when it succeeded in marrying the fearful strength of the past to the infant freedom of choice which was still weak in the conviction of the present and the future'.[142]

Doris Lessing: A Confluence of Consciousness

This chapter has explored varying agitations against a singular mode of both expression and perspective undertaken through the deployment of an aleatorical, fragmentary and interruptive style. Broadly the texts discussed have charted a resistance to a stultifying monolithic tradition of the British novel (with bourgeois or imperial sensibilities implied in its classic formulations), the representation of trauma and shock in the personal and collective psyche, and the collapse of meaning and identity as a stable event. It is within the context of collective trauma manifesting in personal experience – as agitations against a totalizing history of colonial rule – that this chapter now focuses on the problematizations of normative voicings surrounding the perceptions of singular selfhood and totalizing ideologies. The work of Doris Lessing offers fertile ground for this exploration, partly because – as Emma Parker notes – Lessing's 'life narratives are suggestive of unfinished business, of entanglements with war and Britain's imperial past that will not, or cannot, be undone'.[143] Further, *The Golden Notebook* (1962) exhibits a concern with Britain's imperial entanglements, and the associated collective trauma, treated concomitantly with a problematization of totalizing narratives, ontological logic systems, and psychological norms. Broadly, the novel, as Molly Hite identifies, 'ultimately breaks down its major characters without even making a gesture at reassembling them, and that bifurcates its plot to the point where two separate and irreconcilable versions of a story jostle uneasily for ontological supremacy-for the status of being the account of what "really"

[142] Wilson Harris, *The Eye of the Scarecrow*, p. 45.
[143] Emma Parker, 'Review: Lara Feigel, *Free Women: Life, Liberation and Doris Lessing*', *Doris Lessing Studies*, 36 (2018), pp. 25-27, p. 27.

happened'.[144] The effect of this complex overlapping of narratives, a dynamic that enfolds internal temporal displacements in each narrative, is to establish an interruptive style that heightens the problematization of narrative containment of chaos, and heightens the aleatoric effect. The representation of chaos in the novel's form has been comprehensively analysed by N. Katherine Hayles in *Chaos Bound: Orderly Disorder in Contemporary Literature and Science* (1990), a study that declares *The Golden Notebook* 'represents a development parallel to chaos theory'.[145] The concluding section of this chapter thereby considers the event of style within the text as an aleatorical opening to chaos that simultaneously contains its complexity within possible bounds.

The British-Zimbabwean Doris Lessing was born in 1919 to British parents in Persia (now Iran), who relocated to Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in 1925, seeking to capitalize on the promised growth in the industry of maize farming as demonstrated at an Empire Exhibition. Despite her mother's attempts to raise her in a 'proper' Edwardian fashion, Doris Lessing became a member of the Left Book Club in Salisbury (now Harare). Lessing is the product of Empire both in her familial colonization of Zimbabwe – capitalizing on the land as a spoil of dominion – and paradoxically in her personal agitation against capital and colonial rule. Indeed, MI5 amassed five volumes of intelligence, declassified in 2015, that date back to her involvement in the Left Book Club in 1944. Moving to London in 1949 to pursue a literary career, Lessing became increasingly active in the Communist Party and in campaigning against apartheid. This led to her being banned from South Africa and Rhodesia in 1956. MI5 intelligence from this time suggest that 'Her communist sympathies have been fanned almost to the point of fanaticism owing to her upbringing in Rhodesia, which has brought out in her a deep hatred of the colour bar'.[146] As Dennis Walder describes in ''Alone in a Landscape': Lessing's African Stories Remembered', what Lessing 'refers to as her "myth country" remains colonial Southern Africa, and in particular Rhodesia, where the profound inadequacies of white settler culture led her to develop a more general sense of the inadequacies of the dominant civilizations of the world'.[147] The ban on re-entry can be considered an exile from her colonial 'myth country'. Furthermore, Lessing's faith in the Communist Party waned as a result of, what she describes as, the incompatibility between their project and the postcolonial landscape. Lessing was therefore an exile from both the ideologies of Communism and Colonialism,

[144] Molly Hite, 'Doris Lessing's The Golden Notebook and The Four-Gated City: Ideology, Coherence, and Possibility', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 34:1 (1988), pp. 16–29, p. 16.
[145] N. Katherine Hayles, *Chaos Bound*, p. 236.
[146] Cited in Richard Norton-Taylor, 'MI5 spied on Doris Lessing for 20 years, declassified documents reveal, The Guardian, 21 August 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/aug/21/mi5-spied-on-doris-lessing-for-20-years-declassified-documents-reveal> [accessed 7 August 2017]
[147] Dennis Walder, ''Alone in a Landscape': Lessing's African Stories Remembered', *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 43:2 (2008), pp. 99–115, p. 100.

occupying an unsteady position between spaces of totalizing logic and worldviews that are problematized in *The Golden Notebook*.

The author-character of *The Golden Notebook*, Anna Wulf, reflects that 'the [Communist] Party was a need for wholeness, for an end to the split, divided, unsatisfactory way we live. Yet joining the Party intensified the split'.[148] Furthering her relationship with the Communist party, the novel is concerned with Anna's struggle with writer's block and impending psychological breakdown, and her project of compartmentalizing aspects of her life and work across various notebooks. Lessing delineates the structure of the text, in the 'Preface' to the 1971 edition:

> There is a skeleton, or frame, called *Free Women*, which is a conventional short novel, about 60,000 words long, and which could stand by itself. But it is divided into five sections and separated by stages of the four Notebooks, Black, Red, Yellow and Blue. The Notebooks are kept by Anna Wulf, a central character of *Free Women*. She keeps four, and not one because, as she recognizes, she has to separate things off from each other, out of fear of chaos, of formlessness — of breakdown. [149]

The novel's essentially aleatoric structure is therefore both a means of challenging the notion of universality, and a schematic representation of the need to order the chaos and ascribe logic onto experience. However, the reader begins to recognize how such compartmentalizations blur, surrendering to the simultaneous interrelation and conflict between characterizations and ideologies. Discussing the myth-making enterprise of writing fiction and its relation to performances of nationhood, Lessing's 'Preface' suggests that Britain lacked 'a novel which described the intellectual and moral climate of a hundred years ago […] in the way Tolstoy did it for Russia, Stendhal for France'.[150] What the British novels of the period offered, instead, was a historiographic realism that did little to reflect the realities of empire and the 'truth' of experience and consciousness. Lessing appears to seek a faithful representation of British colonialism only to confront the fundamental limitations of a novel's representation of pluralism and contradictory hybridity.

The fragmentation and dissonance of *The Golden Notebook* is most readily apparent in Anna's self-reflexive examination of her experience in the Communist Party in 'Central Africa' during the Second World War. Anna's Black Notebook concerns itself with the representation of 'Central Africa' – a reconfiguration of Rhodesia – in the character's novel, 'Frontiers of War', which Anna derides for having been 'full of nostalgia, every word loaded with it, although at the time I wrote it I thought I was being 'objective''.[151] Her attempt to redress the disconcerting parallels between realism and colonialism mirrors the problematic notion of

[148] Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook* (London: Fourth Estate, 2013), p. 157.
[149] Ibid, p. 7.
[150] Ibid, p. 10.
[151] Ibid, p. 150.

historical and cultural linear progress that is central to colonialism, permeating its utterances and structures. Precisely because a colonial past is unequivocally wrapped up in the present, Anna attempts to avoid the nostalgic account of the past, to 'first switch something off in me; now, writing about it, I have to switch it off, or "a story" would begin to emerge, a novel, and not the truth'.[152] Such a narrativization is, for Anna, 'one of the strongest reasons why wars continue',[153] and yet she struggles to resist such a style: 'it is so powerful, that nostalgia, that I can only write this a few sentences at a time'.[154] Her response is a strategy reflected by the broader novel, a self-reflexivity that configures uncertainty through self-interrogation. Victoria Bazin suggests that the 'repeated interruptions, however, do not successfully keep the nostalgic impulse at bay and what emerges is a narrative charged with a sense of loss, of unrequited love, of tragic absurdity and intense eroticism'.[155] Moreover, the Black Notebook portrays a tussle between Anna's friends, Paul and Willi, in which Paul jokingly fantasizes about a future – partly to annoy Willi – in which colonialism is overthrown: 'Suppose the black armies win? There's only one thing an intelligent nationalist leader can do, and that is to strengthen nationalist feeling and develop industry'.[156] Totalizing ideologies of Communism and Capitalism clash with notions of freedom in the scene and reflect the cause of Lessing's withdrawal from the Communist Party. As Anthony Chennells examines, such a failing of ideologies to navigate the 'correct' response within their structures highlights how 'a single subject never stands in a fixed relationship to a stable reality. Our responses are inevitably relativist; in the novel it is the orthodox communists who find this proposition most threatening'.[157] Curiously, Chennells further identifies how in 1980 Lessing did indeed return to Zimbabwe and witness exactly that which Paul had predicted, later commenting – in *Under My Skin* – that 'There is no doubt fiction makes a better job of the truth'.[158]

In addition to Lessing's aleatoric attack on political universalism and her simulation of the pluralism in lines of contestation between hegemonic structures, the novel similarly turns its critique on psychology. At the end of *The Golden Notebook*, we see Anna's partner, Saul, compose a short story in the internal Golden Notebook in response to Anna's opening line: 'On a dry hillside in Algeria, a soldier watched the moonlight glinting on his rifle'.[159] Saul extrapolates a story that does not depict the soldier questioning the structures that have caused him to torture French prisoners. His prisoner complains of having been in an

[152] Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook,* p. 78.
[153] Ibid, p. 78.
[154] Ibid, p. 78.
[155] Victoria Bazin, 'Commodifying the past: Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* as Nostalgic Narrative', *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 43:2 (2008), pp. 117–131, p.125.
[156] Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook,* p. 100.
[157] Anthony Chennells, 'Doris Lessing's versions of Zimbabwe from The Golden Notebook to Alfred and Emily', *English Academy Review*, 32:2 (2015), pp. 53-69, p. 57.
[158] Doris Lessing, *Under My Skin: Volume One of my Autobiography to 1949* (New York: Harper Collins, 1994), p. 314.
[159] Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook,* p. 556.

'intellectual prison house', remarking to the Algerian soldier that: 'He recognized, had recognized for years, that he never had a thought, or an emotion, that didn't instantly fall into pigeon-holes, one marked 'Marx' and one marked 'Freud'. His thoughts and emotions were like marbles rolling into predetermined slots, he complained'.[160] While the Algerian soldier is bound by structural impositions of government and control, the French prisoner is stratified by intellectual (and therefore ideological) dogmas. Revealingly, both are jealous of each other's structural entrapments:

> The Algerian soldier said he envied the Frenchman […] While the French student said he envied the Algerian from the bottom of his heart: he wished that just once, just once in his life, he felt or thought something that was his own, spontaneous, undirected, not willed on him by Grandfathers Freud and Marx.[161]

Reverberating throughout the text – and particularly exhibited in the Yellow Notebook – is Anna's impending breakdown, and the psychoanalytic response which is to impose its own totalizing logic onto the experience. Such a position is illuminated when the query is offered of 'what sort of a doctor is it who sees his patients as symptoms of a world sickness?'[162] and this position is furthered in the subsequent 'Free Women' episode in which Tommy derides Anna, while holding her notebooks, saying that 'we're not individuals for you at all. We are simply temporary shapes of something. Phases'.[163] Lessing's meditation on psychotherapy corresponds to her broader project, and to the central tenet of the text – that even beyond the complexities and contradictions inherent in totalizing ideologies, individual consciousness is itself a maelstrom of multiplicity. As Molly Hite states, 'Unity, integrity, self-consistency, she implies, are not privileged, as they are in traditional therapy and traditional characterization. To be whole by societal standards is not to have resisted fragmentation, but to have been reduced to a single fragment'.[164]

The 'Free Women' episodes within the broader text appear, at first, to represent the confluence of the notebooks and therefore a unity, furthered by its realist style. However, towards the end of *The Golden Notebook* we learn that the strand is in fact another novel within the text. Through this revelation, the reader confronts both 'Frontiers of War' and 'Free Women' as products of Anna, thus explaining the increasing discrepancies between the notebooks and the internal novel. Furthermore, in the supposed climax of the 'Golden Notebook', we see Saul prompt Anna to begin her novel and thus overcome her writer's block: I'm going to give you the first sentence then. There are the two women you are, Anna. Write down: The two women

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[160] Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook*, p. 557.
[161] Ibid, p. 57.
[162] Ibid, p. 197.
[163] Ibid, p. 243.
[164] Molly Hite, 'Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* and *The Four-Gated City*: Ideology, Coherence, and Possibility', p.18

were alone in the London flat'.[165] This line is the beginning of the 'Free Women' novel that we read in the outer *The Golden Notebook*, and as such confirms the reader's suspicion that Anna has written both. Moreover, we experience Saul and Anna becoming increasingly interrelated, in their fragmentariness, and in the overlapping of their writerly projects. Indeed, Ella – the alter-ego of Anna in her Yellow Notebook, which itself begins as a novel – conceives as an outline to her writing project: ''A man and a woman – yes. Both at the end of their tether. Both cracking up because of a deliberate attempt to transcend their own limits. And out of the chaos, a new kind of strength'.[166] *The Golden Notebook* thereby manifests as a fractal whole, non-totalizing yet indivisible, fragmented and yet interrelated, contradictory and still a confluence of a supposedly single consciousness. Its cyclical structure both reflects and redresses a fragmented society, on which Anna's works become a polemic series:

> The novel has become a function of the fragmented society, the fragmented consciousness. Human beings are so divided, are becoming more and more divided, and more subdivided in themselves, reflecting the world, that they reach out desperately, not knowing they do it, for information about other groups inside their own country, let alone about groups in other countries. It is a blind grasping out for their own wholeness, and the novel-report is a means towards it.[167]

As with *Three* and *The Eye of the Scarecrow*, *The Golden Notebook* dismantles the totalizing narratives of the realist novel, as usually delivered by a recognizably single character consciousness, and instead proffers in its wake an open text to represent an aleatorical experience of plural consciousnesses. While B.S. Johnson's strategy was to literally unbind a structure (the object of the book), to embolden an aleatory performance of *his* trauma – in the readerly performance of the book as an artefact – the problematizations of structural entrapments and ideological monoliths in the novels explored in this chapter expound an aleatorical sensibility that seeks to mask its boundaries. As Lessing describes, this means 'the book is alive and potent and fructifying and able to promote thought and discussion only when its plan and shape and intention are not understood, because that moment of seeing the shape and plan and intention is also the moment when there isn't anything more to be got out of it'.[168] The reader enacts an aleatorical procedure in the engagement with the kaleidoscopic characterizations that are circumscribed in each book, operating from a position of heightened unknowability.

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[165] Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook,* p. 554
[166] Ibid, p. 411.
[167] Ibid, p. 75.
[168] Ibid, p. 21.

Chapter Four
Aleatoricism of Language and Signs: Performing Gender

The texts considered in this thesis have been chosen precisely as clusters ranged around marginalized positions, that of the writers or the characters, and my selection also responds to the particular aleatory techniques foregrounded. Such compartmentalizations are useful in terms of comprehensibility, and I do not suggest that in any fashion they might be taken for finite bounds. Unpacking the complexity of the texts and the possibility of engagements across varying aleatory techniques, this chapter proceeds with a return to Doris Lessing from a new stratified lens. Following the previous chapter's exploration of the aleatorical style of *The Golden Notebook* in its treatment of ideological absolutes and the problematization of monolithic structures, a brief foray into the aleatory dynamics of the novel's articulation of gender will be paired with its treatment of language and signs according to a feminist reading that furthers an understanding of such a resistance to fixity and essentialist identities. However, the analysis below seeks to uphold the previous chapter's concern with the dismantling of absolutism and its attention to the stylistic fragmentation, while also furthering the exploration of open aleatory form and structure considered above in Chapter One. As such, feminist readings within this chapter are approached from a position aligned with Hélène Cixous and an *Écriture feminine*, in which 'It is impossible to define a feminine practice of writing, and this is an impossibility that will remain, for this practice can never be theorized, enclosed, coded – which doesn't mean that it doesn't exist'.[1] It is precisely this resistance to the absolute, and the mutable discursive processes of seemingly contradictory agitations against impositions of dominant and fixed ideologies that offers the potential to uncover aleatory dynamics in the seemingly contradictory attempts to construct a new form that dismantles conceptual and ideological absolutes. Indeed, Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* will be discussed so as to situate such apparent conceptual complexity, having previously discussed its dismantling of structural impositions, in the emergence of a second-wave feminism. This chapter will subsequently proceed to explore Eva Figes and the reconfigurations of trauma and 'women's time' in *Days* (1974), before extending an analysis of Brigid Brophy's labyrinthine problematization of gender and language in *In Transit* (1969) as constituting a similar invitation made to the reader toward an aleatory encounter with the text.

In the preface to the 1971 edition of *The Golden Notebook*, Doris Lessing describes the initial reception of her novel as 'instantly belittled, by friendly reviewers as well as by hostile ones, as being about the sex war',[2] when in fact, she proclaims, 'the essence of the book, the

[1] Hélène Cixous, The Laugh of the Medusa', trans. by Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen, *Signs*, 1:4 (1976), pp. 875-893, p. 883.
[2] Doris Lessing, 'Preface' to *The Golden Notebook*, p. 8.

organization of it, everything in it, says implicitly and explicitly, that we must not divide things off, must not compartmentalize'.[3] Indeed, as Chapter Three has shown, *The Golden Notebook* agitates against binary oppositional constructs and totalizing ideologies. Therefore, any reading of the novel as simply tethered to its taking up arms in the 'sex war' is reductionist and incongruous with regard to the fundamental construct of the text and its 'essence'. Lessing concedes, however, that 'This book was written as if the attitudes that have been created by the Women's Liberation movements already existed. It came out first ten years ago, in 1962. If it were coming out now for the first time it might be read, and not merely reacted to'.[4] Indeed, the 1960s witnessed seismic developments in feminist thought and equal rights movements, such as in responses to the availability of the contraceptive pill – prescribed on the NHS to married women from 1961[5] – and the publication in 1963 of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, often heralded as announcing the arrival of Second Wave Feminism. Furthermore, more than 600 women attended the first National Women's Liberation Movement conference, held in Oxford in 1970, in which demands were made for equal pay; equal educational and job opportunities; free contraception and abortion on demand; and free 24-hour nurseries.[6] Moreover, Pamela Nicholson states that 'it is from the Women's Liberation Movement that most of the more theoretical works of the second wave have emerged'.[7]

Referring to the influence of the Women's Liberation Movement, Lessing suggests that her novel should be reread according to the subsequent advancements for women, and acknowledges that her writing was perhaps positioned beyond its contemporary environment, or at least the normative perceptions that were disrupted, for 'apparently what many women were thinking, feeling, experiencing, came as a great surprise'.[8] As Emma Parker identifies, the novel 'focuses on the problem of identity and ascribes value to aspects of female experience previously overlooked or trivialised'.[9] Indeed, the episode in which protagonist Anna Wulf describes her menstrual period is particularly illustrative of such representations of female experience in the novel. Anna had embarked upon 'being conscious of everything so as to write it down',[10] but re-evaluates such a position:

> (I wondered if it would be better not to choose today to write down everything I felt; then decided to go ahead. It was not planned; I had forgotten about the period. I decided

[3] Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook,* p. 10.
[4] Ibid, p. 9.
[5] Lara L. Marks, *Sexual Chemistry: A History of the Contraceptive Pill* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).
[6] See 'Women's Liberation: A national movement', *British Library*, 8 March 2013, <https://www.bl.uk/sisterhood/articles/womens-liberation-a-national-movement> [accessed 17 August 2019].
[7] Pamela Nicholson, 'Introduction' to *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory,* ed. by Pamela Nicholson (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 2.
[8] Doris Lessing, 'Preface' to *The Golden Notebook*, p. 9.
[9] Emma Parker, 'Re-Envisioning Feminist Fiction' in *The Cambridge Companion to British Fiction Since 1945*, ed. by David James (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 79-94, p. 79.
[10] Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook*, p. 304.

> that the instinctive feeling of shame and modesty was dishonest: no emotion for a writer.) I stuff my vagina with the tampon of cotton wool. [11]

Discussing James Joyce's infamous description of Leopold Bloom's defecation in *Ulysses*, Anna acknowledges her 'distaste' at the idea of women similarly detailing their periods. As a result, Anna's writerly exploration of her menstrual period – described as 'the wound inside my body which I didn't choose to have'[12] – is ultimately 'scored through – cancelled out and scribbled underneath: No it didn't come off. A failure as usual'.[13] Anna's writer's block is thereby compounded by her self-censorship, responding to social limitations imposed on the acceptable representations of female experience. Critics, such as Sydney Janet Kaplan, have responded to Anna's position in the novel as 'based on very conventional notions of women's supposed sexual passivity'.[14] Indeed, Anna's awareness of her 'need to placate, to submit. Now I am not Anna, I have no will'[15] is in conflict with a desire to record the breadth of her experience, and her wider writing project. However, Anna occupies a liminal space at the intersection across numerous mutable boundaries, encompassing positions of the diarist; author of the internal novels; character within the internal novels; and protagonist of the broader novel as a sum of these parts. The various degrees of interpretation and lines of significance are temporally stacked upon each other, so that Anna is simultaneously experiencing writer's block while we are reading her novel (Fully drafted), an ironic paradox of sorts. Tonya Krouse thus observes that Anna:

> does write her body, recording her physical symptoms of illness, her experiences of sex and pleasure, and even the details of her menstruation. Nevertheless, Anna's writing perpetually enacts and reenacts her effacement - not her empowerment as a unified subject or a more diffuse empowerment of the feminine.[16]

However, rather than effacing an empowerment, the situation of Anna's self-censorship demands a return to Lessing's central theme of the fragmentation and celebration of contradictory experiences as enabling characters to transcend their limits, to overcome totalizing structures.

'Free Women', the internal novel written by Anna, problematizes freedom as denoting a contradiction between the possibility of living outside of social conventions – arriving at a unified identity – and of the broader intention to destabilize totalizing fictions of such positions and instead to celebrate the multivocal fragmentariness. Lessing's representation of freedom

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[11] Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook*, p. 303.
[12] Ibid, p. 324.
[13] Ibid, p. 326.
[14] Sydney Janet Kaplan, *Feminine Consciousness in the Modern British Novel* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1975), p. 158.
[15] Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook*, p. 425.
[16] Tonya Krouse, 'Freedom as Effacement in "The Golden Notebook": Theorizing Pleasure, Subjectivity, and Authority', *Journal of Modern Literature,* 29:3 (2006), pp. 39-56, p. 44.

thus corresponds to Simone de Beauvoir's assertion that 'freedom in woman remains abstract and empty, she can authentically assume it only in revolt [...] They must refuse the limits of their situation and seek to open the road of the future'.[17] Rather than develop a language of freedom dialogically tethered to the patriarchal system, such a 'freedom' must transcend existing structures. This sensibility is articulated in Anna's conversations with Molly, in which she queries: 'If we lead what is known as free lives, that is, lives like men, why shouldn't we use the same language?' to which Molly responds 'Because we are not the same. That is the point'.[18] Indeed, the 'point' is that a true language of freedom must be regarded as transgressive from a phallocentric viewpoint, considered in and of itself rather than from within existing linguistic and societal structures. That Anna's description of her menstruation is 'cancelled out' enables an aleatoricism in which the original text is discernible for Lessing's reader, but not for the imagined reader of Anna's 'Blue Notebook'. Despite the routine nature of menstruation, its representation is denied within the prescribed societal boundaries of the 'proper' novel that the 'Blue Notebook' reflects. Instead, the reader of *The Golden Notebook* is invited to engage with the redaction as an interactive site of resistance in the open structure of the text, it signifies a refusal of the limits – a revolt within the text – that animates the novel's self-reflexivity and its attempt to represent 'freedom' within bounds, a dynamic complexity that manifests as an aleatory invitation made to the reader.

Lessing's paraleiptic technique serves to exaggerate the celebration of ambiguity and contradiction realised by the intersubjective complexities. Her position resonates with Simone de Beauvoir's articulation of ambiguity in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1947), described by Monika Langer as denoting 'not ambivalence, equivocation, dualism, or absurdity. Ambiguity characterizes our existence and involves an irreducible indeterminacy, and multiple, inseparable significations and aspects'.[19] Furthermore, Simone de Beauvoir asserts in *The Second Sex* that women find themselves 'in a world where men compel her to assume the status of Other. They propose to stabilize her as object and to doom her to immanence'.[20] In order to transcend such a position, yet without an adequate linguistic means, Lessing proffers a strategy of multivocality, a plurality of subjectivity and ambiguity formulated by layers of fragmentation. The aleatory quality of this dynamic is evident in the foregrounding of such techniques as highly responsive to the reader's animation. Yet, individual freedom for Lessing is a paradox, a celebration of ambiguous possibility transcending social limitations in an identity that is increasingly fragmented but communicated from within boundaries of masculinist language. The aforementioned episode in which Anna experiences her period further

[17] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, p. 627.
[18] Doris Lessing, *The Golden Notebook*, p. 59.
[19] Monika Langer, 'Beauvoir and Merleau-Ponty on ambiguity' in *The Cambridge Companion to Simone de Beauvoir*, ed. by Claudia Card (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 87-106, p. 90.
[20] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, p. 29

illuminates Simone de Beauvoir's articulation of the 'mystery' of women as 'Other', particularly given that 'Her physiological nature is very complex: she herself submits to it as to some rigmarole from outside; her body does not seem to her to be a clear expression of herself; within it she feels herself a stranger'.[21] Physically and linguistically, Anna's self is configured as ambiguous and thereby inexpressible in any totalizing manner. As Judith Butler remarks in *Gender Trouble* (1990), furthering de Beauvoir's assertion, 'it follows that woman itself is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end. An ongoing discursive practice, it is open to intervention and resignification'.[22] It is precisely this aleatory shock and the mutable discursive processes that will be unpacked in this chapter, explored via Eva Figes and her reconfigurations of trauma and 'women's time' in *Days* (1974), and Brigid Brophy's problematization of binary configurations of gender and their semiotic significance across the contingency of language in *In Transit* (1969).

Eva Figes: Repetitions and Revelations

In her memoir, *Journeys to Nowhere* (2008), Eva Figes describes how in 1939 she and her secular Jewish family arrived in Britain, Eva aged seven, having escaped Nazi Germany. Her father had previously been arrested during Kristallnacht and sent to Dachau concentration camp, only escaping thanks to her mother's 'clandestine visit to a member of the Wehrmacht reputed to get prisoners out of concentration camps by bribing the guards'.[23] The 'considerable sum' paid to escape the country meant the previously affluent family entered Britain with little, but found themselves gradually assimilating. Figes describes how the 'whole family had been naturalized in the summer of 1946, so we were British now'.[24] Figes articulates such recollections as 'not just personal story, a memoir of private events; it involves what is now history', pronouncing that 'it was my misfortune to live through one of the most catastrophic periods in European history. Old age is normally a period of regression, but for people like me remembering brings problems'.[25] Correspondingly, Figes' fiction is described by Sivia Pellicer-Ortin as populated by:

> fragmented and deeply disturbed characters who strive for self-identity and wholeness in the course of the narration. Most of these characters have endured some kind of

[21] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, p. 286.
[22] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge Classics, 2007), p. 45.
[23] Eva Figes, *Journey to Nowhere* (London: Granta Books, 2008), p. 17.
[24] Ibid, p. 8.
[25] Eva Figes, *Journey to Nowhere*, p. 139.

> traumatic experience that keeps them attached to the past, incapable of progressing towards the future.[26]

The fragmentariness of characters and the interior monologues that characterize Figes' work are often articulated alongside explorations of women and the traumas they have experienced due to their various positions within a patriarchal system. Silvia Pellicer-Ortin's study of *Eva Figes' Writings: A Journey Through Trauma* (2015) suggests:

> Figes has represented female experiences of oppression at different historical moments, and created characters deeply traumatised by war, childbirth, sexual abuse, and discrimination. Women's traumatic experiences are explicitly linked to their female bodies, one of the main causes of their oppression.[27]

Figes's articulation in fiction of the marginality of women was extended into the critic-cultural domain by her polemical social criticism, *Patriarchal Attitudes: Women in Society* (1970), a survey of the grand narratives that have contributed to constraining women, limiting them to subservient roles – by forces such as Christianity and capitalism – and of the attitudes of numerous influential patriarchal voices, including Sigmund Freud and Charles Darwin. Published in the same year at Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1970), *Patriarchal Attitudes* is considered central to the 'Second Wave' of British Feminism and remains Figes' most well-known work.[28]

In *Days* (1974), Eva Figes articulates the fundamental trauma of women's psyche as caused by being subservient, alongside the relentless cyclical nature of domesticity and labour. From the outset, the novel occupies a claustrophobic space – a hospital room – in which the protagonist finds solace and security in its very limitations: 'a small room in which nothing much can happen, furnished with clinical sparseness'.[29] Figes in *Tragedy and Social Evolution* stated of the genre, as opposed to drama, 'we also have to remember that writing and reading a novel is a much more private activity: this makes the expression of unconventional views more acceptable, and even more comprehensible'.[30] In *Days* the protagonist is engrossed in the seemingly relentless task of ordering their surroundings and making sense of experience, only for it to return to chaos with the coming of night. The days therefore take on a significance and appear to represent, in each revolution, the passage of a life:

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[26] Silvia Pellicer-Ortin, 'The Ethical Clock of Trauma in Eva Figes', *Ethics and Trauma in Contemporary Fiction*, 48 (2011), pp. 37-60, p. 38.
[27] Silvia Pellicer-Ortin, *Eva Figes' Writings: A Journey Through Trauma* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), p. 92.
[28] See, for example, Leslie Kaufman, 'Eva Figes, Author and Feminist, Dies at 80', *New York Times,* 16 September 2012 <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/17/arts/eva-figes-author-and-feminist-dies-at-80.html> [accessed 17July 2018]
[29] Eva Figes, *Days* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1983), p. 7.
[30] Eva Figes, *Tragedy and Social Evolution* (New York: Persea Books, 1990), p. 99.

> Once the day is terminated and I am delivered back to the womb of the dark, lying alone with my thoughts. Then the data so carefully sorted and arranged to make sense becomes jumbled again. I do not know where I am, or who. The walls, so carefully constructed to protect me, fade away, leaving me exposed, disoriented in incalculable dimensions of darkness. Choking in twisted passages, hearing sounds. Tomorrow, if I wake, I shall have to start all over again, at the beginning.[31]

This introductory passage foregrounds the thematic quality of the narrator's efforts to make sense of chaos, to carefully order the 'data' represented in the safe structural form of the room, reconfigured each day against a backdrop of implied oppression elsewhere. The effect of this is to offer the possibility of the novel's setting as being a construct engineered by the narrator, a concerted attempt to contain the disorder and chaos of experience within a comprehensible form. It further offers a pronounced association between the physical room and the narrator's psyche, of an unconscious return to disorder and the negentropic potential of consciousness. The nightly descent to the 'incalculable dimensions of darkness' suggest a return to the primordial chaos of the void, and yet the imagery of 'data' signifies the negentropic codification and processing of information that has come to be associated with the complex and dynamic systems of new sciences. The hospital room – in its temporary reprieve from the chaos of the world at large – reflects the possibility for constructing meaning within the chaotic insurgences of personal experience. Yet, it simultaneously foregrounds the instability of such meaning and reveals the fragility of seemingly safe constructs to the cyclical nature of trauma and disorder.

The cause of the narrator's hospitalization is described as a 'fall', suggested as having been experienced across generations of women: 'My mother, who is now an elderly woman, fell down yesterday […]. My mother's mother had a fall. Similar. That was a long time ago. A day, a number of days before now'.[32] Such temporal uncertainties are compounded by the cyclical revelations of the mother/daughter relationship that is manifested as one universal experience, from which the narrative voices submerge and coagulate toward a multivocal unity. Indeed the distinction between the female characters in the novel are blurred, in which both the hospitalized woman and her visiting daughter experience similar traumas of loss and ultimately coalesce toward a universal experience tethered to the room: 'She (I) came into the room and kissed me (her) on the cheek, bending down over the bed'.[33] Born into the confines of domestic space – transposed in the novel as the hospital room, and its fundamental association with care – female experience in *Days* is markedly predetermined from the outset, destined to succumb to the role of carer and a final 'fall' to within the confines of the domestic sphere. Within the delineated domain of the subservient caregiver, men visit the hospital room as 'nervous, uneasy, I saw how he paced up and down the room like a caged animal anxious

[31] Eva Figes, *Days*, p. 8.
[32] Ibid, p. 74.
[33] Ibid, p. 96.

to make his escape'.[34] Conversely, the female patient accepts the situation and ruminates on how it has 'been accepted so passively, that I somehow suspect myself of a deliberate plan. At moments I sense this: that such passive acceptance is not human'.[35] Julia Kristeva's 'Women's Time' ('Le Temps des Femmes', 1979) articulates female experience as essentially characterized by repetition (cyclical time) and eternity (monumental time). Kristeva delineates this simultaneity as the 'cycles, gestation, the eternal recurrence of a biological rhythm which conforms to that of nature and imposes a temporality',[36] experienced in combination with the 'massive presence of a monumental temporality, without cleavage or escape, which has little to do with linear time'.[37] In *Days*, the seemingly predetermined fall of the women is situated precisely at the intersection between such cyclical and monumental time. The temporal experience of the characters furthers Kristeva's assertion that women's subjectivity is incompatible with 'a certain conception of time: time as project, teleology, linear and prospective unfolding; time as departure, progression, and arrival – in other words, the time of history. […] It might also be added that this linear time is that of language'.[38] The structural impositions of cyclical time on women is shown, in Kristeva's paper, to have been approached by 'First Wave Feminists' through an engagement with the symbolic order of masculinist language and temporality, suggestive of attempts to create change from 'inside'. Conversely, the 'Second Wave' rejects the structural order and adopt a strategy to seek change from 'outside'. Instead, 'Women's Time' suggests 'a demand for a new ethics' and a third way of feminism. Kristeva thus promulgates the multiplicity of woman, in opposition to the socially constructed homogenous woman.

The patient of *Days* can be read as having suffered from the fall of a totalizing narrative, a universalism of 'woman', furthered by the remembrances that seem to impose themselves across temporality, destabilizing linearity and heightening the cyclical nature: 'You did not ask me about my day, since every day was as uneventful as the last'.[39] Yet, the repetitions of time stage interventions across the events, influencing developments of plot and suggesting a form of 'progress', even if teleonomic rather than teleologic. For example, the reader encounters the patient recalling a desire to travel to Italy being rejected by her mother, interspersed with a conversation with her own daughter, thereby influencing her daughter to travel:

> There must be something you would like to do. Or Study?
> I don't know
> Or take the chance while you're young and travel.
> Where
> I don't know. Lots of places

[34] Eva Figes, *Days*, pp. 37-38.
[35] Ibid, p. 10.
[36] Julia Kristeva, 'Women's Time' trans. by Alice Jardine and Harry Blake, *Signs*, 7:1 (1981), pp. 13-35, p. 16.
[37] Ibid, p. 16.
[38] Ibid, p. 17.
[39] Eva Figes, *Days*, p. 90.

> (I've never heard such nonsense, she scolded. I Wouldn't dream of letting you go. […] Italy of all places, that's no place for young girls to be gadding about on their own […] Latins don't leave women alone.)
> I don't know, I said. Lots of places. What about Italy?[40]

The dynamic shifts of experience, manifesting as Epicurean swerves in the fall of the coagulated temporal sphere of the novel's women, are moments of agency that disrupt the apparent predetermination of women's time. Responding to Kristeva's paper, Emanuela Bianchi employs the Aristotelian binary between 'a continuous cyclical and teleological time that is masculine, and an aleatory and interruptive time marked as feminine'[41] to suggest, instead, an 'interruptive time', that 'indicates a kind of being in time that is both interruptible and interrupting; in its middle-voiced formulation may be heard simultaneously the passive capacity *to be interrupted* and the active ability to *interrupt*'.[42] The disruptions in the experience of the coalesced women of the novel demonstrate the women's increasing agency, and personal subjectivity, in the act of interruption – as revealed in the above dialogue, but also more generally in the interruptions of possibility and deviations from the cyclical repetitions that punctuate the text. As Bianchi states:

> The radicality of this openness, that of aleatory interruptivity, is that it is *neither* simply an openness to or libidinal drive toward life, love, production, or reproduction, *nor* a queer accession to the death drive whether figured as stasis or deconstruction. Rather, the aleatory roll of the dice is embedded in a context that it interrupts, giving unpredictable outcomes: love, life, *and/or* death.[43]

The fundamental intervention and interruption of *Days* is the daughter's voice – seemingly, though the female characters are enmeshed – rising from the frame of the mother's subservience and articulating her mother's refusal to accept the truth of her husband's betrayal: 'I twisted my body to accommodate the lies, the new shape that the house had taken now, since mother came home. She had never fully accepted the truth'.[44] The daughter ultimately claims agency and interrupts the cycle. In an attempt to conjure an independent voice, she climbs out of bed and thereby disrupts the repetitive cycle, recognising: 'I am not alone. In the bed, on the pillows that gleam white through the dark room, I can see the face of an old woman […] I think she has stopped breathing'.[45] The interruption of the universal woman, disrupting the cycle of women's time, is offered in the recognition that 'A person must

[40] Eva Figes, *Days*, p. 102.
[41] Emanuela Bianchi, 'The Interruptive Feminine: Aleatory Time and Feminist Politics' in *Undutiful Daughters: New Directions in Feminist Thought and Practice*, ed. by Henriette Gunkel et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 35-48, p. 38.
[42] Ibid, p. 36.
[43] Ibid, p. 42.
[44] Eva Figes, *Days*, p. 118.
[45] Ibid, p. 120.

be strong enough to inhabit his or her own story',[46] an arrival that appears to synthesize with the death of the 'old woman'.

Roger Luckhurst notes in *The Trauma Question* (2013) that 'stories involving trauma have ostentatiously played around with narrative time, disrupting linearity, suspending logical causation, running out of temporal sequence'. He posits that such an approach corresponds to 'working backwards towards the inaugurating traumatic event, or playing with belated revelations that retrospectively rewrite narrative significance'.[47] Correspondingly, Figes remarked that 'when I looked back on my life, I saw isolated images in my head. It was that realisation that made it possible for me to start writing novels'.[48] Such disruptions of narrative linearity are explored as kaleidoscopic instances in *Days*, charted as repetitions that span generations of women in the novel. These recurring traumas are sites in which characters converge simultaneously across the space-time of the novel's being. The dismantling of conventional linearity in the novel, posing instead a fragmentary acausality, reverberates with palimpsestic attempts to forge a new language, to establish narrative voice that embraces the multiplicity of woman. Such instances reflect a series of aleatory interruptions that are charged with possibility, and yet are often unfulfilled due to the limitations of language to express trauma and womanhood. As Figes comments in *Tragedy and Social Evolution* about traditional drama's portrayal of women, 'When, on occasion, they are shown wielding power, they tend to assume the same monstrous qualities (superhuman and unfeminine) as they do in the history books' (104). Indeed, as Kristeva's essay identifies, there is a need to 'break the code, to shatter language, to find a specific discourse closer to the body and emotions, to the unnameable repressed by the social contract'.[49] As with Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*, Figes invites a readerly engagement in a conscious process of contradiction, offering revisions and mutable characters that articulate the limitations of language. While the protagonist appears to have suffered the 'fall' experienced by the women of the novel, a cyclical loss of agency and the self – 'He [the doctor] spoke my name… I can't remember what it was… but he spoke my name'[50] – the protagonist subsequently confronts and disrupts the cyclical pattern in collusion with the reader. Voicing the pattern of the cyclical 'fall' that the women of *Days* succumb to as 'so gradual you hardly notice that you are stepping downwards, until one day you find yourself a bag of bones, about to be tipped into the pit',[51] the narrator appears to be issuing a warning. The frank expression is ultimately repealed, however, the statement perhaps considered too bold, too powerful: 'I should not have unleashed so much. It almost

[46] Eva Figes, *Days*, p. 118.
[47] Roger Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question*, p. 80.
[48] Eva Figes cited in *Women Novelists Today*, ed. by Olga Kenyon (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1988), p. 84.
[49] Julia Kristeva, 'Women's Time', pp. 24-25.
[50] Eva Figes, *Days*, p. 59.
[51] Ibid*,* p. 75.

amounted to aggression'.[52] The candour is thus revoked – while simultaneously both interruptible and interrupting – falling back to an apologetic refrain: 'I don't usually think about myself. I never have. I was taught never to'.[53] The aleatory interruption presents as a potentiality, an encouragement to perceive the original statement and the repentant position as possible interpretations, singularly or collectively.

Brigid Brophy: Breaking the Code

Only recently experiencing a resurgence in literary critical and public recognition,[54] Brigid Brophy arguably came closer than any British author in approaching Kristeva's aforementioned task to 'break the code, to shatter language'. However, by the time Kristeva's polemic was published in English, in 1981, Brophy's impact was already beginning to be forgotten. Brophy's first publication was a collection of short stories, *The Crown Princess* (1953), which announced an eclectic oeuvre encompassing essays, journalism, literary criticism and was followed by nine published novels, ending with *Palace Without Chairs: A Baroque Novel* (1978). Diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis in 1979, Brophy's remaining years were beleaguered by the debilitating disease that led to her death in 1995, at only sixty-six. Her final publication, *Baroque 'n' Roll* (1987), was a collection of essays that charted her struggle with Multiple Sclerosis, alongside ruminations relating to her bisexuality and the various social issues that she passionately championed throughout her career. It is worth noting that although Brophy variously challenged conventional views, often expressed thematically and linguistically in her work, aesthetically she was not egalitarian about the process of being an artist and art-work itself, stating in *Mozart the Dramatist* 'the truth is that art is a realm where the aristocratic principle rules, and must rule—if the whole business is not to be reduced to nonsense'.[55] However, Brophy's representations of bohemian experience in young educated women and explorations of queerness – particularly in *The King of a Rainy Country* (1956) and *The Finishing Touch* (1963) – have been described as 'an important milestone in the history of lesbian and, more broadly, antihomophobic literature'.[56] Similarly influential and arguably remarkable for being at the vanguard of social issues, the 1969 publication of *In Transit: an heroi-cyclic novel* was described on its dust-jacket as 'a trans-sexual adventure'. Actively seeking to dismantle the

[52] Eva Figes, *Days*, p. 75.
[53] Ibid, p. 76.
[54] See: Sonya Andermahr, 'Introduction: Brigid Brophy', *Contemporary Women's Writing,* 12:1 (2018), pp. 137-141.
[55] Brigid Brophy, *Mozart the Dramatist: A New View of Mozart, his operas and his age*. (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1964), p. 24.
[56] Corinne E. Blackmer, 'The Finishing Touch and the tradition of homoerotic girls' school fictions', *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 15:3 (1995), pp. 38-45, p. 38.

gender binary in its treatment of the complexities and contradictions inherent in the liminal space between such polarizing positions, the novel was described by Frank Kermode as a 'kit of symbols' that can 'fit together in an indeterminate number of ways'[57] and therby assumes the dynamic instability of an open and aleatory text.

A novel in four sections with an additional codetta, *In Transit* charts the protagonist's experience following their decision to remain 'in transit' in the liminal space of an airport departure lounge. The character is divorced from their traditional sense of self, arrested between departure and arrival without knowledge of their own gender or causality of being, setting out on an adventure to discover their place in the world. Before proceeding to analyse the novel's treatment of gender and language and its aleatoricism, it is imperative to contextualize the environment in which it was written. Revealing of the period, Brophy's previous publication – a collection of essays entitled *Don't Never Forget* (1966) – was described by Simon Raven in *The Spectator* as containing both 'sweet reason', an orderly and apparent logic he aligns with masculinity, and the supposed feminine sensibility of 'dottiness':

> There are, it seems, two hands at work here. One, let us say, is that of Brophy, an intelligent writer of clear and masculine prose, sensitive indeed to every shade of meaning and every twist of moral subtlety, but in the sum tough, incisive and direct; while the other hand is that of Brigid, a faddy and finicking prig, of whom more hereafter. For let us forget Brigid as long as we can, and first consider, on the showing of these articles, what the incomparable Brophy has to say.[58]

It is curious to see the everyday manifestation of the aforementioned associations between masculinity as linear and teleological, contrasted by the 'faddy' nature of femininity as teleonomic and responsive to chance. It is tempting to suggest some inspiration for *In Transit* arising from this double gendering of Brigid and Brophy in Raven's review, particularly given that any positive qualities are claimed as 'masculine', in contrast to the 'faddy and finicking prig' of Brigid. Indeed, Leslie Dock posed the question of the novel being a direct response to Raven's comment – in 'An Interview with Brigid Brophy' in 1975 – to which the answer was: 'Not consciously, but I recognize it; obviously, I've read it. So you could be right'.[59] *In Transit* offers a fierce problematization of such gendered positions and patriarchal structural impositions, and the book should be read as a pronounced agitation against such binary associations.

While the period of the late sixties is equated with Women's Liberation, still such a position as Raven's was not uncommon, and such attitudes gave rise to a certain combative

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[57] Frank Kermode, 'Sterne Measures', *The Listener*, 25 September 1969, pp. 414-15, p. 414.
[58] Simon Raven, 'Brophy and Brigid', *The Spectator*, 25 November 1966, p. 21. <http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/25th-november-1966/21/brophy-and-brigid-ili> [accessed 19 August 2018]
[59] Brigid Brophy cited in Leslie Dock, 'An Interview with Brigid Brophy', *Contemporary Literature*, 17:2 (1976), pp.151-170, p. 157.

quality to the Women's Liberation movement. Yet, when asked about her feminist position, during Leslie Dock's interview, Brophy describes a desire for parity, necessary on both sides of the gender divide. Brophy's line of reason here (and indeed Brigid's, too…) is that 'There are a number of reputations which are open to the question, "Suppose you'd been born a man?" Would we ever have heard of them?'.[60] In the same interview, Brophy is subsequently asked about the form of *In Transit* and its depiction of the 'impulse to fiction', which demands to be quoted fully before proceeding with any further analysis.

> *In Transit* is about a series of disintegrations of rulebooks, including the sexual stereotypes, ending with the question of whether Aristotelian logic might disintegrate, whether we are mistaken in thinking that a thing cannot be both X and not-X […] . And then, going from the logical proposition to the sentence, the book poses the question of whether the accepted Western sentence structure (subject-verb-object) is also disintegrating. When I say that these rules are disintegrating, I mean that what is being questioned is, do they reflect any necessary truths, or are they entirely arbitrary? [61]

As such, *In Transit* must be read as a novel in which the limitations of language are exposed alongside the frailties of categorical logic and adopting binary oppositions. The disintegrations that Brophy refers to suggest her recognition of a wider rupture in the constructs of knowledge and absolutism that have been discussed above, and which are referred to as a paradigm of chance in crisis. Art itself is not logical or formally coherent for Brophy, who states explicitly in *Mozart the Dramatist*:

> The *purpose* of art, like the purpose of life, is non-existent (or at least it does not declare itself): artist and biologist must respectively accept art and life as activities which *are*—and have no further justification. Art, in this respect, is aping life. It is setting up to be another instinctual, self-justifying, self-existent activity, an extra life, an organic growth *on* life.[62]

The breakdown of linearity, teleological thinking and conventional causality is reflected in a turn toward flux, possibility, and teleonomic developments require a degree of experimentation to be reflected more representatively. Indeed Brophy further states that the 'structure of the book, to express these disintegrations or questionings, is the first instance of my trying to write in symphonic form. Everything else I have written (…) is structured on the concerto, in three movements'.[63] In concerted effort to dismantle the conventional subject-verb-object sequence, the novel's form is a pastiche of Johannes Brahms's *Fourth Symphony* – a particularly complex symphonic form in four parts with an additional codetta – structured by the Allegro non troppo; Andante; Scherzo and Fugue; Allegro Energico e Passionato; and Piu Allegro. This structural

[60] Brigid Brophy cited in Leslie Dock, 'An Interview with Brigid Brophy', p. 164.
[61] Ibid, p. 166.
[62] Brigid Brophy, *Mozart the Dramatist*, p. 26.
[63] Ibid, p. 166.

allusion indicates an intentional agitation against concordance, amplified by the symphony's denial of resolution and its internal conflicts. Upon Brahms's private premiere to a group of friends and sympathetic musical critics, the piece was received by Eduard Hanslick as though 'I've just been beaten up by two terribly intelligent people',[64] responding to the constant moving motifs and sense of constant transformation and overall flux.

As with Brophy herself, the novel's narrator is a middle-aged person of Irish heritage who appears in the first section, 'Linguistic Leprosy: Allegro non troppo', to have suffered from a loss of language. The novel's first line – 'Ce qui m'étonnait c'était qu'it was my French that disintegrated first'[65] – announces the preoccupation with constructions of language, interlocution and gender that pervade the text. Indeed, the moment in which the French language *qu'its* is before a gendered possessive adjective (*mon* français) is required.

Following a rumination on the imaginary interlocutor and the public-address system that performs an interlocutory role, the first person narrator describes their 'macaronic plaint, with that brilliant apostrophe in qu'it through which I sobbed on an indrawn breath--a plaint which, because it both stated and illustrated my leprosy, constituted a rebus in language'.[66] The reiteration of this instance suggests a conscious desire to palimpsestically double meaning and emphasise the interpretative quality of language itself, to dismantle the omnipotence of traditional narration, while at the same time holding the hand of the reader and offering guidance through the disorientation. Such a 'rush to be misunderstood'[67] suggests both an enabling function for the narrator's journey and an apparent mockery of the literary writers of the period, describing how 'authors squirm, how they sidle from foot to foot, to avoid that compulsion to narrative. They poise their shears over the wire, threatening to cut the connection'.[68] Such writers, for Brophy, 'take aim to fling you an open-ended fiction […] less a book than a box of trick tools, its title DO IT YOURSELF KID'.[69] Furthering such an apparent critique of the aleatory form – one that could very easily be taken to refer to B.S. Johnson's *The Unfortunates*, published in the same year – *In Transit* later states that the 'neo-surrealist gimmick of writing a coherent narrative and then reshuffling the pages to render it incoherent is wasted on readers like me, who usually do-it-ourselves anyway'.[70] Brophy amplifies an aleatoricism of the novel – while simultaneously critiquing its inherent gimmicks – insistent that 'I shall of course be at pains to give you too, dear Reader, the utmost opportunity to employ

[64] Eduard Hanslick cited in Tom Service, 'Symphony Guide: Brahms's Fourth', *The Guardian*, 13 May 2014 <https://www.theguardian.com/music/tomserviceblog/2014/may/13/symphony-guide-brahms-fourth-tom-service> [accessed 18 September 2019]
[65] Brigid Brophy, *In Transit: an heroi-cyclic novel* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 11.
[66] Ibid, p. 13.
[67] Ibid, p. 15.
[68] Ibid, p. 14.
[69] Ibid, p. 14.
[70] Ibid, p. 102.

the device'.[71] Beyond form, however, Brophy employs various aleatory techniques to disrupt language within the text and foreground a problematization of identity and the unreliability of socially constructed gender. The narrator of *In Transit*, inhabiting the open and dislocated space of an airport realizes that they have forgotten their gender and sexual identity alongside their loss of language. They are therefore resigned to playing a series of games determining gender from the interactions with strangers and the deciphering of signs. Such a dynamic of determining meaning and significance from responses is expounded by the turn to rearrange language: 'The utworst you do is stifle me a trifle. You do, I confess, stuffle up my pores and clause. You muff me into shiffling my wordpack amess and amiff'.[72] There is a ludic quality to the language that unsettles the accepted norms toward an unravelling of gender identity, thus inviting an aleatory engagement with its syntactical logic and a foregrounding of the interlocutory significance of language and establishing meaning. The scenario develops a sense of sexuality expressed by Brophy in *Mozart the Dramatist*: 'bisexual impulses still exist in the adult, but in most individual (as distinct from group) relationships they are sieved and sorted out according to the adult's sexual disposition; an unconscious censorship and suppression is exercised on the inadmissible impulses',[73] but not for the narrator in *In Transit*, whose sexual identity is unfixed.

This narrator, who we later learn to be the ungendered and androgynously named Evelyn Hilary (Pat) O'Rooley, recalls remarking at the age of three that the landmark 'Ireland's Eye' was in fact 'Ireland's I'. This transpires to be the last exchange Pat had with their parents, who subsequently die in a plane crash. Indeed, Pat states 'I was no longer temptable to the identification Ireland equals I, my parents having been killed in a plane crash and I transplanted across the sea that they had so often me gaze out at'.[74] Having left Ireland, Pat's trauma is compounded by their adoptive parents' subsequent death in a plane crash, on their way to Italy. The airport is thus embroiled with trauma, configured in association with Pat's loss of socially-determined gender. Yet, the airport is perceived as 'circumscribed' and enabling, like a 'free-range womb'.[75] Indeed, the 'airport, I told my interlocutor, is one of the rare places where twentieth-century design is happy with its own style'.[76] In such a constrained sphere, Pat is free to operate entirely within the present and occupy a space outside of history and removed from the subjectivity of fiction. For Pat, 'History is in the shit tense. You have left it behind you. Fiction is piss: a stream of past events but not behind you, because they never really happened'.[77] In the liminal space, Pat is situated in a state of being-in-the-world, removed from

[71] Brigid Brophy, *In Transit*, p. 102.
[72] Ibid, p. 222.
[73] Brigid Brophy, *Mozart the Dramatist*, pp. 40-41.
[74] Brigid Brophy, *In Transit*, p. 17.
[75] Ibid, p. 20.
[76] Ibid, p. 19.
[77] Ibid, p. 14.

classification and thereby opts to 'remain in the Transit Lounge and thus perpetually or for a simulacrum of perpetuity remain in the present moment […] between departure from the past and arrival at the future'.[78] It is from this precise vantage that Pat realizes the 'you' of the reader, the 'interlocuter', as denoting a genderless and placeless mystery caused by the ambiguity of 'the only language I so much as half command'.[79] Encountering such a disruption of language, and uncertain of the native tongue, Pat elects to order a cappuccino and a brioche, given that they're the only two items that the protagonist could recall that traverse language divisions. At this juncture – where language and time have lost their relative assuredness – even Pat's sex is destabilized: 'during the scudding of the back of the spoon across the opaque liquid that I realized I could no longer remember which sex I was'.[80]

Within the transient and relatively anonymous space of the airport, Pat realizes that their sex and gender are indeterminate. Going beyond these localised characteristics, Pat proclaims that the reader's sex is also in flux, given the reader is subsumed within an imagined community:

> Remember, above all, if you please will, that the relations between us are by no means so straightforward as they often pass for being because writers and readers have grown so used to the conventions as not to notice them […] please remember that, to me it is you who are the fictitious – the, indeed, entirely notional – character. To be engulfed by you into an identification must be like being nibbled at, ticklingly, by a void. I have to summon my weightiest resources of gravity to take you seriously. I don't even know, for example, what sex you are.[81]

Raising an awareness of the mechanics of the dynamic between the interlocuters – including the author, narrator, internal interlocuters, and the variable reader – Pat's gender becomes indeterminate only when narrated as such. To achieve such a position, the novel perceptibly toils at a first-person narrative removed from gendered descriptions, creating situations in which the passport, clothing or physiology present no determining clues. In one scene, Pat's sex is indeterminable due to their corduroy trousers which 'far from presenting a significant lack of bulges, the region made a whole rolling landscape of bulges'.[82] Further inspection is impossible due to the social indecency of visiting the wrong bathroom. Pat operates in an ambiguous physicality of queerness, which as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick comments, can refer to 'the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically'.[83] Beyond their sex, though, the gender

[78] Brigid Brophy, *In Transit*, p. 24.
[79] Ibid, p. 41.
[80] Ibid, p. 71.
[81] Ibid, p. 73.
[82] Ibid, p. 77.
[83] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), p. 8.

of Pat becomes a site of various deconstructive enquiries and games of convention that invite the reader to engage with (and eventually perhaps interrogate) the various norms and stereotypes associated with gender.

Following Pat's failed attempt to physically determine their sex, a foray into 'Traditional Formal Logic'[84] is embarked upon as potentially offering clarification. Pat's employment of an Aristotelian syllogistic system follows the lines of thought that would be manifested in a normative patriarchal view, in which they 'noticed I had unconsciously compared being a woman to negativeness and being homosexual to partialness'.[85] In response, a doubled narrative – with two parallel streams-of-consciousness typographically configured alongside each other on the page – charts the pursuit of a logical enquiry alongside the self-reflective trawl through the unconscious. This device can be interpreted as responsive to the aforementioned review by Simon Raven, thus, ascribing the left-hand text with a display of 'intelligent' logic associated with the masculine Brophy, while the right hand column contains the ruminations of the 'feminine finicking prig' of Brigid. The device further mirrors Emanuela Bianchi's aforementioned interpretation of Aristotelian logic, in that masculine time is teleological while feminine time is interruptive and aleatory. Ultimately, 'after suffering my consciousness to be tossed from side to side, and to no advantage either way',[86] the two narratives are reunited by the interruption of a book bought from the airport bookshop. The English translation of *L'Histoire de la Langue D'Oc* by S.X.Y, a parody of *Histoire d'O* (1954) by Anne Desclos (under the nom de plume of Pauline Réage), offers Pat a canvas for self-determination. This book is adorned with a blurb by Brophy, describing it as: 'straightforward commercial pornography: and what's wrong with that?, - *Brigid Brophy'* and is therein read at random by Pat. Significantly, the pornographic book writes the gendered pronoun 'he' within inverted commas on each appearance. Despite potentially offering a clue to their sexuality, the book does little to inspire any urges in our protagonist, instead all it 'made me want, all but compulsively, to do was pee'.[87] Venturing towards the bathrooms, Pat encounters the husband of Betty Bouncer, a former companion, and determines that 'I clearly am, must be and can only be A MAN'[88] following the revelation that Pat was Betty's first date. At this point the first person narrative shifts to the third person masculine pronoun, after which Pat O'Rooley enters the male lavatory, 'unzipped his trousers and reached inside. There was nothing there'.[89] Pat is therein replaced by Patricia, who escapes the lavatories to find herself on a conveyor belt, arriving as the 'missing member' to a gameshow called 'What's My Kink?' in which panellists guess the sexual perversions of the contestants.

[84] Brigid Brophy, *In Transit*, p. 87
[85] Ibid, p. 92.
[86] Ibid, p. 101.
[87] Ibid, p. 106.
[88] Ibid, p. 114.
[89] Ibid, p. 117.

The gameshow, a 'programme devised by Brigid Brophy',[90] opens the so-far realistic setting of *In Transit* to a realm of interpolating genres and styles, each carrying the significance of associated gender and performing the convention of each form. As Carole Sweeney states, the novel:

> darts mischievously between languages and genres parodying fairy tales, pornography, opera and detective fiction. Marooned in an airport lounge, Evelyn Hilary (Pat/Patricia) O'Rooley is a bemused figure stranded between genders and receiving little help from [their] linguistic environment in identifying himself/herself as either female or male.[91]

In the numerous parodies, Brophy showcases the impositions of language and novelistic tropes on the essential happenings of the plot. With the hackneyed voice of a detective – Slim O'Rooley, a 'dead-beat dick; weeper peeper; down-at-heel heel'[92] – the narrative is reconfigured in the clichéd manner of detective fiction. In the thriller style of Bunny/Barbara, we encounter the drag-leader of an underground world of radical lesbians planning a coup: 'the microcosm shall rise and overwhelm the macrocosm […] The Lesbian Takeover is on. Barbara leads'.[93] Such an explosive theme is furthered in the parodied scholarly narrative, in which the professor declares that 'It is by the setting off of bombs inside the existing framework of the arts that new artistic forms come into being'.[94] Indeed, the mutable form and style of the novel manifests in an 'explosion [that] indirectly produced, by a percussive chain of accidents, the collapse of the stock of the bookstall'.[95] The multifarious genres are each disrupted and the novel form structurally and symbolically "exploded", with the gendered norms of each laid bare. It becomes apparent that the strategy has been to reduce the novel to the fundamental problematization of language, removed from the tropes and structures of genre. Delivered in a transactional style, the reader (as client) is instructed that 'The management trusts the clientele has by now observed that at least one of the hero(in)es immolated throughout these pages is language'.[96] So as to unravel the structural power dynamics that pervade the text, and the instabilities of sex, gender, interlocution, it is language itself that becomes personified, martyred for its semiotic potentiality and flux.

Julia Kristeva's examination of the reductionist approaches to language and power can be employed most effectively to unpack semiotic potentiality and the treatment of language – and the effect of its personification and the foregrounding of its dynamic instability – in Brophy's

[90] Brigid Brophy, *In Transit*, p. 138.
[91] Carole Sweeney, 'Groping inside language': translation, humour and experiment in Christine Brooke-Rose's *Between* and Brigid Brophy's *In Transit*', *Textual Practice*, 32:2 (2018), pp. 301-316, p. 302.
[92] Brigid Brophy, *In Transit*, p. 155.
[93] Ibid, p. 183.
[94] Ibid, p. 197
[95] Ibid, p. 217.
[96] Ibid, p. 219.

In Transit. Kristeva sought to identify and unravel the repressed mother in the structural order of language, exposing the limits of Lacan's notion of 'le Nom du Père', as a child's linguistical acculturation, by way of the father. Defining 'structure' as the symbolic, representing the homogenous and stable entities of state, family or language, Kristeva articulates structure as manifesting a 'cleavage' from 'process'. Conversely, the semiotic is the process that is heterogenous and ultimately repressed, corresponding to feminine language: 'I am interested in language, and in the other side of language which is filtered inevitably by language and yet is not language. I have named this heterogeneity variously. […] I have called it the semiotic in relation to the symbolic'.[97] The semiotic is that which 'exceeds the subject and his communicative structures',[98] a sphere of openness and a space for self-contestation that forms a dialectic with the closed fixity of a patriarchal symbolic structure. In the essay 'D'une identité l'autre' (1975), Kristeva defines the semiotic by way of its fuzziness, illuminating the dialectic with the symbolic:

> The semiotic activity, which introduces wandering or fuzziness into language and, *a fortiori*, into poetic language, is, from a synchronic point of view, a mark of the workings of drive […] and, from a diachronic view, stems from the archaisms of the semiotic body. Before recognizing itself as identical in a mirror and, consequently, as signifying, this body is dependent vis-à-vis the mother. At the same time instinctual and maternal, semiotic processes prepare the future speaker for entrance into meaning and signification (the symbolic). […] Language as symbolic function constitutes itself at the cost of repressing instinctual drive and continuous relation to the mother. On the contrary, the unsettled and questionable subject of poetic language (for whom the word is never uniquely sign) maintains itself at the cost of reactivating this repressed instinctual, maternal element.[99]

Kristeva suggests that the introduction of the semiotic destabilizes the fixity and finality of language and meaning when combined with the symbolic. While there is unquestionably a fuzziness within the linguistic sign and subject in its normative state – which Kristeva acknowledges in her reading of Ferdinand de Saussure's *Anagrammes* – the incorporation of the poetic semiotic is an agitation against the broad homogeneity and an activation of the 'repressed drives' of the semiotic. Such a feminist project of exploding language from within the oppressive language of the symbolic, readily apparent in the movements of the 1970s, is furthered when considered alongside Hélène Cixous's manifesto for women's writing, 'The Laugh of the Medusa' (1976). Cixous's polemic articulates a contemporary desire to destabilize the conventions of writing, as a gendered and oppressive form:

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[97] Julia Kristeva cited in Griselda Pollock, 'Dialogue with Julia Kristeva', *Parallax, 4:3* (1998), pp. 5-16, p. 8.
[98] Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language,* trans. by Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 16.
[99] Julia Kristeva, 'From One Identity to an Other', in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature*, ed. by Leon S. Roudiez, trans. by Thomas Gora and Alice Jardine (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), p. 136.

> If woman has always functioned "within" the discourse of man, a signifier that has always referred back to the opposite signifier which annihilates its specific energy and diminishes or stifles its very different sounds, it is time for her to dislocate this "within," to explode it, turn it around, and seize it; to make it hers, containing it, taking it in her own mouth, biting that tongue with her very own teeth to invent for herself a language to get inside of.[100]

Arguably, Brophy's 1969 novel had already sought to shatter the codes of oppressive language, tasking itself with occupying a space that is both divorced from and simultaneously problematizing the symbolic oppression of gender and language convention. As Pat declares, 'suppose the structure which, like an organic conveyor belt, has been transporting all my thoughts and experiences all these years is but an arbitrary convention?'.[101] Ruminating on speech and writing from within a microcosm of twentieth century possibility – represented in the airport as a site of liminal possibility, purely situated in the 'present' – Pat embarks upon a quest to deconstruct language, showcasing the mutability of communicable meanings operating in aleatorical engagements with the reader.

The most potent technique employed toward a communicable attack on fixity and the structural impositions of language in Brophy's text is humour, and particularly 'punning' to explode the possibilities of language and meaning. Arguably, one characteristic difference between the British aleatory novel and the aleatory engagements of those in the French nouveau roman, for example, is the incorporation of humour and play, readily apparent in the aforementioned works of B.S. Johnson, Rayner Heppenstall, and Doris Lessing. Humour extends the previously discussed social communicability of their novels, offering recourse to the exclusionary seriousness of an experimental project, and a manner in which to temper potential didacticism and elitism in any agitation against convention. I contend, however, that Brophy's use of the pun houses a more potent and combative social protest than the humour that might be described as encouraging communion with the reader. The pun, for Brophy, is a means of attacking the prison of language and convention itself. It is a jocular attack upon oppressive structure, delineated in *In Transit* through Pat's ability to navigate through the liminal enclosure of the airport by way of her badinage. Just as Cixous expounds, a turn toward the pun as a potent resistance – as a conscious problematization of the normativity of language – is a challenge made to conventional fiction that suggests 'There's no room for her if she's not a he. If she's a her-she, it's in order to smash everything, to shatter the framework of institutions, to blow up the law, to break up the "truth" with laughter'.[102] The pun signifies simultaneity in meaning that foregrounds an aleatory interruptivity – to return to Bianchi's

[100] Hélène Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', p. 887.
[101] Brigid Brophy, *In Transit*, p. 222.
[102] Hélène Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', p. 888.

analysis – that encourages the reader's interactive perception of an interlocutory dynamic instability in the narrative. As Carole Sweeney identifies:

> Punning is deliberate non-meaning or, sometimes perverted meaning, compelling words to be read as encrypted code rather than as flow, slowing down the reading process in order to think of the variations upon which the author is playing and to work out for herself which of these meanings is the 'real' one. Arresting the logical flow of language, punning is a refusal to go anywhere in terms of dialogue and narrative progression.[103]

Carole Sweeney illuminates the similarities in linguistic play between Christine Brooke-Rose's *Between* and Brigid Brophy's *In Transit*, suggesting both texts as fundamentally 'interested in the slippery intricacies of language that invisibly but powerfully organize our worldview and corral human subjectivities into carefully policed gender positions'.[104] For both Brooke-Rose and Brophy, the pun is a particularly potent arena for social protest, in that it foregrounds that encounter with assumptions and symbolic fixities of meaning. As Brooke-Rose considered, 'The pun is free, anarchic, a powerful instrument to explode the civilization of the sign and all its stable, reassuring definitions'.[105] Indeed, the polysemous word play of Brophy's novel is precisely intended to perpetually heighten a readerly awareness of the multiplicity of meaning and the fragility of language as a construction, in a manner that refrains from imposing new structures upon the reading experience.

The mutability of language and gender within the novel, as a deconstruction of the novel form itself, illuminates the susceptibility of texts to indeterminacy and the possibilities of meaning within language. As Sheryl Stevenson notes, in 'Brophy's allegory of interacting transients, language appears as a disruptive element, not prison-house; rather than determining gender identity, it offers a surplus of conflicting meanings for femininity and masculinity'.[106] The character of Pat is a delinquent, conjured by Brophy as a showcase for non-gendered language and a means toward revealing the potentiality for non-binary experience, through dismantling tired conventions. Stevenson perceives Brophy's project as 'suggesting that individual identity is tied to language and by presenting both in an unstable condition, *In Transit* draws attention to a juncture between feminist studies of gender and Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of language'.[107] Employing Bakhtin's *The Dialogic Imagination* (1975) in a reading of *In Transit* illuminates the synthesis between the heteroglossia of 'social dialects, characteristic group behaviour, professional jargons, generic languages, languages of

[103] Carole Sweeney, 'Groping inside language': translation, humour and experiment in Christine Brooke-Rose's *Between* and Brigid Brophy's *In Transit',* pp. 309-310.
[104] Ibid, p. 302.
[105] Christine Brooke Rose, *Thru* in *The Christine Brooke Rose Omnibus: Out, Such, Between, Thru* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1986), p. 607.
[106] Sheryl Stevenson, 'Language and Gender in Transit' in *Feminism, Bakhtin, and the Dialogic* ed. by Dale M. Bauer and Susan Jaret McKinstry (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 181-199, pp. 193-4.
[107] Sheryl Stevenson, 'Language and Gender in Transit', p. 181.

generations and age groups, tendentious languages, languages of the authorities, of various circles and passing fashions'[108] and the structural impositions of language on gender as a continuous process of becoming.

It is curious to note (even if an outdated position) that Brophy's numerous explorations of varying social and novelistic conventions were perceived as diminishing the feminist project, for example by Magali Cornier Michael who in 1996 argued that *In Transit:*

> calls into question the dichotomies between man and woman and between masculine and feminine by presenting a protagonist who does not know if he/she is a man or a woman and who spends most of the novel seeking to resolve this indeterminacy but is ultimately unsuccessful. Although the gesture is initially feminist in stance, it loses its specific political impetus through its excess of play with the variety of culturally constructed signs that normally work to position individuals.[109]

Yet, the thrust of Brophy's novel is that regardless of their unfixed gender, Pat remains the central tether, a complex whole, for a text that otherwise seems characterized by vagaries. Indeed, early in the novel we are instructed that unlike the imposed certainty of sex, 'Identity, however, is unloseable. That which feels the loss, that which searches and doubts – that *is* your identity. I have doubted often what I am, but never who'.[110] Pat's various quests through genre and style and agitation against the structural impositions of language, recurrently escaping the imposition of grand narratives, is a performance of their identity. If Pat's self is defined by the search, then 'trying on' conventional notions of gendered roles, finding each to be incompatible with the complexity of their identity, and moving toward more fantastical environments is an actualization of their character. Magali Cornier Michael states that *In Transit's* turn towards indeterminacy causes 'its characters and plot [to] collapse' adding that 'stable meaning is no longer possible and the specific feminist politics are buried in the ensuing chaos'.[111] Thus, returning totalizing ideologies are oppressive stable structures, fundamentally at odds with the vision for 'women's writing' that we see propounded by Kristeva, Cixous and beyond. Essentially, for Brophy, 'we are all simply persons slit, split and filleted on a point of logic of our own perceiving'.[112] The foregrounding of a ludic approach to the potential of language simultaneously communicates that language is both a limiting structure that imposes concrete identities, while also offering a means for Pat to escape such a tyranny, forging a path toward performing an identity as characterized by doubt, enquiry and play. Rather than

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[108] Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 262.
[109] Magali Cornier Michael, *Feminism and the Postmodern Impulse: Post-World War II Fiction* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 30.
[110] Brigid Brophy, *In Transit,* p. 44.
[111] Magali Cornier Michael, *Feminism and the Postmodern Impulse: Post-World War II Fiction*, p. 30.
[112] Brigid Brophy, *In Transit,* p. 27.

diluting the tenet of the novel, the 'excess of play' enables an agitation against the patriarchal limitation of language, offering agency and multiplicity in its wake, as animated by the reader.

In Transit's chaotic and kaleidoscopic close, in which various abrupt narratives play variations of the parody of 'La Langue D'Oc', is consistent with the passacaglia style of Brahms's fourth movement. Depicting characters from the airport in fantastical situations, the novel concludes with a vignette in which a dismembered penis is uncovered in the wreckage of a plane crash: 'It was a penis: very wish-washily pink in the pale light, unimpressively limp in its severed state'.[113] From this intersection of the two traumas that pervade the text – the loss of two sets of parents in plane crashes, and the oppression of phallocentric language – we arrive at the codetta in which, ultimately, 'it no longer matters a damn of course whether 'I' is masc. or fem. Or whether 'you' is sing. Or plur.'.[114] Following this revelation, Pat appears ready to commit suicide by jumping from the control tower of the airport and falling toward the revolution of their making. Brophy as principal interlocuter interjects, pronouncing an aleatory project by stating that 'I warned you I wouldn't play god, disliking as I rigorously do that old fraud's authoritarian temperament. So You'll have to make a choice'.[115] The novel thus returns to two simultaneous columns depicting the possible end for Patricia and Patrick. In the left column, Patricia commits suicide and 'Her body, spread-eagled, was flattened by the fall, like an animated-cartoon hero who's been run over'.[116] The alternative ending in the right column configures Patrick as 'Convinced by his interlocuters (he was always a rational being), Patrick decided to come out of his perilous predicament'[117] before ultimately slipping into a 'posture of castration-agony. Lurching out of it, he slipped wholesale, and plummeted'.[118] In a triumphant finale, Brophy's problematization of the gender binary articulates the same conclusion for the opposing identities. As such, the final note of the novel-symphony offers an aleatory choice, amplifying the audience's reception of the dizzying Baroque composition we have experienced. Indeed, Brophy's definition of the Baroque, in the 'Introduction' to *In Transit*, serves as a signifier for the aleatory novel as a whole:

> Baroque is an open, sometimes an explosive embrace of contradictions, intellectual and of feeling. Ambiguity and puns are its raw material merely. Its essence is the ambivalence, in full deep psychoanalytic import, of emotions. It is a pair of giant curly brackets that clip together things irreconcilable.[119]

Clipping together the irreconcilable binary of Pat's gender with the universal end for each performative self is furthered by the surviving character of the narrator. Stating that 'Love of

[113] Brigid Brophy, *In Transit,* p. 232.
[114] Ibid, p. 234.
[115] Ibid, p. 235.
[116] Ibid, p. 236.
[117] Ibid*,* p. 236.
[118] Ibid, p. 236.
[119] Ibid, p. 4.

You has, I mean to say, decided me to live',[120] the narrator demands a role reversal in which they are read *to* and not *from*. The narrator, refusing to be gendered, steps down from the ledge more cautiously 'to and for You – to and for, that is Scholiastically to say, the both of You'.[121] According to Sheryl Stevenson, Brophy is thus 'imputing an analogous androgyny, or at least ambiguity, to the reader [...] an ambiguous, unfixed gender identity, a fictitious, multiple self'.[122] The coda of 'You' as a passing of agency, a demand for aleatorical engagement, is the entwinement of the contradictions, plurality and ambiguity that have characterized the novel.

A Material Re-Turn Toward New Ontologies

This chapter has considered the invitation made to the reader of an aleatory encounter with the structuring dualities of gender, and the binary that was problematized in the feminist movement, archetypally in Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex.* Furthermore, the developments beyond such binary thinking that became a burgeoning discourse in the late 70s – most notably in the works of Judith Butler and Julia Kristeva – have been employed to illuminate the agitations against gendered conventions in the work of Brigid Brophy and Eva Figes. As explored and articulated in previous chapters, examining the aleatory dynamics of the texts and their representations of a cultural and conceptual shift in perspectives of chance and chaos might be most revealingly explored in a material (re)turn that retrospectively reflects upon such burgeoning social and conceptual dynamics relating to contingency and chaos. What follows therefore engages with 'new materialism' and the philosophical movement that has, since the 1990s, concerned itself with the materiality of ontologies operating within structures and structuring dimensions in an environment that has rendered the post-Marxist materialism and Kantian correlationism as overly idealistic and reductionist. As Bruno Latour defines in the influential essay 'Can We Get Our Materialism Back, Please?' (2007), the material-turn concerns a close synthesis between 'the way we move knowledge forward in order to access things that are far away or otherwise inaccessible; and, second, the way things move to keep themselves in existence'.[123] The following analysis, however, focuses its attention on feminist new materialisms, as the field (or assemblage) has, I contend, most fruitfully problematized the linguistic and ontological paradigms, stressing instead the materiality of complex immersions in power relations.

Judith Butler's analysis of the normative effects of organizing structural impositions on gender argues that performativity is 'the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts

[120] Brigid Brophy, *In Transit,* p. 236.
[121] Ibid, p. 236.
[122] Sheryl Stevenson, 'Language and Gender in Transit', p. 181.
[123] Bruno Latour, 'Can We Get Our Materialism Back, Please?', *Isis*, 98:1 (2007), pp. 138-142, p. 139.

within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being'.[124] As Sara Salih suggests, in a reading of Butler, 'Gender identities are constructed and constituted by language, which means that there is no gender identity that precedes language'.[125] Brophy's *In Transit* must therefore be read as a problematizing of the fundamental contradiction in which theoretical approaches to the gender binary employ a language system that paradoxically serves to reify the normativity. Just as Simone de Beauvoir declared that 'new carnal and affective relations of which we cannot conceive will be born between the sexes',[126] Brophy's narrator admits, towards the book's conclusion, 'I conceive (and in conceiving it I am done for) a civilization whose syntax is not built on the statement'.[127] Thus, Brophy's novel seeks to perform what Butler terms in *Gender Trouble* as a *descriptive* account rather than a *normative* account of gender:

> A descriptive account of gender includes considerations of what makes gender intelligible, an inquiry into its conditions of possibility, whereas a normative account seeks to answer the question of which expressions of gender are acceptable, and which are not.[128]

Butler, however, later developed her theory to articulate how 'subjected to gender, but subjectivated by gender, the "I" neither precedes nor follows the process of this gendering, but emerges only within and as the matrix of gender relations themselves'.[129] If Pat, in Brophy's novel, is a performance of the 'I' within such matrix, the novel showcases how such a position continues to remain susceptible to a binary structure, a dialectic that denies plurality. Indeed, Michel Serres and Bruno Latour propose, 'An idea opposed to another idea is always the same idea, albeit affected by the negative sign. The more you oppose one another, the more you remain in the same framework of thought'.[130] Furthermore, Sheridan argues that while some feminist theorists have been 're-figuring the material/biological, and the connections between nature and culture, others from the social sciences are re-thinking different dimensions of the material sidelined by cultural constructivism'.[131] Such a bifurcation has resulted in a situation in which 'feminism forgoes the material world in its reductive (essentialist) representations of the nature/culture binary divide itself'.[132] Arguably, what Brophy's project seeks might be extrapolated though a new materialism that, as Sheridan argues, demands a "transversality"

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[124] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 25
[125] Sara Salih, *Judith Butler* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 64.
[126] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex,* p. 765.
[127] Brigid Brophy, *In Transit,* p. 223.
[128] Judith Butler, 'Preface' to *Gender Trouble*, p. xxii.
[129] Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 7.
[130] Michel Serres and Bruno Latour, *Conversations on Science, Culture and Time*, trans. by Roxanne Lapidus (Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1995), p. 81.
[131] Susan Sheridan, 'Words and Things: Some Feminist Debates on Culture and Materialism', *Australian Feminist Studies*, 17:37 (2002), pp. 23-30, p. 29.
[132] Susan Sheridan, 'Words and Things: Some Feminist Debates on Culture and Materialism', p. 28.

that tackles the material, rather than a more conventional reliance on immaterial theoretical constructs, which appear as perpetually deconstructed.

Materialism in western thought has flourished most fervently in continental feminist theory and its cross-section with phenomenological theory and Marxist theory, furthered by post-structuralism. However, some feminist thinkers have portrayed these interactions as configured along lines of binary opposition in themselves. Karen Barad polemically states that 'Language has been granted too much power. The linguistic turn, the semiotic turn, the interpretative turn, the cultural turn: it seems that at every turn lately every "thing" – even materiality – is turned into a matter of language or some other form of cultural representation'.[133] The burgeoning movement of new materialism across disciplines, seeks a fundamental rejection of dualisms. At the heart of this project are the renegotiations of the work of Judith Butler, and particularly her text, *Bodies That Matter* (1993*)*. Vicki Kirby, in *Judith Butler: Live Theory* (2006*)* states that Butler's argument on the fixity of lived language and meaning 'can simply ignore or deny the ontological complexity of language/representation that enables it to incite very different, even contradictory meanings and reactions from the 'same' language event – even from the 'same' person'.[134] Such a move toward affirmative, non-dialectical, materialism is outlined by Coole and Frost's *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency and Politics* (2010) in a triptych of themes – that matter itself has agency; that it should be considered in relation to posthumanism and bio-ethical concerns; and that material should also be reinterpreted according to everyday life. Coole and Frost describe these three facets as being an 'emphasis on materialization as a complex, pluralistic, relatively open process and their insistence that humans, including theorists themselves, be recognized as thoroughly immersed within materiality's productive contingencies'.[135] The "transversality" sought – as an intersectionality that cuts diagonally across disciplinary boundaries[136] – seeks to carve an openness that resists structuring structures. Interestingly Brophy indicated in *Mozart the Dramatist* such a complexity required, in her comment on Psychology:

> Psychology, however, is meaningless unless it claims to be inclusive. Either it must take as its material every manifestation of the human psyche, including both art and spirituality, or it is nothing. Much lies outside it: much that comes within its sphere it cannot yet give an account of, and any or all the accounts it has so far given may be wrong; but nothing can lie beyond it.[137]

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[133] Karen Barad, 'Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter', *Signs,* 28:3 (2003), pp.801-831, p. 801.
[134] Vicki Kirby, *Judith Butler: Live Theory* (London and New York: Continuum, 2006), p. 99.
[135] Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, 'Introduction' in *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency and Politics,* ed. by Diana Coole and Samantha Frost (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 7.
[136] See Iris van der Tuin and Rick Dolphijn, *New Materialism: Interview & Cartographies* (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2012)
[137] Brigid Brophy, *Mozart the Dramatist, p. 27.*

Such a position suggests a sensibility that might later be deemed as prefiguring a 'transversality', as first proposed in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1983). Initially used in critique of the dichotomies of clinician and patient in psychoanalytic transference theory, transversality has been employed in new materialism to dismantle polarities in disciplinary dualisms, such as the social/biological and to enable intra-actions between disciplines. In 1991 Rosi Braidotti identified that 'The neo-materialism of Foucault, the new materiality proposed by Deleuze are […] a point of no return for feminist theory'.[138] Braidotti's proposed new materialism 'refuses the linguistic paradigm, stressing instead the concrete yet complex materiality of bodies immersed in social relations of power'.[139] This proposed crisis in the linguistic paradigm and a turn toward materiality has since been claimed to have arrived, as heralded by Rick Dolphijn and Iris van de Tuin in *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies* (2012):

> New materialism, as a transversally new intellectual orientation, works through the transcendental and humanist (dualist) traditions that […] are consistently predicated on dualist structures. New materialists open up the paradoxes inherent in those traditions by creating concepts that traverse the fluxes of matter and mind, body and soul, nature and culture, and opens up active theory formation[140]

New materialism's negation of dualisms transcends and transverses the differences between male/female and masculinity/femininity in which the defining of the sexes and gender is always structured by phallocentric language. Perceiving feminism as inherently paradoxical, in these terms, and aleatorical in linguistic construction, demands an ontological position in which gender is not predetermined by social or biological constructs, themselves actualized through phallocentric difference. As Karen Barad proclaims, this requires a 'performative understanding, which shifts the focus from linguistic representations to discursive practices'.[141] Through this lens, Brigid Brophy's *In Transit* can be reconsidered as paradoxically needing to be read from a position of agency divorced from the phallocentric view. Pat's body and gender unfold variously according to the encoded sphere in which the narrator and the reader place them. This is furthered by Brophy's bifurcation of the reader themselves, the 'both of you' that ends the book, and performs a paradoxical doubling. If there are polarized readers simultaneously interpreting binary genders, the space of possibilities can never land on a fixity. As Karen Barad describes, in 'Re(con)figuring Space, Time, and Matter' (2001):

> The space of possibilities does not represent a fixed event horizon within which the social location of knowers can be mapped, nor a homogenous fixed uniform container

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[138] Rosi Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance: A Study of Women and Contemporary Philosophy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p. 266.
[139] Rosi Braidotti cited in 'Interview with Rosi Braidotti' in Iris van der Tuin and Rick Dolphijn, *New Materialism: Interview & Cartographies,* pp. 19-37, p. 21.
[140] Iris van der Tuin and Rick Dolphijn, *New Materialism: Interview & Cartographies,* p. 86.
[141] Karen Barad, 'Posthumanist Performativity', p. 807.

> of choices. Rather the dynamics of the spacetime manifold is produced by agential interventions made possible in its very re(con)figuration[142]

The gendered characters of Pat and Patricia in *In Transit* can be perceived as transversally entangled, an inseparable whole that performs a superposition of each constituent part, reminiscent of the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics. Crucially, as Karen Barad states in *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (2007):

> To be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but to lack an independent, self-contained existence. Existence is not an individual affair. Individuals do not preexist their interactions; rather, individuals emerge through and as part of their entangled intra-relating.[143]

As such, Brophy's novel enacts the multiplicity of the character as being both man and woman, masculine and feminine, exclusively and inclusively in simultaneity. These dualities thereby operate as a confluence of possibilities in constant flux, reconfiguring the performance within boundaries and exploding the bifurcation. In *Mozart the Dramatist* Brophy identified a similar dialectic in the Enlightenment's quest for freedom and 'a normative spirit prepared to regulate every last aspect of speech, conduct and art by a rule of correctness. It was in keeping with this paradox that the eighteenth century became the great age of encyclopaedias and dictionaries – ambiguous instruments, which at once store knowledge and freeze it'.[144] While Pat appears to unfurl a gender according to the encoded environment that imposes meaning upon them, the increasingly playful and fantastical situations they find themselves in – as influenced by the indeterminate and non-binary narrator – are themselves shaped by the intra-actions Pat makes, transversally performing Pat, Patrick and Patricia across mutable characters assumed in the numerous parodies and tropes throughout the text. In so doing, the airport cartography – as the microcosm of the world and its 'field of reality'– becomes a hanger for the Deleuzian 'plane of exteriority', reflecting 'the possibility and necessity of flattening all of the multiplicities on a single plane of consistency or exteriority, regardless of their number of dimensions. The ideal for a book would be to lay everything out on a plane of exteriority of this kind'.[145]

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[142] Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2007), pp. 103-4.
[143] Ibid, p. ix.
[144] Brigid Brophy, *Mozart the Dramatist*, p. 81.
[145] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* p. 10.

Chapter Five
The Subjects of the Aleator: Popularized Chance

The previous chapter's engagement with new materialism served as a framework from which to reread and conceptualize literary articulations of chance and unpack the aleatory engagements of a period that, I have argued, was in the midst of tumultuous paradigm shift. The more recent philosophical movement resonates with the mounting significance of contingency, chaos and the seemingly paradoxical conditions that the new sciences of chance appeared to illuminate in everyday life. Given the discussion of paradigm shifts and destabilizing of grand narratives, one might go as far as to suggest that the emergence of a 'new materialism' – characterized by its immanence, transversing foundational dichotomies toward multiplicity, fluxes and becomings – might be symptomatic of a crisis in a material understanding of the world. This thesis does not insist that such a "new" materialism will become a revolutionary new paradigm across disciplines or structures of knowledge more generally. Nor does it seek to prove that the emergence of quantum mechanics, or developments under the banner of chaos theory, explicitly influenced everyday attitudes. However, in engaging with new materialist thought toward an exploration of literary representations of chance between 1959 and 1979, it is clear that (implicitly at least) there was a burgeoning consciousness of the frailty of 'knowing' and a chaotic confluence between determinism and indeterminism that pervaded the everyday, following a crisis in the paradigm of determinism and classical mechanics. Karl Popper identified this paradigm shift in the breakdown of determinism and traditional structures of scientific 'knowledge': 'the fundamental idea underlying 'scientific' determinism is that the structure of the world is such that every future event can in principle be rationally calculated in advance, if only we know the laws of nature, and the present or past state of the world'.[1] Instead, Popper suggests a widespread appreciation of how the 'universe is partly causal, partly probabilistic, and partly open: it is emergent'.[2] This shift in sensibility – that this thesis has shown to manifest in the arts as a preoccupation with the complex dynamics of the vagaries of chance and its own uncertainties – can be variously traced across the disciplines, and suggests the emergence of the tangled skein of chaos in everyday attitudes.

This chapter will explore literary treatments of conceptual matters relating to chance and chaos in texts that aren't necessarily deemed "experimental", turning instead to more "popular" novels. In doing so, this chapter endeavours to uncover a broader cultural shift toward chance, and reveal the state of flux permeating a period that was in the midst of multiple paradigm shifts. David Bohm and F. David Peat suggest, for example, that 'the really important

[1] Karl Popper, *The Open Universe*, p. 6.
[2] Ibid, p. 130.

figures in science and the arts were fundamentally doing the same thing and responding to the same ultimate origin'.[3] I contend that such an essential confluence can be uncovered between the arts and sciences in a mutual crisis of ontological security. Indeed, as Anthony Giddens identifies, 'To live in the universe of high modernity is to live in an environment of chance and risk, the inevitable concomitants of a system geared to the domination of nature and the reflexive making of history'.[4] This final chapter therefore seeks to draw some intra-action between conceptual and personal encounters with chaos, and to suggest a confluence of the *automaton* and *tyche* of chance as played out in heavily narrativized terrains of the 'possible'. Everyday encounters with chance might thus be characterized by what Giddens terms an 'openness of future events', identifying the effects of such ontological insecurity on reflexive self-identity and 'the capacity to keep a particular narrative going'.[5] Indeed, complex perspectives on chaos are perhaps only understood as 'possible' when situated within comprehensible narrative explanations. This chapter seeks to unpack the aleatory dynamics in seemingly paradoxical attempts to evoke chance and chaos in narratives that systemize and contain chance within conventional narrative bounds.

This chapter explores two popular novels (or at least decidedly less experimental than those previously discussed) and their treatment of complex conceptual themes relating to chance and chaos in the realm of personal experience. This enquiry aims to explore how characters become emblematic of conceptual encounters, and how such theoretical personifications encourage the reader's heightened engagement with chance in both ontological and epistemological terms. Given the various problematizations of authorial impositions and destabilized structures of meaning in the experimental novels that have been discussed thus far, the representation of a burgeoning chaos within a more conventional narrative comprehensibility demands some authoritative machination over the representation of chance, choice and aleatorical freedom. Arguably, however, one such solution to the problem lies in metafiction, and the self-reflexive representation of such structuring narrative influences. As Patricia Waugh identifies, this represents a 'metafictional response to the problem of how to represent impermanence and a sense of chaos, in the permanent and ordered terms of literature'.[6] The experimental novels discussed in this thesis have arguably sought to disrupt convention and inspire a turbulent uncertainty, representative of being-in-the-world. However, this chapter suggests that even more conservative literary representations of chance – which seek to offer comfort – engage with aleatory constructs in their treatment of chaos. If the essential unease surrounding the paradigm shift centre on the rupture in absolute

[3] David Bohm and F. David Peat, *Science, Order, Creativity,* (New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 2.
[4] Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern Age.* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p. 109.
[5] Ibid, p. 54.
[6] Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction*, p. 12.

knowledge, this is manifested in literary pursuits by some writers and critics as 'The Death of the Author' thesis. Arguably the need to overcome such a problem (in a *comfortable* manner) inspired the emergence of a metafictional author. This construct is best exemplified by John Fowles's authorial meta-narrator in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969), who declares:

> the novelist is still a god, since he creates (and not even the most aleatory avant-garde modern novel has managed to extirpate its author completely); what has changed is that we are no longer gods of the Victorian image, omniscient and decreeing; but it is the new theological image, with freedom our first principle, not authority.[7]

While maintaining the reassuring presence of the book's creator, and reasserting authorial control, the reimagined 'author' builds a fictional world that reflects the potentiality of chance procedures, and aleatory freedom, within more comprehensibly stylized bounds of conventional fiction. Further to the metafictional author, however, this chapter seeks to unpack varying metafictional configurations of the reader. Indeed, in order to safely contain such an open dynamic of aleatory possibility within the confines of a conventional form, I contend that such constructs variously offer configurations of – what I term – an *aleator. A*ppearing as a proxy for the aleatory reader of an open text, an aleator is the personification of the readerly enacting of chance procedures designed by an authorial creator. Indeed, the *aleator* is granted the apparent freedom to animate chance and encounter chaos within the construct of the fictional open world. While remaining fixed within the bounds of the conventional novel, such a meta-quality between the reader and the *aleator* foregrounds a broader aleatory engagement with shifting perspectives of chance.

John Fowles: *The Magus*, the conjuror

John Fowles's understanding of chance is one characterized by an existential concern for personal freedom in complex interaction with the philosophical and scientific milieus concerned with chaos. The dismantling of classical mechanics and the precarious influence of chance permeates his oeuvre and is readily apparent in his 'Self Portrait in Ideas', *The Aristos* (1964), in which he proclaims 'the cosmos is an infinite proliferation of fire, atoms, forms, collisions, attractions, sports, mutations, all happening in the space-time continuum; only thus can Law survive against Chaos, and only thus can Chaos survive against Law'.[8] Within his articulation of chaos Fowles demonstrates a cognisance of the paradigmatic shifts in the sciences, of the dynamic interactions between chance and order, and the necessity of contingency within the

[7] John Fowles, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (London: Vintage, 1996), p. 82.
[8] John Fowles, *The Aristos* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1980), p. 20

structures of the universe (cosmos). While Fowles is principally concerned with the individual experience of such an apparent precarity of personal freedom in the midst of chaos and law, I contend that this is positioned in a complex relationship that corresponds to a dynamic interaction between *tyche* and *automaton*. Indeed, at the heart of his writing and of his philosophical enquiry, there lies a fundamental concern for wider conceptual positioning that is problematized by the negotiation of meaning in the balance between the grand narratives of chance and order, and the reconfiguration of free will within the broader paradigm shift in the dismantling of classical mechanics, and the determinism and certainty it contained. Indeed, Robert L. Nadeau's analysis of modern physics within the work of Fowles suggests the author 'not only demonstrates an awareness of discoveries made in the new physics, but also carefully evaluates the impact of these new ideas on the moral and intellectual foundations of values'.[9] This conceptual positioning is encapsulated by the notion of 'hazard' that permeates *The Magus* (1965), which I contend must be considered in concordance with the 'aleatory' concern with chance as explored in this thesis.

Having begun writing *The Magus* in the early 1950s, Fowles acknowledges – in the 'Foreword' to the revised version (1977) – that 'one of the (incurable) faults of the book was the attempt to conceal the real state of endless flux in which it was written'.[10] Indeed, the novel's various revisions reveal his dissatisfaction with the conceptual clarity of the original and its depiction of a 'godgame' that contains 'hazard'. Michael Boccia's analysis of the revisions, for example, identities that 'in the new version the elements of the godgame are much more explicit'[11] and that mentions of 'hazard' had been developed to further convey (what he perceives as) its 'manifestation of the chaos of the universe upon which man wishes to impose order'.[12] Originally titled *The Godgame*, Fowles 'collated and rewrote all the previous drafts'[13] and published *The Magus* in 1965 following his first published novel, *The Collector* (1963), and the subsequent collection of philosophical aphorisms, *The Aristos* (1964). The concept of 'hazard' appears in each of these texts, culminating in a broader picture of a concept that appears – like the aleatory – to pertain to personal encounters with the complex interaction between chance and order. Indeed, in *The Collector,* hazard is variously associated with the dynamic interplay between teleonomic evolutionary logic and chance variation: 'It's hazard, of course, he said. The genes'.[14] However, the conceptual significance is extended in the aphorisms of *The Aristos*, suggesting an aleatory dynamic of chaos within comprehensible

[9] Robert L. Nadeau, 'Fowles and Physics: A Study of "The Magus A Revised Version", *Journal of Modern Literature*, 8:2 (1980), pp.261-274, p. 263.
[10] John Fowles, 'Foreword' to *The Magus*, revised edn (London: Vintage, 2004), p. 6.
[11] Michael Boccia, ''Visions and Revisions': John Fowles's New Version of 'The Magus', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 8:2 (1980), pp. 235-246, p. 236.
[12] Ibid, p. 244
[13] John Fowles, 'Foreword' to *The Magus*, p. 6.
[14] John Fowles, *The Collector* (London: Vintage, 2010), p. 175.

bounds in the assertion that humanity 'is in an infinite situation of finite hazard; that is, its fundamental principle will always be hazard, but a hazard without bounds. A hazard without bounds would be a universe without physical laws: that is, a perpetual and total chaos'.[15] Contained within limits, hazard and the aleatory both offer potential to animate chaotic complexity and dynamic instability as spaces of potential flux within bounds of the possible.

Reminiscent of the 'hasard' in Mallarmé's 'Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le Hasard', the notion of hazard in Fowles's oeuvre appears to pertain to chance as the fundamental unknown and primordial chaotic potential, associated with creativity, and embroiled with a quality of risk. In the 'Foreword' to the revised version of *The Magus* (1977), Fowles alludes to the significant influence of Mallarmé on the representation of the creative impulse he experienced on the island of Spetses.[16] Fowles describes the island as being like 'an eternally blank page waiting for a note or a word […] The *genius loci* was very similar indeed to that of Mallarmé's finest poems of the unseen flight, of words defeated by the inexpressible'.[17] Indeed, the otherwise inexpressible chaos of hasard in 'Un coup de dés' is delineated in the Master's experience at the mercy of the stormy sea of chaos. The creative impulse, and a desire to find meaning within the potentiality of the chaotic void, leads the Master to surrender himself to the creative force of chance. Represented by the die that 'is shaken and mixes / in the fist that would grasp it', the power of chance is enacted when the Master elects to 'play / like a gray-haired maniac / the game'.[18] As Meillassoux states, the Master's inspiration derives from the surrendering of the self to the ludic endeavour, and the act reveals 'his sacrificial devotion to the hazardous nothing from which fiction is fabricated'.[19] Such a surrendering of the self to chance and chaotic potential is formulated as the ultimate creative impulse, and reflected in *The Magus* in the protagonist's crisis of artistic inspiration. Indeed, Nicholas Urfe is depicted as suffering an existential crisis and a moment of reckoning relating to the protagonist's artistic voice: 'the truth rushed down on me like a burying avalanche. I was not a poet'.[20] In this pivotal scene, the suicidal drive of the protagonist is configured as a performative gesture – a blind shot to the sky – that nonetheless represents the casting away of the inauthentic former self: 'It was a Mercutio death I was looking for, not a real one. A death to be remembered, not the true death of a suicide'.[21] This gesture leads to the discovery of a part of the island that is perceived – akin to the Master's chaotic sea – for its primordial 'potential as a clean canvas, a

[15] John Fowles, *The Aristos*, p. 17.
[16] After reading French at Oxford, and following a year teaching at the University of Poitiers, John Fowles became an English teacher at the Anargyrios and Korgialenios School of Spetses, an island school in Greece. It was this formative experience that informed *The Magus*.
[17] John Fowles, 'Foreword' to *The Magus,* p. 8.
[18] Stéphane Mallarmé, *A Roll of the Dice Will Never Abolish Chance*, trans. by Robert Bononno and Jeff Clark (Seattle and New York: Wave Books, 2015), p. 9.
[19] Quintin Meillassoux, *The Number and the Siren*, p. 126.
[20] John Fowles, *The Magus,* p. 58.
[21] Ibid*,* p. 62.

site for myths'.[22] The new terrain is thus characterized by the surrendering of the self to hazard and the existential freedom that is uncovered in the potentiality of the chaotic void.

The concept of hazard is first introduced in *The Magus* by the authorial character of Maurice Conchis, who suggests that there is a 'point of fulcrum' in one's life that emerges by hazard, and that: 'Only the few recognize this moment. And act on it […] 'The elect. The chosen by hazard''.[23] Within the Greek philosophical tradition that the novel is situated, the notion of the elect few corresponds to the aristoi (ἄριστοι translated from Greek as "the best"). In *The Aristos*, Fowles explains how his philosophical understanding of the aristoi derives from the fragments of Heraclitus, who 'saw mankind divided into a moral and intellectual elite (the *aristoi*, the good ones, not – this is a later sense – the ones of noble birth) and an unthinking, conforming mass – *hoi polloi*, the many'.[24] The aristoi can be aligned with the personal transcendence of the Master figured in Mallarmé's 'Un coup de dés'. Indeed Fowles's philosophical position is tethered to the pursuit of the idea of the enlightened artist – reflected in the figure of the Master – as aligned to the aristoi's pursuit 'to accept one's limited freedom, to accept one's isolation, to accept this responsibility, to learn one's particular powers, and then to humanize the whole'.[25] Thus, *The Magus* is essentially concerned with the Heraclitean proto-existential pursuit for personal freedom as a process, transcending the impositions of structures of absolute knowledge toward personal truth in accommodation of the flux of experience. Indeed, for Fowles, 'the dividing line between the Few and the Many must run through each individual, not between individuals'.[26] Such a line between the elect few, 'chosen by hazard', is thus a matter of personal transcendence.

Revealingly, Conchis articulates his own pivotal moment of transcendence – experienced at the mercy of hazard – as arising during the First World War, following a particularly traumatic incident in which 'In ten minutes I saw the whole summary of a butcher's shop of war'.[27] His reaction to this point of fulcrum – deemed his moment of becoming an aristoi – was a fundamental recognition of the sanctity of life. Despite suggesting that such horror typically inspires vengeance in the soldier, Conchis relates having 'had exactly the contrary feeling. I had a mad lust not to be killed'.[28] Subsequently, Conchis proposes that a ludic surrendering of the self to hazard might better satisfy humanity's apparent fundamental urge for war. Indeed, in his utopian vision of a 'perfect republic', war would be replaced by the throw of dice at the age of twenty-one: 'They would go to hospital where they would throw a dice. One of the six numbers would mean death […] no mess, no bestial cruelty. No destruction

[22] John Fowles, *The Magus*, p. 63.
[23] Ibid, p. 109.
[24] John Fowles, *The Aristos,* p. 9.
[25] Ibid, p. 214.
[26] Ibid, p. 9.
[27] John Fowles, *The Magus*, p. 124.
[28] Ibid, p. 124.

of innocent onlookers. Just one clinical throw of the dice'.[29] Conchis thus entices Nicholas to play the same game of hazard, wherein the throw of the die should determine whether he lives or dies. In this pivotal scene the characters reveal a metafictional stratification of author and aleator within the complex framework of a meta-theatre (later revealed as a 'godgame') devised by Maurice Conchis, who appears as an elect "magus" of the aristoi. Akin to Mallarmé's Master, Nicholas surrenders himself to the potential hazardous nothing of the chaotic void, a possibility contained within the ludic risks of a throw of dice. Yet when the fateful number six is rolled, determining that he should take a 'suicide pill', Nicholas refuses to accept death and instead watches as Conchis swallows the poison in his stead. Seemingly, the first lesson in the godgame is designed to alter Nicholas to the fundamental value that he places on his own life. Conchis, however, subsequently 'put the dice in the shaker, and threw it. It was a six. Then again. And again it was a six'.[30] It thus becomes apparent that the first round of the godgame is designed to reveal that the structural order and logic systems within which we place our faith are not necessarily reliable spaces of absolute knowledge or causal determinism.

Concordantly, Fowles employs the metafictional creator figure of Conchis to lead a foray into a new world of dismantled absolutism in which the reader gleans, through Nicholas, that the 'basic principle of life is hazard. Maurice tells me that is no longer even a matter of debate. If one goes deep enough in atomic physics one ends with a situation of pure chance'.[31] The concept of hazard thus emerges, initially, as synonymous with a fundamental indeterminism in the fabric of the quantum universe, and yet its significance broadens throughout *The Magus* to envelop matters of personal freedom. I contend that one might best unravel the complex significance of hazard in the novel in relation to the philosophical position of Heraclitus that appears to frame the text. From the particular vantage of twentieth century paradigm shifts, and the burgeoning emergence of chaos theory, Karl Popper reasserts the "discoveries" of Heraclitus as significant for having 'visualized the world not as an edifice, but rather as one colossal process; not as the sum-total of *things*, but rather as the totality of all events, or changes, or *facts.* "Everything is in flux and nothing is at rest", is the motto of his philosophy'.[32] The notion of hazard might be perceived as denoting, for Fowles, a dynamic complexity in the individual appreciation of the contradictory synthesis between chance and order in the world at large, and of this dynamic relating to a Heraclitean flux. Hazard relates to the repositioning of personal freedom within the collective consciousness of a world in a constant state of ontological becoming. Indeed, in an aphorism of *The Aristos,* Fowles proclaims: 'I comprehend that being is understanding that I must exist in hazard but that whole

[29] John Fowles, *The Magus*, p. 124.
[30] Ibid, p. 126.
[31] Ibid, pp. 627-8.
[32] Karl Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 12.

is not in hazard. Seeing and knowing this is being conscious; accepting it is being human'.[33] This encapsulates the philosophy of hazard that permeates *The Magus,* which appears essentially concerned with the simultaneous process of coming to terms with chaos and uncertainty in combination with arriving at an existential affirmation of meaning and personal freedom. Such complex conceptual limits are delineated in the flux of the 'Godgame', animated by the aleator figure of Nicholas.

In the aforementioned instance of the godgame, the manipulative strategies of Conchis are readily apparent to Nicholas. Yet, in *The Aristos*, Fowles pronounces that the essential element of a godgame is to 'Put dice on the table and leave the room; but make it seem possible to the players that you were never in the room'.[34] Indeed, the subsequent 'trials' of the godgame offer more complex dynamics of power, control and agency. The lesson of each of those appear to be related to an intricately designed and instructive journey through the complex conceptual terrain of free will and personal freedom. Curiously, the exaggerated offering of an authorial figure within the text – characterized by the trickery of their art, in their position as a "magus" – is evidently a metafictional means for Fowles to problematize and destabilize the absolutism of grand narratives represented by the god-like imposition of the authorial creator. Indeed Fowles states in the 'Foreword' to *The Magus* that his intention was for 'Conchis to exhibit a series of masks representing human notions of God, from the supernatural to the jargon-ridden scientific; that is, a series of human illusions about something that does not exist in fact, absolute knowledge and absolute power'.[35] Furthermore, one might suggest that Nicholas – as a figure of the aleator within the narrative – performs a similar metafictional function for the reader's journey in the instructive endeavour. Indeed, Nicholas frequently recognizes the illusion of agency in the dynamic of the godgame, remarking that 'I was too intelligent not to be already grasping the rules of the game we played'.[36] Yet, he nonetheless finds himself falling prey to the labyrinthine masquerade: 'I still fell for it, as one falls for the oldest literary devices in the right hands'.[37] The figure of Nicholas thus foregrounds the inherent desire for the reader to suspend disbelief in fiction – to seek the comfort of orderly narrative – and yet afford a dynamic of apparent aleatory agency in traversing the meta-theatre that has been devised. As such, if the self-reflexivity of metafiction serves to expose the hierarchical structures of meaning in conventional fiction's masquerade as reality, the aleator figure enables the reader's perception of the Magus to assume the quality of 'a sort of psychiatric novelist sans novel, creating with people, not words'.[38] Considered within the broader conceptual nexus of chance and order, this scenario foregrounds the semblance of

[33] John Fowles, *The Aristos*, p. 28.
[34] Ibid, p. 19.
[35] John Fowles, 'Foreword' to *The Magus,* p. 10.
[36] John Fowles, *The Magus*, p. 139.
[37] Ibid, p. 139.
[38] Ibid, p. 242.

agency and freewill to establish stability and meaning within the flux of the universe, and yet the fundamental absence of fixity and absolutism.

Further evidence for the conceptual personifications contained by the characters of Nicholas Urfe and the beguiling figure of the authorial Maurice Conchis can be found in the Cartesian dualism between mind and matter made manifest in their relationship. Indeed the surname of each character are suggestive of an ontological dualism, between earth (Urfe) and the conscious (Conchis), particularly foregrounded in the curious insistence that the latter 'pronounced the *ch* hard'.[39] In the context of a crisis in paradigms of certainty and determinism, Karl Popper proposed that the mind-body dichotomy should be reconsidered as a 'body-mind interaction' that suggests a tripartite compromise, in concordance with his articulation of the three worlds theory. Examining the problems of freedom, creativity and rationality within the context of fundamental indeterminism, Popper conceptualized that World 1 was the world of the physical; World 2 was constituted by mental processes; and the third was delineated by human knowledge. Returning to the original distinction made between *tyche* (denoting personal encounters with chance), and the *automaton* of chance in the world, one might suggest a similar interaction. Indeed, Popper suggests that World 2 and World 1 interact, so that when one 'reads a book or listens to a lecture, brain events occur that *act* upon the World 2 of the reader's or listener's thoughts; and conversely, when a mathematician follows a proof, his World 2 *acts* upon his brain and thus upon World 1'.[40] Given that the demise of classical mechanics has rendered a consideration of World 1 as, in part, defined by indeterminacy, Popper further queries whether this state is responsive to the causal influence of human thought and creation. He thus declares:

> Indeterminism is not enough: to understand human freedom we need more; we need the openness of World 1 towards World 2, and of World 2 towards World 3, and the autonomous and intrinsic openness of World 3, the world of the products of the human mind and, especially, of human knowledge.[41]

Arguably, in his search for artistic agency, Nicholas Urfe enacts an essential encounter with the problem of causal determinism and the existential interaction between the immaterial and the material. Transcending this problem is arguably the prize of the godgame that Urfe and Conchis engage in, of becoming an enlightened member of the aristoi. Indeed, while the basic principle of the new paradigm may now be 'hazard', the godgame serves to interact and impart meaning on the world of chance and to preserve a semblance of its essential interaction. The

[39] John Fowles, *The Magus*, p. 72.
[40] Karp Popper, 'Notes of a realist on the mind-body problem' in *All Life is Problem Solving,* trans. by Patrick Camiller (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 23-35, p. 29.
[41] Karl Popper, *The Open Universe*, p.130.

metafictional godgame foregrounds the indeterminate process of meaning-production in a complex system that organises itself into patterns temporarily.

The various tribulations and conceptual navigations that Nicholas undertakes, in the midst of the machinations of Conchis's godgame, foreground the role that narrative plays in our "reading" of knowledge structures and a broader conceptual understanding of the world. The construct of the godgame serves to alert Nicholas to his power to forge meaning from within the chaos. This is delineated in *The Aristos*, in which Fowles states that the elect individual 'knows that the Many are like an audience under the spell of a conjuror, seemingly unable to do anything but serve as material for the conjuror's tricks; and he knows that the true destiny of man is to be a magician himself'.[42] Evidently, Nicholas's path toward becoming an aristoi represents the imagined reader's journey toward an active and interrogative reading of the world as an open text. Indeed Peter Stoicheff suggests that metafictional texts more widely introduce the reader 'to the possibilities of self-generative readings that are latent in any text; in fact it produces a multiply-interpretive and highly self-conscious reader'.[43] In *The Magus*, Nicholas journeys towards such self-consciousness, led by the complex system of the godgame, and is encouraged to arrive, reflexively, as a member of the elect aristoi. Along the way, Nicholas is offered the potential to engage with chance and exert freewill, to have the freedom to act upon the world around him and to create meaning from the chaos. He thus enters into the seemingly contradictory pursuit of freedom despite knowingly performing the role that Conchis has created.

The Magus arguably presents, as its central tenet, the synthesis between two modes of thought around chance and freedom. The first, 'the better you understand freedom, the less you possess it',[44] reflects the entrapment of grand narratives and monolithic structures of significance. Instead, *The Magus* suggests that true freedom of the self can only be achieved when one has thrown off the limitations of conceptual fixity and absolutism, and acknowledged the impermanence and provisionality of the world. This further relates to paradox in which any act of determination on the unfixity of the world serves as a measurement within its own framework. As Conchis states, 'Verification is the only scientific criterion of reality. That does not mean that there may not be realities that are unverifiable'.[45] Furthermore, this facet of chance and freedom within the novel corresponds to an awareness of how the creation of meaning can be considered akin to provisional possibility: 'all these things *could* fall into place, they *could* become a source of construction rather than a source of chaos'.[46] The breakdown of causal determinism and the fundamental notion of chance as the unknowable second facet

[42] John Fowles, *The Aristos*, p. 213.
[43] Peter Stoicheff, 'The Chaos of Metafiction' in *Chaos and Order: Complex Dynamics in Literature and Science,* ed. by N. Katherine Hayles (Chicago and London: The University of Chigaco Press, 1991), pp. 85-99, p. 93.
[44] John Fowles, *The Magus*, p. 518.
[45] Ibid, p. 235.
[46] Ibid, p. 164.

of the philosophy is that 'There is no plan. All is hazard. And the only thing that will preserve us is ourselves'.[47] Left in isolation, however, this philosophical position assumes an entropic quality that veers towards chaos and a meaningless void of existence. The interrelationship between chance and freedom in *The Magus* is tethered to a second philosophical position that contains such hazard within finite bounds, contained by a desire for narrative explanations (however provisional) and an essential moral principle.

Given the tumultuous tensions of mounting chaos a natural urge toward order and power emerge. A fundamental need to control the uncontrollable stems from a desire, perhaps, to elude the singularity and unanchored qualities of the individual in a life suffused with contingency. A burgeoning awareness of a hazard-driven world involves a simultaneously complex awakening to a plethora of structural dynamics and narrative systems that construct meaning and are reflected in the ordering principles of social consciousness. Revealingly, for example, Conchis acknowledges that such ordering principles are fundamental to structures of human goodness and essential morality:

> One of the great fallacies of our time is that the Nazis rose to power because they imposed order on chaos. Precisely the opposite is true – they were successful because they imposed chaos on order. They tore up the commandments, they denied the super-ego.[48]

Evidently, any arrival at personal freedom within the dismantling of dogmatic grand narratives must remain within the limits of regulatory value-systems that are tethered to a social consciousness. In amplifying readerly engagement, configuring the performativity of chance and freewill within clearly defined parameters, Fowles is actualizing the Heraclitean philosophy presented in *The Aristos*, in which: 'The good human, and so the good universal upbringing gives freedom to develop, or hazard, within fixed bounds'.[49] Correspondingly, in creating the godgame, Conchis affords Nicholas a safe structural containment for the exploration of relative freedom. Subsequently, Nicholas recognises that his perception of freedom has shifted from 'the freedom to satisfy personal desire, private ambition' to a Heraclitan freedom characterized by a journey in, and of, flux. Indeed, Nicholas identifies that the games have imparted a perception of 'freedom that must be responsible for its actions; something much older than existentialist freedom, I suspected – a moral imperative, an almost Christian concept, certainly not a political or democratic one'.[50] Indeed the freedom delineated in the text is specifically aligned with *eleutheria,* denoting the individual's desire to act according to free will contained within limits of morality. In Heraclitean terms such morality is characterized by a journey towards wisdom, transcending the ignorance of the many, to a state of *becoming* and flux.

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[47] John Fowles, *The Magus*, p. 129.
[48] Ibid, p. 428.
[49] John Fowles, *The Aristos*, p. 19.
[50] John Fowles, *The Magus*, p. 440

Ultimately, when Conchis appears to abandon the instructive game, Nicholas faces the final trial in his journey of becoming an aristoi. Returning to London, Nicholas encounters the name for the meta-theatre he has played: ‘‘The godgame is over’ […] ‘Because there is no God and it is not a game’’.[51] Shattering any comfort found in the illusion, Nicholas must reconcile with the absence of a discernible governing force to his ludic self-exploration. Instead, he must arrive at a *personal* freedom that relates to an existential authenticity of the self. Indeed, throughout the novel, Nicholas acts with a proclivity towards performance, which he identifies as ‘always I had acted as if a third person was watching and listening and giving me marks for good or bad behaviour – a god like a novelist, to whom I turned, like a character with the power to please’.[52] Correspondingly, the final chapter summons a further breakdown in the authorial illusion, with a shift from the narrative voice of Nicholas to a writerly voice that appears to proclaim John Fowles’s own intentions for the project: ‘The smallest hope, a bare continuing to exist, is enough for the anti-hero’s future; leave him […] But the maze has no centre. An ending is no more than a point in sequence, a snip of the cutting shears’.[53] This announcement signals the oncoming frustration at a lack of closure to the novel, a situation in which the reader is informed that there will be ‘ten more days. But what happened in the following years shall be silence; another mystery’.[54] The effect of this authorial intrusion is to generate a further metafictional frame, offering a potential reading of *The Magus* as an extended godgame with John Fowles as the supreme aristoi, magus or conjuror. Just as Nicholas has been manipulated by Conchis toward a devised awakening, the reader of *The Magus* is invited to reconcile with having been manipulated by a conjuror.

From this new vantage, Nicholas’s meeting with Alison – which ends the novel – has its ‘final truth’ destabilized. Nicholas perceives himself to have arrived at a moment of full comprehension: ‘The final truth came to me, as we stood there […] There were no watching eyes. The windows were as blank as they looked. The theatre was empty’.[55] With no one watching, he commits a violent act against Alison: ‘My arm flicked out and slapped her left cheek’.[56] The outburst is both a desperate act of testing the limits – seeking to draw a response from the game’s creators – and of a violent reaction to the supposed absence of an audience and the meaninglessness of the chaotic void. The gesture thus signals Nicholas’s perceived end of the game: ‘it was logical, the perfect climax to the godgame. They had absconded, we were alone’.[57] Ultimately, however, Nicholas has failed in arriving at the final truth of eleutheria as characterized by flux, and personal freedom limited by a profound moral imperative and

[51] John Fowles, *The Magus*, p. 625.
[52] Ibid, p. 539.
[53] Ibid, p. 645.
[54] Ibid, p. 645.
[55] Ibid, p. 654.
[56] Ibid, p. 654.
[57] Ibid, p. 655.

social consciousness. This is revealed in the doubt that plagues Nicholas, who questions: 'after so much, how could I be perfectly sure? How could they be so cold, so inhuman – so incurious? To load the dice and yet leave the game?'.[58] Reminiscent of the aforementioned dice in the empty room, this scenario alerts the reader to how the godgame is very much still in a process of becoming. Indeed, the novel's ending is left in flux and with Nicholas's role as an aleator seemingly defunct, the provisionality of the loaded dice rests in the hand of the reader to animate: 'She is silent, she will never speak never forgive, never reach a hand, never leave this frozen present tense. All waits, suspended'.[59] Just as with the meta-theatre devised by Conchis, the metafictional procedure of Fowles's text has encouraged the reader to surrender themselves to the chaotic flux of experience, contained within the instructive bounds of the novel as a godgame. The novel leaves a profound uncertainty in its wake that invites the reader to animate a Heraclitean *eleutheria*, of a journey towards becoming characterized by hazard within bounds.

Iris Murdoch: A Fairly Muddled Materialism

Unlike the formal interventions, structural instabilities, and syntactical disruptions that have been discussed throughout this thesis, the above analysis of *The Magus* reveals how more conventional novels approach the delineation of a complex conceptual terrain relating to an emergent paradigm of chaos. Robert L. Nadeau asserts, for example, that Fowles delineates the 'threatening ideas' of modern physics while containing their 'thematic expression within the framework of a narrative that would seem easy and familiar to any avid reader of late Victorian novels'.[60] Arguably, however, the aforementioned metafictional procedures afford the author the framework with which to encase the complexity of such concepts of proto-existentialist flux and the synthesis between chance and order within comprehensible (and more 'popular') conventions. To further unpack this dynamic interplay, this chapter proceeds to analyse the literary treatment of complex philosophical concepts relating to chance and personal freedom in the work of Iris Murdoch. Indeed, where John Fowles appears to contain a broad network of chance-related concerns within the term 'hazard', Murdoch arguably attempts the same within her notion of 'muddle'. Furthermore, like Fowles, Murdoch constructs symbolic characters whose interaction demarcate the varying complex dynamics operating across conceptual positions.

[58] John Fowles, *The Magus*, p. 655.
[59] Ibid, p. 656.
[60] Robert L. Nadeau, 'Fowles and Physics: A Study of *The Magus* A Revised Version', p. 266.

Iris Murdoch's oeuvre offers a particularly fertile terrain from which to explore the intersection between changing perceptions of chance in the philosophical milieu and their impact on everyday attitudes. Her philosophical training at Newnham College, Cambridge, in 1947-8 and subsequent teaching position at St Anne's College, Oxford situate Murdoch at the nexus of the British philosophical milieu.[61] Remarking on her experience in the academic field, Michael Levenson states that Murdoch 'found that something had crystallized in philosophy in the middle of the twentieth century, especially in Britain. A range of doctrines, attitudes, tones, and moods had converged'.[62] The monolithic character of the philosophical environment in Britain appeared in stark contrast to the dynamic confluence of continental philosophies, particularly its existential turn and the associated literary treatment. This gave rise to Murdoch's view that 'For both the collective and the individual salvation of the human race, art is doubtless more important than philosophy, and literature most important of all'.[63] Indeed, having already published the first monograph on Jean-Paul Sartre in English, *Sartre: Romantic Rationalist* (1953), her first novel, *Under the Net* (1954), reveals her desire to transverse the British tradition and embrace the influence of continental philosophy in a form she deemed more impactful. A similar dynamic between Murdoch's philosophical and literary endeavours is revealed in the relationship between her work of philosophy, *The Sovereignty of Good,* and her thirteenth novel, *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*, both published in 1970. Akin to the interaction between Fowles's novel and philosophical work, the relationship between the two texts reveal a post-existentialist position that foregrounds the significance of shifting perspectives of chance and their impact on moral philosophy.

It is worth noting that Murdoch's inclusion is key to the critical context of this thesis, given that Julia Jordan's *Chance and the Modern British Novel* also culminates in a study of Murdoch, whom Jordan deems as 'perhaps the post-war novelist who thought the most deeply about contingency and its implications for the novel form'.[64] A comparative analysis might well offer further elucidation of the aleatory and its various functions in the novel, within broader critical notions of chance. Indeed, Jordan suggests that the pivotal term *muddle* – which like Fowles's *hazard* contains a conceptual positioning on chance – should be considered in relation to moral *goodness*, in that 'mess is almost without exception good. Muddle and an ability to bear it, as her characters often illustrate, define a person: resistance to muddle […] is continuously shown to be destructive'.[65] However, I contend that Murdoch's novelistic

[61] Born in Dublin, but raised in London, Murdoch initially identified as Irish. Yet, her biographer, Peter J. Conradi, describes Murdoch as later identifying as Anglo-Irish, following the death of her father in 1958. As such, this thesis does not separate her from the exploration of the British Aleatory, as it has done with such Irish figures as Samuel Beckett and Flann O'Brien.
[62] Michael Levenson, 'Iris Murdoch: The Philosophic Fifties and *The Bell', Modern Fiction Studies*; 47:3 (2001), pp. 558-579, p. 559.
[63] Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 76.
[64] Julia Jordan, *Chance and the Modern British Novel*, p. 115.
[65] Ibid, p. 115.

treatment of muddle, as relating to the essential flux of contemporary experience, differs in effect to its delineation in her philosophical work. That her fictional world problematizes (whether consciously or not) a state of intellectual and moral passivity in the face of contingency, despite the dynamic complexities and contradictions that an encounter with chance encompasses. Indeed, I suggest that Jordan's reading of the notion of muddle – as entrenched within its conceptual explication – becomes problematically embroiled with what Karl Popper describes as 'Our attempt to describe the world in terms of unique theories [which] may be an attempt to rationalize the unique, the irrational, in terms of our self-made universal laws'.[66] Instead, when animated aleatorically by the reader (or as encouraged by the proxy of an *aleator*) the novelistic world of Murdoch's philosophy reflects a situation of muddle that is characterized by its capricious instability and potential for active meaning generation. Contained within narrative limits, muddle responds to the ordering principles and creative impulse of readerly animation, replete with Machiavellian curiosity that may disrupt goodness.

The Sovereignty of Good contains previously published essays that, as Maria Antonaccio summarizes, suggest that 'consciousness exists within a morally structured world keyed to the agent's vision and not merely the value-creating will'.[67] Indeed Murdoch's moral ontology proposes that the notion of goodness structures our experience, articulating an image of perfection that we strive towards. Such an understanding of moral goodness is inevitably indefinable, yet experienced and formulated in the locus of value in our interrelationships and encounters with others. Therefore, for Murdoch, 'the central concept of morality is the individual as thought of as knowable by love'.[68] What follows, then, is a reading of *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* specifically trained on the relationship between Murdoch's moral philosophy and the "individuals" depicted within its literary counterpart. This approach is particularly potent given that *The Sovereignty of Good* proposes that "good" art is 'the most educative of all human activities and a place in which the nature of morality can be seen'.[69] Within this context, Jordan identifies Murdoch's central tenet as: 'Goodness for the novelist, then, is essentially the same as goodness in life – the realization that other people's centres of consciousness are as legitimate as one's own'.[70] Instead, I contend that the novel appears as a particularly self-aware problematization of the novelist's own philosophical text, unravelling the naivety of its moral 'goodness' as tethered to the agent's visions, when set against the chaotic insurgences of the world at large.

A Fairly Honourable Defeat depicts a group of middle-class Londoners thrown into disarray by the arrival of the interloper, Julius King, charting how he variously impacts on their

[66] Karl Popper, *The Open Universe*, p. 46.
[67] Maria Antonaccio, *Picturing the Human: The Moral Thought of Iris Murdoch* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 98.
[68] Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, p. 30.
[69] Ibid, pp. 83-6.
[70] Julia Jordan, *Chance and the Modern British Novel*, p. 129.

apparent stability. Julius, for example, wagers that he can disrupt the relationship between Axel and Simon. Not satisfied with this meddling, he proceeds to coerce Tallis's wife (Morgan) and her brother-in-law (Rupert) into a romantic affair. Julius describes his success to have been made possible by their 'sentimental pussyfooting around [which] would produce such a web of emotional confusion that they would no longer be in a position to verify anything'.[71] From the outset, it seems, Julius's machinations are deemed a success by way of the naivety and muddle of this group's agonized concern for goodness. The moral rupture between action and theory, made manifest in the infidelity, is exaggerated by Rupert's hypocrisy, given that he is in the final stages of writing a book on moral philosophy – describing himself as a 'Sunday-metaphysician'[72] – while also engaged as a civil servant in Whitehall. The character's intellectual pursuit mirrors Murdoch's own philosophical projects. Yet, his work is the subject of scepticism from the group; with Axel mockingly stating that 'I expect to be told how to live, my dear fellow. I shall take it as my guide to good behaviour and follow it slavishly'.[73] In a seemingly self-reflexive critique, Murdoch illustrates that Rupert's hypocrisy and his vulnerability to the Machiavellian machinations of Julius are fundamentally related to the didactic nature of his moral philosophy. Its theoretical construct leaves it impervious to the dynamic interactions of community and the possibility of the requirement to adapt. Correspondingly, Hilda proclaims to her husband that 'You're such a wise person, Rupert. You have so much instinctive wisdom and goodness of heart. It sometimes worries me that you're putting it all in a book'.[74] His artefact of moral philosophy – and indeed, the philosophical position itself – is seemingly a cause of concern, given the absolute nature of its contents. Furthermore, it might be deemed as an endeavour undertaken at the expense of the goodness of personal relationships with others, appearing instead as an abstract exercise removed from the world. Indeed, in one of many foreshadowing moments laced throughout the novel, Hilda reveals that she 'keeps worrying in case it gets burnt or lost or something, Eight years' work. All those precious pages of tiny writing and no carbon copy'.[75] The fear is ultimately realized at the novel's climax, in which we learn that Peter has destroyed his father's manuscript in a fit of rage concerning the supposed affair. The impotence of the moral philosophy is thus performed in its absence of communication, unread and unconcerned with the possibility of dynamic interaction.

Julius's plot to inspire Rupert's affair with Morgan similarly reveals the significance of communication and interactivity, its success relying on their blinkered positions. This quality in Rupert's moral philosophy is reflected in Morgan's view of love, which Tallis describes as

[71] Iris Murdoch, *A Fairly Honourable Defeat,* p. 406.
[72] Ibid, p. 27.
[73] Ibid, p. 46.
[74] Ibid, p. 27.
[75] Ibid, p. 27.

'hopelessly theory-ridden […] "You're chasing empty abstractions. What *happens* will be quite different"'.[76] Julius therefore preys on their stubborn fixity, employing the Shakespearean device of fabricated letters to deceive each party (and prompt infatuation). The success of this manipulation rests on the simple lack of questioning or communication between the parties. As such, the novel's catastrophic end is the result of abstract theory rather than dynamic practice. Their philosophies appear to be, in practice, monolithic positions that blinker them to the dynamic complexity of experiencing reality in its complexity and disorder. Contrastingly, Julius is revealed as 'someone who might do anything because he was bored',[77] a character who appears to act in a retrograde fashion oblivious to any moral code or philosophical position and is therefore dynamically responsive to each situation. Julius is depicted as not simply an immoral character, but as an unpredictable figure exercising risk and hazard in his Machiavellian schemes. This character trait is furthered in the significance of his having been a biochemist, which he describes as dicing with risk, meddling with natural order:

> These little games will end civilization and probably end human life on this paltry planet in the not too distant future […] of course these accidents are always hushed up. One day some really sensational virus, the absolute pet of some biochemical hack like myself, will get out and all human life will cease. [78]

Deeming himself an 'artist', there is a discernible correlation to be drawn between the malevolent biochemist and an authorial proclivity for the creation of worlds. Indeed, D.J. Gordon suggests the novel correspondingly exhibits a 'complicity between its villain and its author'.[79] In response, however, Jordan argues that the author's position is consistent with the philosophy conveyed in *The Sovereignty of Good*; asserting that Murdoch's position should be aligned with the saint-like figure of Tallis, who lives in a state of 'muddle' and passivity.

Murdoch's philosophical position, reflected in *The Sovereignty of Good*, is perhaps best encapsulated by the declaration of how 'the only genuine way to be good is to be good "for nothing" in the midst of a scene where every "natural" thing, including one's own mind is subject to chance, that is, to necessity'. However, Jordan suggests that Tallis reflects Murdoch's philosophy of goodness as relating to 'passivity and equanimity in the face of the true, chaotic nature of things'[80] and of his state of muddle being 'indicative of an exemplary state of being'.[81] Indeed, Jordan's interpretation suggests that Murdoch characterizes muddle itself with a hopeful quality. This reading draws on Tallis appearing in opposition to Rupert's singular academic project, as a monolithic theory that appears utterly entrenched in its own disciplinary

[76] Iris Murdoch, *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*, pp. 213-4.
[77] Ibid, p. 13.
[78] Ibid, p. 219.
[79] David J. Gordon, *Iris Murdoch's Fables of Unselfing* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1995), p. 431.
[80] Julia Jordan, *Chance and the Modern British Novel*, p. 126.
[81] Ibid, p. 124.

matrix. In sharp juxtaposition, Tallis is a failed author and academic whose 'activities are all so wet and dilettante and disconnected. All that bitty adult education and dribs and drabs of social work and nothing ever achieved or finished'.[82] Tallis is thus characterized by his passivity within the general muddle, a seemingly disparate pursuit of study in a state of flux, compared to the concentrated and singular efforts of Rupert.

Tallis is unperturbed by muddle, demonstrating an equanimity in the face of chaos. Crucially, though, he is not always entirely passive. His occasional interventions in the novel offer potential for moral redemption or the prevention of calamity, though ultimately frustrated by contingent circumstance. For example, his suggestion to phone Hilda and expose the truth is a decisive intervention determining that 'They must all be told. At once'.[83] Revealingly, Tallis's response is deemed to have possessed the potential to save the life of Rupert, but ultimately thwarted by the unfortunate malfunction of Hilda's telephone. This denial of his potential to enact chance is especially curious give that Murdoch proclaims, in 'The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited', the importance of allowing the consciousnesses of fictional characters to freely manifest themselves. Indeed, Murdoch suggests that a 'novel must be a house fit for free characters to live in'.[84] Arguably, the denial of Tallis's potential to freely enact change is as a result of the principal characters of *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* appearing as two dimensional manifestations of positions that accord with a particular worldview, unfurnished with deep consciousness. Furthermore, many of the events in the novel are foreshadowed and the overall trajectory is predictable, despite its superficial depiction of a chaotic reality. The majority of the novel's characters are abstractions that suggest the mess of the situation and the unpredictability of the events, despite the predictable reality of the novel's design and the behaviour of its characters. The passivity of the characters and the novel's predictable arrangement provides the foundation for the more complex character of Julius to conduct his manipulative games. Indeed, this Machiavellian figure states that he was only successful because the other characters 'behaved predictably to an extent which is quite staggering. Indeed, if any of them had been less predictable the whole enterprise would have collapsed at an early stage. They really are puppets, *puppets*'.[85] While Murdoch's philosophical view presented in *The Sovereignty of Good* might suggest an alignment with Tallis, I contend that Murdoch's literary enterprise is animated by the machinations of Julius and his problematization of the novel's steadfast arrangement.

Despite the novel's familiar appearance and conventional form, it's clear that Murdoch shared an experimental attitude to the novel, akin to those already discussed in this thesis.

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[82] Iris Murdoch, *A Fairly Honourable Defeat,* p. 22.
[83] Ibid, p. 409.
[84] Iris Murdoch, 'The Sublime and the Beautiful Revisited' in *Existentialists and Mystics: Writings on Philosophy and Literature*, ed. by Peter Conradi (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 286.
[85] Iris Murdoch, *A Fairly Honourable Defeat,* pp. 407-8.

Curiously, Murdoch remarked that the 'literary writer deliberately leaves a space for his reader to play in. The philosopher must not leave any space'.[86] I contend that *A Fairly Honourable Defeat* affords such space most prominently to the machinations of Julius, who appears as the animator of the novelistic universe. Configured as an aleator playing with the scenario proffered by the author (with prescribed bounds), Julius creates in effect a "muddle" that is nonetheless fixed within a conventional narrative form. Indeed, the space for the reader is contained within aleatorical limits cleaved by Julius as a construct, whose experience revealingly frames the text. For example, the novel begins with Julius's arrival in London and ends in Paris where 'the sun was warm on his back. Life was good'.[87] Within the confines of this narrative framework, the character performs the role of animating the reader's collusion in disrupting the predictable stasis of the environment. The reader is thus invited toward an aleatory appreciation of the muddle by way of Julius's machinations as an exercise of personal freedom at the expense of the stultifying characters and their seemingly predetermined interactions. The symbolic construct of the aleator foregrounds the representation of writing as an uncertain endeavour – drawing upon the fallibility of fixed narratives that might be construed as a crisis in ontological security – to instead offer a complexity that is entirely provisional. Julius thus appears as a dynamic potential for a radical transformation of the muddle into meaning, enabled by his Machiavellian knowledge of how 'Human beings are roughly constructed entities full of indeterminacies and vaguenesses and empty spaces […] Their little sadisms and their little masochisms are surface phenomena'.[88] I contend that this dynamic influence suggests a possible synthesis in the midst of the apparent disjuncture between an emergent paradigm of the chaotic muddle of experience and the resolute fixity of scientific and theoretical positions within such dynamic complexity and flux. Further, this very *conjuncture* might be unpacked by way of Louis Althusser's multifarious articulation of aleatory materialism in analysis of Niccolò Machiavelli's treatment of chance engagements in *The Prince* (1532).

In Louis Althusser's philosophy of – what he termed – the 'materialism of the encounter', a stark disruption from his previous philosophical ideas led to the formulation of an aleatory materialism. As Banu Bargu identifies, Althusser explicated 'a materialism that is nonteleological and not trapped within a logic of necessity, a materialism that takes chance seriously, and that maintains as its ambition the radical transformation of society'.[89] The later texts of Althusser's philosophical oeuvre – those posthumously published in 2006, that focus on Machiavelli and aleatory materialism – arguably offer a precursory window on to a speculative and dialectical 'new materialism' that has already been discussed in this thesis.

[86] Iris Murdoch, 'Literature and Philosophy: A Conversation with Bryan Magee' in *Existentialists and Mystics: Writings on Philosophy and Literature*, ed. by Peter Conradi, p. 5.
[87] Iris Murdoch, *A Fairly Honourable Defeat,* p. 447.
[88] Ibid*,* p. 233.
[89] Banu Bargu, 'In the Theater of Politics: Althusser's Aleatory Materialism and Aesthetics', *Diacritics*, 40:3 (2012), pp. 86-111, p. 87.

Pronouncing the significance of chance events in combination, aleatory materialism emphasizes epistemological diversity in arguing that historical conjunctures are subject to radical change and dynamic complexity. While Althusser argues that the world-as-it-exists is an "accomplished fact" that may appear to contain order, logic, and reason, it was nonetheless formed through chance encounters that would present themselves differently if replayed. As Nick Hardy summarizes:

> Althusser highlights that knowledge is created from *within* the boundaries of the established world and is *not* gained from any external, enduring source. Therefore, what may appear to be enduring structures and 'truths' are just that, *appearances*. Knowledge is always linked to the chance encounters that structure the present external world.[90]

Althusser argues that there are four stages to the process of aleatory structures, beginning with an Epicurean 'fall' and momentary flux, proceeding to 'the encounter' that corresponds with the aforementioned clinamen swerve. However, Althusser further suggests that encounters between elements can create stability in that they can 'take hold' [*prise*] towards enduring structures or 'crystallized' conjunctures, but that these appearances of stability and order appear as 'hooks' that becomes 'entangled' with other elements that derive from aleatory procedures, and subsequently bond to constitute: 'assignable, distinct, localisable beings endowed with such-and-such a property (depending on the time and place); in short there emerges in them a structure of Being'.[91] Aleatory materialism thus understands the world to exist as a radically immanent structure without any telos or order, and should be perceived as like 'catching a moving train'.[92] Indeed, as causality is always part of a wider conjunctural setting that destabilizes any notion of pure cause and effect – and instead suggests that any conjuncture contains multiple overdeterminations – any inquiry into the structure or state of the world can only produce knowledge within limitations, that remain impermanent.

Althusser identifies in Machiavelli's Prince an attempt to 'conceive the conditions and kinds of political action in its pure form, that is to say at the conceptual level. What struck me again was the radical manner in which he took into account the aleatory nature of every conjuncture.'[93] Correspondingly, I suggest that Julius's schemes derive from a cognizance of the aleatory nature of experience as provisional, one that the reader confronts through their embroilment in his machinations over the characters and their apparently fixed conceptual

[90] Nick Hardy 'Theory From the Conjuncture: Althusser's Aleatory Materialism and Machiavelli's dispositif', *Décalages,* 1:3 (2014), pp. 1-36, pp. 5-6.
[91] Louis Althusser, 'The Underground Current of the Materialism of the Encounter' in *Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings, 1978-1987*, ed. by François Matheron and Oliver Corpet, trans. by G.M. Goshgarian (New York: Verso, 2006), pp.163-207, p. 192.
[92] Ibid, p. 189.
[93] Louis Althusser, *The Future Lasts a Long Time and The Facts*, trans. by Richard Veasey (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993), p. 220.

positioning. In Julius's will to forge patterns within the muddle, as a creative impulse without any apparent utilitarian telos, he animates an aleatory encounter. As Althusser states:

> every encounter is aleatory, not only in its origins (nothing ever guarantees an encounter), but also in its effects. In other words, every encounter might not have taken place, although it did take place; but its possible nonexistence sheds light on the meaning of its aleatory being.[94]

Significantly, aleatory materialism thus perceives the world-as-it-is (the automaton), as necessitating consideration separate to personal and discursive understanding (tyche), while simultaneously arguing everything must have come into Being through an aleatory encounter. Julius is the personification of such a conjunctural encounter. He is an exemplar of an active engagement with the flux of the world, and of forging a potential for meaning and personal significance (however temporarily). As a manipulator of both its contingency and determinism, contained within limits of the possible but operating without a teleological drive, the aleator creates meaning from a world of chaos.

Perhaps the most potent articulation of the relationship between the passivity of Tallis and the Machiavellian machinations of Julius in the novel is the scene following Rupert's accidental death, in which Julius is cleaning the mess of Tallis's kitchen. The muddle of Tallis is physically represented in his kitchen, and the passivity of goodness configured in the literal lack of action that has caused the mess:

> The familiar group of empty beer bottles growing cobwebs. About twenty more unwashed milk bottles yellow with varying quantities of sour milk […] The window, which gave onto a brick wall, was spotty with grime, admitting light but concealing the weather and the time of day. The sink was piled with leaning towers of dirty dishes/. The draining board was littered with empty tins and open pots of jam full of dead or dying wasps. A bin, crammed to overflowing, stood open to reveal a rotting coagulated mass of organic material covered with flies.[95]

The scenario is a domestic configuration of entropy and disorder. In cleaning the mess, Julius performs his 'passion for cleanliness and order',[96] and amplifies his oppositional relationship to Tallis and his passivity. Correspondingly, Julius wills Tallis to pursue an ordering principle that might forge some meaning from the chaos: 'try to get yourself a decent job. As things are, what does your life amount to? I suppose it's always like that, but it does pain me, After all, I am an artist. This is just a mess'.[97] Although Tallis exhibits the potential to disrupt the tragedy of the novel, his lack of action repeatedly precludes any meaningful order.

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[94] Louis Althusser, 'The Underground Current of the Materialism of the Encounter', p. 193.
[95] Iris Murdoch, *A Fairly Honourable Defeat,* p. 68.
[96] Ibid*,* p. 426.
[97] Ibid, p. 431.

The representation of moral goodness in Murdoch's novel doesn't necessarily negate the theoretical position delineated in *The Sovereignty of Good.* However, the aleatory encounter of Julius problematizes the passivity of the construct as outside of everyday experience. Given the inherent contingency, and socially responsive nature, of Murdoch's conceptual positioning of morality, its containment within a fixed and didactic form is deemed problematic. Indeed the crisis of ontological insecurity, and the scientific and philosophical insurgences that dismantled structures of 'knowledge', have resulted in a provisionality that might be deemed a "muddle". Mikko Lahtinen's analysis of Althusser's aleatory materialism questions: 'is the aleatory a consequence of the fact that not a single cognisant subject can propose such an all-encompassing theory […] of knowledge concerning the case and its progress?'.[98] Where Jordan's analysis suggests that 'Murdoch's understanding of contingency does not rest on the idea that reality is provisional; but rather that it is essentially dependent',[99] I suggest an aleatory dynamic that celebrates provisionality and ludic vacillations between opposing poles of chance and order, and between knowledge and uncertainty, creating spaces of potential in their midst. So rather than surrendering the self to permanent disorder, or of being characterized by flux, I contend that Iris Murdoch's notion of *muddle* is pregnant with a potential for flux which might at least provisionally lead to meaning, as an aleatory encounter.

[98] Mikko Lahtinen, *Politics and Philosophy: Niccolò Machiavelli and Louis Althusser's Aleatory Materialism*, trans. by Gareth Griffiths and Kristina Kőlhi (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009), p. 144
[99] Julia Jordan, *Chance and the Modern British Novel*, p. 140.

Conclusion

The aleatory has been examined mutably and multifariously, with this thesis entertaining the incongruities that reveal its essence as an instability that agitates against absolute definitions. Drawing upon the statement that 'A process is said to be aleatoric (from Lat. *Alea* = dice) if its course is determined in general but depends on chance in detail',[1] this thesis is the first full length study to counter the maelstrom of paradoxical meaning that the synonymous use of indeterminacy and aleatory engenders in discussions of literary engagements with chance. Numerous critics have employed both terms interchangeably, housed within the vagaries of chance. While this thesis does not question the validity of arguments by such critics who enmesh these terms – as they do so while offering a window onto a subject that has otherwise been ignored – it has instead shown the possible distinction between the act of composing with chance operations and the offering of a composition that seeks to enable the performance of chance engagements. Christian Bök's analysis of 'Aleatory Writing: Notes Toward a Poetics of Chance' conceives that 'When we throw the dice, we throw down a gauntlet in the face of chance, doing so in order to defy the transcendence of any random series, thereby forcing chance itself to choose sides, either pro or con, with respect to our fortune'.[2] This summons a contradictory and performative enactment of chance and a desire for negentropic articulations of chaos that characterize the aleatory act, as discussed throughout this thesis. Tussling with the increasing fragmentation and disorder of the world in combination with our need for order and meaning, chance is openly explored in the detail of more comprehensive and 'logical' boundaries. Yet, Bök identifies 'the *"poesie decoupe"* of Tristan Tzara and the *"170adaver exquis"* of Andre Breton, the "mesostics" of John Cage and the "asymmetries" of Jackson Mac Low, the "cut-up novels" of William Burroughs and the "sadhu muffins" of Steve McCaffery'[3] as exemplars of such throws of the dice. This thesis, however, has shown that an aleatory quality to art is located in the space of contradiction between composition and performance – as best exemplified by Pierre Boulez's conceptualization of the aleatory – beyond the chance operations of indeterminacy in those such as Tristan Tzara, John Cage, William S. Burroughs, Andre Breton, and Jackson Mac Low.

This thesis has performed a kaleidoscopic survey of the aleatory – as a heightened articulation of chance engagements offered to the reader within logical boundaries, for the purpose of comprehension – engaging with aleatory procedures across mutable lines. It offers

[1] Werner Meyer-Eppler, 'Statistic and Psychologic Problems of Sound', p. 55.
[2] Christian Bök, 'Aleatory Writing: Notes Toward a Poetics of Chance', *Public*, 33, pp.24-33, p. 27.
[3] Ibid, p. 26

an examination of the breadth of the aleatory novel, unravelling various mechanics of writing – form and structure, style and genre, language and voice – and their expressions of chance. In this fashion, this thesis has sought to concurrently entwine such structural, stylistic and technical elements with thematic, political and social responses to the shifting perceptions of chance in everyday life between 1959 and 1979. Concentrating on the particularly experimental form of the British aleatory novel has furthered a discussion regarding the literary output of a period characterized by the need to reengage with a drive for literary innovation and to usurp the primacy of the nineteenth century realist novel. Indeed, drawing inspiration from continental experiments and seeking to pick up the baton of those such as James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, British literary novelists between 1959 and 1979 were seemingly galvanized by a desire to engage with the novel form as a socially responsive and simultaneously experimental project that reflected a burgeoning paradigmatic crisis relating to chance and the emergence of chaos. The British aleatory appears fundamentally to operate within a site of contradiction, vacillating between the seemingly oppositional poles of innovation and the popular, manifesting as a desire for readerly collusion and a fundamentally collective undertaking of experiment. The aleatory novel is thus concerned with encountering a non-excluded third transversing such binary spaces, as an animation of the aleatory nature of quotidian experience.

Collaborative projects appear to characterize the British aleatory novel, as signified in attempts to write an open text for the reader to animate on each encounter, distinguishable from the indeterminate tactic of chance based compositional practice. Throughout the novels discussed in this thesis there lies a discernible pursuit of heightened communicative and empathetic performance. The class consciousness and structural innovations of Rayner Heppenstall and B.S. Johnson, for example, invite the reader to actively collude in explications of grief and the collaborative exorcising of trauma. The unbound form of *The Unfortunates* is an amplification of the reader's sense of agency and place, disrupting the traditional power dynamic between author and reader. To a similar end, John Fowles, Doris Lessing, Iris Murdoch, and Wilson Harris utilize metafictional tactics to reconfigure the author within the text and disrupt such a structure of power. While B.S. Johnson's project suggests the possibility of affording the reader an influence on the active process of determining the plot of the novel, all the aleatory novelists discussed in this thesis demonstrate a cognizance of the limitations of such a gesture. Recognizing that the reader is unable to alter the course of events, the aleatory novel celebrates the renewed awareness in the structural and ordering logic that has created narrative. Doing so with a wink, enabled by humour and empathetic utterances, the novels investigated in this thesis erect a straw man to dismantle. Just as Wilson Harris configures the character of a scarecrow for the reader to dismantle, John Fowles constructs the characters of the Magus; Brigid Brophy presents the interlocuter; Doris Lessing offers metanovels and

authorial characters that showcase the fallibility and fragmentation of authorial voices; Eva Figes merges characters within the same authorial determinations; Iris Murdoch configures an interloping Machiavellian influence; and Brigid Brophy articulates the imposition of narrative styles on the variable character of Pat. Such structural configurations of agency and power are delivered with a ludic quality that affords the ultimate impotence of readerly control over the general outcome to be felt as collective experience rather than individual denial. Instead, the reader becomes increasingly cognizant of their influence on the detail of such an aleator encounter.

The ludic language of the novels explored turn toward aleatoricism in the reader's engagement with mutable meaning, and a shattering of normative and monolithic ideologies. The resistance to an eidetic nucleus affords a nexus for chance and its multifarious vagaries to assume significance. Most evidently, Brigid Brophy's *In Transit* unsettles the accepted norms toward an unravelling of gender identity; thereby performing an aleatoricism of meaning. Furthermore, the novels explored in this thesis disrupt and explode normativity and play with the fragments that remain, toward a rejuvenated articulation of identity. Johnson and Heppenstall destabilize class stratifications and respond to the shattering of identity as a result of personal trauma. Within their class consciousness is a potent solipsism, seemingly in contradiction, and yet a collaborative recognition of the limitations of the structure and of the habitus. The resulting fragmentation and simultaneity is repurposed and configured toward an aleatoricist language in which clauses stack up and the mounting weight of meaning signifies the pluralities of identity. Similarly, Harris and Fowles play with allusions and the mythic heritage of language and narrative as directly concomitant with structures of power and of trauma. Furthering such agitation against hegemonic forces, Quin, Lessing, Figes and Brophy proffer strategies of multivocality and the plurality of subjectivity. Unpacking the ambiguity formulated by layers of oppression and fragmentation is arrived at through humorous badinage, offering a means of protest from within the totalizing outer narrativizations. Such demarcations of play emerge in Brophy, Fowles, Murdoch, and Quin in the game-like scenarios that are depicted, furthered by the Machiavellian emergence of characters who manipulate the rules and inscribe meaning. These manifestations of play and games are representations of contestation, and are personified by the aleator in *The Magus* and *A Fairly Honourable Defeat*. Within each network the reader becomes and active participant, knowingly colluding in the strategies that perform the project. Variously, these undertakings problematize totalizing ideologies and the oppositionality of binary logic while simultaneously projecting their own myth-making enterprise of a structure that accommodates chance.

This thesis has conveyed a sense of the burgeoning network of paradigm shifts across scientific, philosophical, and cultural thought experienced in the period between 1959 and 1979. Such positions were furthered by the perception of Britain's position on the 'world-stage'

as increasingly unsteady. The shift toward decolonization and the rebranding of Empire under the banner of the Commonwealth signifies the nascent perception of multiplicity contrary to previously imperial notions of homogenous Britishness. The dismantled absolutism of nationhood and imagined communities, more generally, is met in the aleatory novel with a celebration of complexity and multiplicity that seeks to further vocalize marginalized voices. Such a position is one characterized by contradiction in the conventional novel, with its dependence on causality and narrative logic. The aleatory, as discussed in this thesis, thereby offers a tactic for both exploding the form of the conventional novel and inculcating complexity while operating as a dynamic and complex instability, an artefact of flux that insists on being responsive to chance engagements and the reader's interactions. A readerly temptation to entwine loose strands toward a universal fabric – in combination with an authorial intent to communicate a comprehensible logic – is enabled by way of a tapestry that seeks a confluence of possibilities in constant flux; reconfiguring the animation within aleatory boundaries. The novels discussed throughout this thesis display an agitation against organizing principles, as seen in the problematization of ideologies in Lessing's *The Golden Notebook;* the responses to patriarchal language and performances of gendered views in the novels of Brophy and Figes; the problematic search for the 'truth' in Johnson's oeuvre; the articulation of paradigm shifts across philosophy and science in Fowles and Murdoch; and the open reconfiguration of fragmentary and traumatic experience in Heppenstall, Quin, Lessing and Harris. Such antagonisms depict an aleatory drive for choice and freedom, maintained within the communicative logic of limitations and outer logic. Indeed, as Pierre Boulez identified, creating such an open structure is characterized by 'a permutation with limits that are strictly defined by the restriction of the powers imposed upon it by its self-determination – such a possibility is a completely justified, logical evolution since the same organizational principle rules both morphology and rhetoric'.[4] The aleatory thus recognizes the need for a flexible organizing structure to contain the problematization of oppressive organizing principles, seeking to facilitate potential for chance to perform the detail within the spaces left between the constituent parts.

The aleatory novel acknowledges that any provisional chance engagement is always enacted and administered deterministically, but that internally it can yield a responsive representation of the influence of chance on experience and amplify the perception of ambiguity and contradiction in their intersubjective complexities. Indeed, that the chance is performed in the "detail". In such a way, the aleatory can appear on the surface as a gimmick – rendered inconsequential in any rigorous reading of its singular logic – a style that either dismantles compositional intent, or gestures toward chance without actually making true

[4] Pierre Boulez, 'Alea', p. 52.

chance manifest. Pierre Boulez responded to such a concern in ‘Alea’, which again rested his formulation of the aleatory on an articulation of Stéphane Mallarmé:

> As for those who might be worried by this dynamite introduced into the heart of the work, by this chance that resists "composition" – and who would point out to us that human poetics and extra-human chance are inalienable, irreconcilable enemies incapable of providing any positive result by being amalgamated – we will quote for their benefit this paragraph from *Igitur*:
>
> > In short, in an act involving chance, it is always chance that accomplishes its own Idea by asserting or denying itself. Negation and affirmation come to nought in the face of its existence. It contains the Absurd – implies it, but in a latent state, and prevents it from existing: and this makes it possible for the Infinite to be.
>
> Perhaps it is reckless – and insolent – to embark upon this voyage, shrouded in uncertainty, but isn't it the only way to try *to fix the Infinite?*[5]

The aleatory is the simultaneous encounter of contradictions, entertaining a complex transversality between such positions as both a compromise and a stance in its own right. This thesis has sought to illuminate a manner of reading that transgresses limits and singular perceptions or universal thinking; to accommodate chance and to celebrate unknowability as a negentropic space from which meaning arises. Yet, equally, it has served to explicate that the aleatory *is* indeed a gimmick. Its tactic is to raise attention to chance, allowing the vagaries and mutability of the sum of its transgressive parts to come to the fore, agitating against monolithic structures and totalizing logics. What the gimmick conveys, however, is a rejuvenated concern for unknowability as a knowledge in of itself. The aleatory is thus both a gimmick and a means of reading the world of chance, made possible by its inherent contradiction and the reader’s collusion in such a paradoxical pursuit. To facilitate an analysis of such a confluence of positions, new materialism, speculative materialism, and aleatory materialism – and the nexus of thought afforded by those such as Michel Serres, Karen Barad, Rosi Braidotti, Louis Althusser, and Quentin Meillassoux – have been proffered, transversing lines of the thesis’ approach. The aim has been to situate the aleatory within a burgeoning understanding of the relationship between chance and order, that is itself perpetually in flux. So that rather than pure randomness or incomprehensible chance, what is conveyed is the network and interaction between two seemingly opposing states within structuring structures of popular understanding in perpetual motion.

The introduction to this thesis offered a summary of the evolution of chance and its variable receptions in contemporary thought. The intention was to illustrate how popular understanding of randomness; chaos; possibility; fortune; probability; coincidence; accident;

[5] Pierre Boulez, ‘Alea’, p. 53.

and the labyrinthine network of chance in general is a lens toward comprehending our experience. In the 1950s, for example, chance assumed a quality of fear in response to the horrors of war and the simmering anxiety regarding the Cold War. Arguably, this thesis has shown that the aleatory novel between 1959 and 1979 instead demonstrates a burgeoning cultural acceptance of chaos as characterizing a paradigm of chance in crisis, associated with a fundamental ontological insecurity. However, it's possible to perceive of the literary articulations of chance that followed 1979 as an implicit response to the rise of individualism championed by Margaret Thatcher. Indeed, the privatization of public services and assets, alongside such policies as the selling of council homes and the deregulation of the financial sector, inscribed the period with a renewed hopelessness. As Emily Horton, Philip Tew, and Leigh Wilson describe in the 'Critical Introduction' to *The 1980s: A Decade of Contemporary British Fiction* (2014):

> Thatcher's ideological monetarist solutions to supposedly fundamental problems divided the nation, impoverished huge swathes of working-class people, created an economic recession, led to inner-city riots in 1981 and decimated Britain's industry and massively increased unemployment. [6]

Furthering such a seemingly hopeless situation, the ideology of the era appears characterized by individualism, the demise of doubt, and the resurrection of monolithic absolutism. Revealingly, Thatcher's proclamation upon entering Downing Street was 'Where there is discord, may we bring harmony. Where there is error, may we bring truth. Where there is doubt, may we bring faith'.[7] Moreover, the period after 1979 marks the arrival of a new paradigm in understanding chance, signalling the acceptance of deterministic systems that can appear random and the complex dynamical systems that are associated with chaos theory. It further corresponds to the arrival of the personal computer,[8] and the seismic impact this had on everyday life and indeed on literature.

Espen J. Aarseth's *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature* offers parallels with the theory of the aleatory but essentially responds to the burgeoning field of digital literature. For Aarseth, the 'cybertext focuses on the mechanical organization of the text, […] it also centers attention on the consumer, or user, of the text, as a more integrated figure than even reader-response theorists would claim'.[9] As with the aleatory, Aarseth's 'Cybertext is a *perspective* on all forms of textuality'[10] that suggests that many of the texts discussed in this thesis correspond to his theorization of ergodic, a term 'derived from the Greek words *ergon*

[6] Emily Horton, Philip Tew and Leigh Wilson, *The 1980s: A Decade of Contemporary British Fiction* ed. by Emily Horton, Philip Tew, Leigh Wilson (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), p. 3.
[7] Margaret Thatcher, cited in *The 1980s: A Decade of Contemporary British Fiction,* p. 1.
[8] For example, the Apple I in 1977, the WordStar word processing software of 1978 and the prevalance of the Commodore in home computing in 1980 with the VIC-20, and perhaps most significantly, the IBM PC of 1981.
[9] Espen J. Aarseth, *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), p. 1.
[10] Ibid, p. 18.

and hodos, meaning “work” and “path”’.[11] The principal difference between the aleatory and the ergodic cybertext is that the latter places the reader at risk, subject to the material machine of the text. Indeed, for Aarseth, ‘The cybertext *is* a player, a gambler; the cybertext *is* a game-world or world-game’.[12] Instead, the aleatory novel enables hope in its collaborative venture, offering a dynamic means to accommodate the contradictions that seem to mount in the maelstrom of modernity, and a problematization of fundamental concerns within a comprehensible and communicative project. Variously, the novels discussed in this thesis encourage an animation of individual freedom as a social, political or philosophical relationship requiring collaboration. Hope is perceivable in the aleatory novel’s foregrounding of the need to liberate the novel from oppressive structures of imposed meaning, and to encourage a provisional enactment of chance in the hands of the reader. Hope thus lies in the collaborative role of the imagined reader, offered the sensibility of a gimmick to perform while denied absolute fixity. To this end, the writer reaffirms a position of authority and compositional control over the seemingly infinite transformations that can arise in the practice of reading the text, but relies on the reader’s capacity to animate this profound intention. In the aleatory novel, the reader thereby encounters the dynamic complexity of chance as a mediated necessity – a fundamental unknowability – contained within comprehensible limits.

[11] Espen J. Aarseth, *Cybertext* , p. 1.
[12] Ibid, p. 4.

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