Creative Writing and Ethics in Contemporary Canadian Novels:

How Should an Author Be?

by

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Abstract

"How Should an Author Be?" is a study of creative writers as characters in contemporary

Canadian novels. The theoretical framework, developed from both the Anglo-American and the

European approaches to ethical criticism, highlights the complexity of discourses on authors, and

it works in three stages. In the first stage, consideration is given to how a text and a hypothetical

reader might interact. Aesthetic strategies that foster open-mindedness are then highlighted and

discussed. In the final stage of this process, the first two stages are re-evaluated and critiqued in

order to consider alternative points of view.

The first chapter considers four contemporary Canadian authors who wrestle with the

motif of the artist as hero. David Adams Richards' *Hope in the Desperate Hour*, Lynn Coady's

Mean Boy, Steven Heighton's *The Shadow Boxer,* and Sheila Heti's *How Should a Person Be?* all

represent or critique this motif in some way. I read this powerful and intoxicating

characterization of writer-characters as a distraction preventing readers from fully engaging with

these texts. I propose an alternative way that authors "should be": not as heroes but as restless

questioners. The phrase "restless questioner" is from Wayne C. Booth's discussion of "restless

questioning" in *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* (478). These individuals are rarely

certain of their role or their function in society, and they do not need to be. Their goal is to write

as well as possible without ignoring the profound importance of the Other. For restless

questioners, writing well tends to mean developing complicated fictional worlds that challenge

simplistic forms of thought.

The second chapter explores the various ways that one author can create a sense of openness. In this thesis, openness is discussed mainly in relation to the indeterminacy of the present, and it derives from Mikhail Bakhtin's description of the novel as "zone of crude contact" (26). A sense of openness encourages resistance to dogmatism, and it invites complex interpretations of meaning. Michael Winter's first four novels, *This All Happened, The Big Why, The Architects Are Here,* and *The Death of Donna Whalen,* represent the writer-character as capable of challenging certitude and conviction through the complexity of their aesthetic visions. Authors are not cultural heroes, but they can demonstrate how certain forms of observing and describing are preferable to others. A sense of openness, for example, invites one to consider the complexities of other people's lives.

In chapter three, Edward Riche's *Easy to Like,* Russell Smith's *Muriella Pent,* Lawrence Hill's *Any Known Blood,* and Lynn Coady's *The Antagonist* are discussed as parodic narratives. Here, "parody" is informed by Linda Hutcheon's development of the term "as repetition with critical distance that allows ironic signaling of difference at the very heart of similarity" (185). These novels add new layers to the argument that is developed in the first two chapters by exploring the world of authors and writing from critical perspectives that challenge my arguments from the first two chapters. Ideally, this study invites readers to develop their own idiosyncratic responses to the titular question, "How should an author be?"

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Table of Contents

Introduction: Writer-Characters in Novels

Ethos, Openness, and Parody

The central argument of this dissertation is that authors are adept at creating selves and moments of openness. By "creating selves," I am referring to the development of characters and narrators who might help readers contemplate their lives and the lives of others. I write at a time when unsettling impositions on Canadian citizens appear to be commonplace: contemporary surveillance narrows the spectrum of potential human experiences, and it inhibits people from creating selves. My study does not situate authors and literary critics as a source of resistance to surveillance; it does, however, place them in what Linda Hutcheon would describe as a position of parody, which means that they encourage both "change and cultural continuity" (186). Surveillance strategies simplify and streamline perceptions of how a society functions. In "The Rock Observed: Art and Surveillance in Michael Winter's *This All Happened*," Chris Armstrong points out that by compiling vast amounts of data, states and corporations can sort individuals into types (38). In this way, individuals' life experiences can be reduced to the clichés of their social status and their income (Armstrong 38). To parody surveillance, I posit the critical strategy of *literary sousveillance*, which is designed to complicate simplistic representations of human beings and communities. This study discusses authors, writer-characters, and creative writing in

a way that challenges these types of simplification and highlights the power of literature as a path to encountering various complex selves and others.[1]

Some contemporary Canadian novels and works of ethical criticism suggest a self that authors should aspire to be: the "restless questioner." My contribution to this discourse is developed from Wayne C. Booth's *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction,* where he writes about "restless questioning" (478), and I merge it with the concept of openness. In my study, openness functions as a superordinate for the outgrowth of various terms in ethical criticism to describe a sense of unknowingness: indeterminacy, uncertainty, ambiguity, alterity, messiness, fancy, and hesitation. By accepting unknowingness as a part of life, by thinking with an open mind, and by creating complex literary worlds, restless questioners seek out new selves for authors to inhabit or to encounter. The categories used in this study are not meant to be comprehensive or restrictive. Instead, the multiplicity of options works to complicate the potential ways that, to use the phrase from my title, an author should be. My study considers authors and writer-characters, but it also necessarily contemplates the position of readers who encounter these writerly selves. A variety of choices and desires might converge in one novel, depending on who reads it and on how he or she wants to be in relation to that book. Ideally, this study does not provide a singular answer to the question, "How should an author be?" Instead, it

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[1] When I use "authors," I am mainly referring to the authors of the novels I am discussing. I also use the term "literary artist" to identify authors who aspire to create literature as opposed to other types of writing, such as newspaper editorials. I use "writer-character" to refer specifically to characters in novels. When I am discussing "writer-characters," I sometimes need to refer to them as "literary artists" when I am not discussing them as characters. For example, Gabriel English is a writer-character created by Michael Winter, but in the world of *This All Happened* and *The Architects Are Here,* Gabriel English's friends do not think of him as a character in a novel; he is a literary artist.

frames conversations about authors in such a way that individual answers will be explicitly temporary; a revised definition is expected once one's contingencies have altered.

The phrasing of my titular question may sound familiar. Reworked from Sheila Heti's *How Should a Person Be?,* the title of this dissertation establishes a discussion of authors and writer-characters that desires to be expansive and inclusive. The original, overarching question for this thesis was "What is the role of the Canadian author?" I have replaced "the author" with "an author" to highlight individuality as opposed to group personality. To say "what" a group "is" requires sorting people into categories and constructing a static definition of their characters. In contrast, to say "how" a person should "be" means developing a dynamic definition; to "be" is an indeterminate yet finite experience. Furthermore, "should" emphasizes the utopian nature of the question. The answers offered by this thesis are not meant to be prescriptive or totalitarian, and they are not meant as burdens to be imposed on authors. "Should" and "must" have different implications. "Should" is a possible, desirable destination. "Must" is the place where one has to go; there is no choice. My answers are hopeful ideas that could be guiding principles for those who are curious about authors and literature. To be fair, by framing this study with its current titular question, I am treading extremely close to the imposition of a limited set of roles upon authors. And yet, the idea of the restless questioner resists confinement in the creation of literary fiction.

Genre is of secondary concern to the titular question: "How should an author be?" Even though the most obvious and direct representation of authors can be found in *Künstlerroman*, discussions of creative writing appear in a variety of forms. Fictional autobiographies, such as Michael Winter's *The Big Why,* also feature writer-characters. Furthermore, Winter frames *The*

Death of Donna Whalen in a foreword and an afterword; although short, both sections offer dense rationales for his position as an author in Canadian society.[2] Gordon Rankin Jr. in Lynn Coady's *The Antagonist*, is a unique example of a narrator who describes himself as a non-writer. As his confessional progresses, however, he begins to think of himself as a literary artist. Authors always reveal something of their ethos, whether they mean to or not, simply by the construction of their texts and by the desires they attempt to create in their readers. If I were to focus only on the *Künstlerroman*, then I would fail to account for the various forms of fiction that authors use to discuss their craft and their lives.

In the following introductory section, I will explain my choice of novels, and I will define key terms for this study. These terms include: literary artist, contemporary, Canadian, ethics, ethos, openness, parody, author, reader, and sousveillance. As I provide these definitions, I will also explain their connections to the novels I have chosen and to the world of authors. After the key terms have been defined, I will provide an overview of ethical criticism, and I will explain how I make use of this theory. The section that follows the overview develops a theoretical framework through an ethics of literary sousveillance. Essentially, the process of literary sousveillance is an intense engagement with a text, the seeking for moments of openness, and then the parodying of one's own observations. Restless questioners are social beings, and they desire certain receptions of their critical and literary work. Thus, before I conclude the introduction with chapter summaries, I also argue for the ethos that restless questioners should aspire to embody through their work.

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[2] Michael Winter's first four novels are the focus of Chapter Two.

Choice of Texts

The novels in this study have been selected based on their date of publication, their

subject matter, and their regional setting in Canada. These novels feature representations of

writer-characters or a forward and afterword by the author; they have all been published between

1996 and 2011, and the authors are mainly from or working in the eastern half of the country.

These texts present a host of options for how one might define the term "literary artist." For

example, David Adams Richards's *Hope in the Desperate Hour* develops a dichotomy between

two writer-characters: a true literary artist who feels profound compassion for others and a false

literary artist who uses his craft to manipulate people. Sheila Heti's *How Should a Person Be?*

synthesizes this dichotomy into one character; her experimental novel is narrated by a writer-

character who realizes that she has unintentionally been using her abilities to hurt people. Lynn

Coady's *Mean Boy* and Steven Heighton's *The Shadow Boxer* tend to represent writing as the

recording of profound realizations, whereas Coady's *The Antagonist* and Michael Winter's *This

All Happened* show writer-characters as creators of new experiences. In some of these novels,

writer-characters are younger people trying to understand their craft, but Lawrence Hill's *Any

Known Blood,* Michael Winter's *The Architects Are Here*, Edward Riche's *Easy to Like,* and

Russell Smith's *Muriella Pent* all narrate what it means to be a literary artist as one gets older. In

The Big Why, narrator Rockwell Kent is not solely a writer-character; he is also a famous painter.

Finally, in *The Death of Donna Whalen,* Winter shows how an author (himself) can actively

critique the criminal justice system in Canada. These various representations imply a host of

meanings for the term "literary artist," but a concrete definition should further clarify why some texts were chosen and others were excluded.[3]

Key Terms

The best way to describe how the term "literary artist" operates in this study is by focusing on the noun form of "literary": literature. Literature can be defined as a superordinate for various forms of writing, or as a cultural assignation of quality and of thoughtfulness to specific texts. In "Genres of Discourse and the Definition of Literature," Gerard Steen writes that "literature may be argued to be the superordinate of genres such as the novel, the poem, and the play, each of which displays a number of familiar subgenres, such as the western, the detective, and so on, for the novel" (114). In contrast, George Elliot Clarke argues in "Literature" that "the only legitimate definition of literature now is, anything a thoughtful community deems worth reading, extensively and intensively" (43). He does not limit literature to the novel, but for the purposes of this study, I discuss only novels. Clarke's definition is helpful for pointing out that literature is distinguished by its relationship to a specific type of community, a thoughtful one. He implies that non-literary texts are not capable of creating the same level of discussion; the thoughtful community is able to understand and interpret non-literary texts without much trouble. In this study, literary artists will be defined as people who aspire to create literature in Clarke's cultural sense of the word. This distinction between literary artists and other authors is

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[3] Much could be said of the influence of race and gender on authors. Although I return to these topics at various points in this dissertation, they are not my focus. In depth discussion on race and gender are beyond the scope of this thesis.

important to this thesis because I am focussing on texts that possess a greater potential to inspire the extensive and intense interpretation that Clarke discusses.

"Contemporary" indicates a close proximity between the writing of this dissertation, which has taken place between 2009 and 2016, and the publication dates of these novels. The oldest texts are Richards's *Hope in the Desperate Hour* (1996) and Hill's *Any Known Blood* (1997). Richards's novel is included because of its development of an artist-as-hero motif in the subplot, and Hill's because of its complex representation of race, culture, and writing. At the other end of the spectrum, Heti's *How Should a Person Be?*, Winter's *The Death of Donna Whalen*, Riche's *Easy to Like,* and Coady's *The Antagonist* were published in 2010 and 2011. Little criticism has been published on these texts, so I am working mainly with my own readings of them. However, there are two scholarly articles about surveillance in *This All Happened,* and both *Easy to Like* and *Muriella Pent* narrate the effects of arts funding or a lack of funding on writer-characters, which helps this study to examine social and political forces currently affecting Canadian authors.

The contested, shifting nature of what it means to be Canadian has led some to question the validity of this word as a literary category (New 6). What it means to be Canadian varies from one region to the next, and even regional identities when closely scrutinized are fragmented and diverse (Wyile 8, Thompson 24). One of the authors in this study, Michael Winter, was born in England, and another, Russell Smith, was born in South Africa. Sheila Heti's parents are from Hungary, and Lawrence Hill's father is from the United States. Being a Canadian author is not solely defined by being born in Canada or by living one's entire life inside its borders. In this study, "Canadian" is mainly used to describe eastern Anglo-Canadian authors. Most of their

writer-characters have ties to Atlantic Canada, but they are a mobile group. Some leave the country, and a few move here from other countries. Lawrence Hill's writer-character, Langston Cane V, is descended from African-American slaves; he and his ancestors have periodically travelled back and forth between Canada and the United States. Michael Winter's Gabriel English, in *This All Happened* and *The Architects Are Here,* was born in England and grew up in Newfoundland, but he travels back and forth from Newfoundland to Toronto. Sheila Heti's writer-character in *How Should a Person Be?* is a Torontonian who visits Miami and New York. Steven Heighton's Sevigne Torrins moves from Sault Ste. Marie to Egypt to Toronto to a deserted island and then back to Toronto. Finally, Marcus Royston, the poet in Russell Smith's *Muriella Pent,* travels from the Caribbean to Canada on a cultural exchange. Some of these characters remain in Canada, but they move between provinces. Larry Campbell in Lynn Coady's *Mean Boy* was raised in PEI but he leaves for New Brunswick. In *The Antagonist,* Rank is a Cape Bretoner who lives in Ontario. In contrast, David Adams Richards' character Emile Dexter in *Hope in the Desperate Hour* does not leave New Brunswick; he is too closely tied to his community. All of the authors in this study, including Michael Winter and Russell Smith, I take to be Canadian; all of the writer-characters who are listed above, with the exception of Royston, I also understand as being Canadian. However, Royston's experience growing up in a British colonial setting bears similarities to the experiences of these Canadian authors. Readers can learn about Canada through such a character and his understanding of the country. This study's definition of "Canadian" accommodates the transience of this country's authors and their characters; they are all tied to the country, but they are also a mobile group.

The titular question of this thesis requires a close consideration of what ethics means for contemporary Canadian authors. How should an author be? To answer this question, a critic inevitably passes judgements on the world of authors and of writing. In James Feiser's definition of ethics for the "Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy," he writes "ethics (or moral philosophy) involves systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong behavior" (Feiser par. 1). From this starting point, ethics is divided into three categories: metaethics, normative ethics, and applied ethics. Metaethics is "the study of the origin and meaning of ethical concepts" (Feiser par. 3). I will take this approach when discussing the history of ethical criticism in literature studies later in this introduction. Normative ethics "involves arriving at moral standards that regulate right and wrong conduct [...] The key assumption in normative ethics is that there is only *one* ultimate criterion of moral conduct, whether it is a single rule or a set of principles" (Feiser par. 12-13). Rather than a set of principles or a single rule, this study develops the self of the restless questioner. For the most part, this self is designed to resist dogmatism and normative forces. However, the notion of the restless questioner inevitably implies moral standards about the craft of writing and how an author should be. Finally, applied ethics is "the analysis of specific, controversial moral issues such as abortion, animal rights, or euthanasia" (Feiser par. 28). The controversial issue in this study is surveillance. My analysis of this topic is focussed on how authors are affected and how they might respond. Although ethics is about passing judgement in some form or another, ethical criticism in literary studies tends to resist this impulse. Rather than making one more certain of right and wrong, ethical critics generally encourage a sense of uncertainty (Hale 190, Serpell 15). At this point,

however, I will postpone a complete discussion of ethical criticism until the next section of this introduction, and I will define five more key terms.

The ways in which these authors construct aesthetic worlds reveal information about their ethos. In "Aristotle on habit (εθō) and character (ηθō): Implications for the rhetoric," Arthur B. Miller explains that Aristotle makes a distinction between ethos, meaning habit, and eethos, meaning character (309). These two terms are intertwined; a person demonstrates character through voluntary actions (312) that reveal a consistent "pattern of moral virtue" (316). Thus, ethos and eethos are essentially conflated, and they presume some element of choice through repeated behaviour. In *Anatomy of Criticism,* Northrop Frye derives his definition of ethos from Aristotle, and he uses the term in relation to literature. He defines it as "The internal social context of a work of literature, comprising the characterization and setting of fictional literature and the relation of the author to his reader or audience in thematic literature" (361). Frye's definition emphasizes the importance of interpreting the ethos of *characters* in a text but also the actual ethos of a *text*. Finally, Marshall Gregory explains why ethos is important in relation to ethical criticism: "Inquiry into the influences that make us the kind of agents we become—the influences that shape our character, or ethos—is called 'ethical criticism,' which, clearly enough, derives from the word 'ethos' itself. Ethical criticism, then, examines the influences on us that shape our ethos" (xiv). In Gregory's formulation, literature is one of the influences that helps to shape a person's character. Thus, texts have an ethos and readers have an ethos. The two interact and both are changed in this process.

Ethos is an important term for this study because it is the inversion to the concept of an inherent personality. In contrast to ethos, the concept of group personality implies a set of

inherent traits found throughout a diverse collection of people. Analysis of group personality tends to result in descriptions that exclude people who do not fit. One of the strongest manifestations of this fallacy is the concept of the artistic temperament, which Raymond Williams in *Culture and Society: 1780-1950* explains has been used to typify artists as passionate, solitary rebels (37). One of the better examples of the problems created by such homogenizing descriptions of personality can be found in Maurice Beebe's *Ivory Towers and Sacred Founts: The Artist as Hero in Fiction from Goethe to Joyce*: "The person blessed (or cursed?) with 'artistic temperament' is always sensitive, usually introverted and self-centered, often passive, and sometimes [...] he appears absentminded" (Beebe 5). Obviously, however, people who do not fit this description also produce art; authors exhibit an array of different traits. A more recent example of such a totalizing account of creative people can be found in Richard Florida's *The Rise of the Creative Class,* which I will discuss briefly in chapter three. In *Literature and the Creative Economy,* Sarah Brouillette critiques how Florida's description attempts to characterize creative people as uniformly autonomous and hedonistic; such a characterization reduces artists to their ability to contribute directly to the economy (Brouillette 29). Although authors do not have a single personality or temperament, they do have certain commonalities. They enact their ethos in their response to the contingencies of their time and place. In this dissertation, "ethos" indicates the choices available to authors and the choices available in a text. I use Gregory's definition of this word; Frye's description and Aristotle's original usage are also pertinent.

One of the aesthetic choices that authors should make is to create texts that foster a sense of "openness." Although critics cannot determine how readers will experience texts, one

response that they can be paradoxically confident about is the power of fiction to create openness

in its various manifestations. Namwali Serpell makes this point in *7 Modes of Uncertainty* (15)

as does Dorothy Hale in "Aesthetics and the New Ethics: Theorizing the Novel in the Twenty-

First Century," when she discusses alterity, or otherness, as the troubling of certainty (901).

Booth posits the importance of a "restless questioning" that can be cultivated through books

(478), and Nussbaum uses the term "fancy" in part to express the importance of the novel's

ability to inspire the free play of the imagination (43). Similarly, Critchley writes that

"*deconstruction is a 'philosophy' of hesitation,* although it must be understood that such a

hesitation is not arbitrary, contingent, or indeterminate, but rather, a rigorous, strictly determinate

hesitation: the 'experience' of undecidability" (42, emphasis in original). Openness and

undecidability as described by Critchley are slightly different concepts. Although there is a

connection between the two, openness is a moment of radical unknowing, whereas

undecidability is the moment before two determinate choices. The thread tying them together is

the importance of hesitation before making a decision. Serpell chooses "uncertainty" over other

terms. She writes:

> I prefer the word uncertainty over its semantic siblings precisely because it captures the
>
> interactive, temporal, and experiential qualities of reading. While its kin terms
>
> (ambiguity, difficulty, indeterminacy) tend to get attributed solely to the literary object,
>
> uncertainty can refer to either the object or the cognitive state of the observer. It is the
>
> quality or "state of not being definitely known" or "the state or character of being
>
> uncertain in mind." Drifting between reader and text, uncertainty invokes both. (Serpell
>
> 9)

Both uncertainty and openness promote thought by challenging whatever certainties readers may have about a particular group, time, or place. However, openness has more positive connotations than uncertainty. I consider the virtue of openness to lie in its ability to get readers to pause and think about other people's lives. In contrast, an anxiety-laden interpretive process is suggested by "uncertainty."

Openness is central to this study because reading fiction should problematize quick judgements that inhibit dialogue. Recent psychological experiments conducted at the University of Toronto illustrate fiction's potential to make readers more open-minded. In "Opening the Closed Mind: The Effect of Exposure to Literature on the Need for Closure," Maja Djikic, Keith Oatley, and Mihnea C. Moldoveanu ask, "If having a closed mind can affect both rationality and creativity, the question becomes: Can anything be done to reduce the need for cognitive closure, and help open the closed mind?" (149). They hypothesize that, because of its distinct qualities, reading fiction makes people less judgmental: "This double release—of thinking through events without concern for urgency and permanence and thinking in ways that are different than one's own—may produce effects of opening the mind" (150). When people evaluate situations in their own lives, they tend to have trouble removing personal interests; however, readers of novels are both invested in the narrative and detached from characters' lives, and in this way, reading stories creates a sense of openness: "When compared to reading an essay, reading a literary short story led to a significant short-term decrease in participants' self-reported need for cognitive closure" (153). Djikic, Oatley, and Moldoveanu's study presumes that fiction has the same effect on closed-mindedness; they do not consider whether certain aesthetic choices are more likely than others to create uncertainty. However, theorists such as Serpell in *7 Modes of Uncertainty*,

Wolfgang Iser in "Indeterminacy and the Reader's Response," and Herb Wyile in "Making a

Mess of Things: Postcolonialism, Canadian Literature, and the Ethical Turn" have presented

powerful arguments on the potential of *different, specific literary techniques* to increase a sense

of openness. In any case, by providing readers with different types of experience, stories help

people be more thoughtful and imaginative. Essentially, in this study, openness means a moment

or moments of unknowingness; it is influenced by but not limited to the following terms:

uncertainty, indeterminacy, alterity, restless questioning, fancy, and hesitation. I will expand on

the concept of "openness" later in the introduction during the section on literary sousveillance.

      I am working with Linda Hutcheon's definition of "parody." Her use of this term is more

inclusive than M. H. Abrams' definition of parody as high burlesque.[4] She writes in "The Politics

of Postmodernism: Parody and History":

> What I mean by "parody" here is not the ridiculing imitation of the standard theories and
>
> definitions that are rooted in eighteenth-century theories of wit. The collective weight of
>
> parodic practice suggests a redefinition of parody as repetition with critical distance that
>
> allows ironic signaling of difference at the very heart of similarity. In historiographic
>
> metafiction, in film, in painting, in music, and in architecture, this parody paradoxically
>
> enacts both change and cultural continuity: the Greek prefix para can mean both
>
> "counter" or "against" AND "near" or "beside." (185-186)

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[4] In *A Glossary of Literary Terms,* M. H. Abrams defines "parody" as follows: "A parody
imitates the serious manner and characteristic features of a particular literary work, or the
distinctive style of a particular author, or the typical stylistic and other features of a serious
literary genre, and deflates the original by applying the imitation to a lowly or comically
inappropriate subject" (26).

Hutcheon places a political emphasis on parody; it is a mode that calls attention to other texts, incorporating and critiquing them at the same time. An example of parody in this study is Lynn Coady's *The Antagonist,* whose narrator is similar to a minor character from her earlier novel, *Mean Boy. The Antagonist* parodies and reinforces assumptions about the world of writing made by the narrator of *Mean Boy*. Parody involves varying levels of dissent and assent to another text. In this study, I also practise self-parody, which will help me to critique my own argument.

At this point in my discussion, it is imperative that I pause and describe how the "reader" operates in this dissertation. Hutcheon points out in *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms,* that simply by talking about parody, a critic is assuming some kind of authorial intent. She writes, "when we call something a parody, we posit some encoding intent to cast a critical and differentiating eye on the artistic past, an intent that we, as readers then infer from the text's (covert or overt) inscription of it" (Hutcheon 84). When one assumes an intent, one is not talking about what the living or deceased author actually intended, but only what can be interpreted from his or her aesthetic choices in the text. Hutcheon writes that we do not "have to return to a Romantic interest in the extratextual intention of the god-like creator; it is more a matter of inferring the activities of an encoding agent [...] we would then know an author only as a position to be filled within the text, as inferred, in other words, by us as readers" (86). In this study, "reader" is just a shorter way of writing "people who are or were in the act of reading." Hutcheon's definition of "author" rightly assumes a fairly complicated, inferred self who organizes a text, and her idea of "reader" also assumes a sophisticated decoder.

However, in this study, "reader" is a more open category.[5] Anyone might pick up a text and interpret it in accordance with their own idiosyncratic worldview. A parody might simply not work as an "author" intended, and that is fine. Another text might work better for a reader. In chapter one, I consider readers who also desire to be literary artists. Mainly, however, when I use "readers," I am referring to a person who is reading or has been reading, but I am trying not to reduce that person to a type.

"Sousveillance" is the final term that I will define before moving on to the discussion of ethical criticism. In "'Sousveillance': Inverse Surveillance in Multimedia Imaging," Steve Mann describes sousveillance as a form of observation that functions through the gaze of individuals; he contrasts it with surveillance, which tends to function from a position of authority and generally at the behest of a hierarchical structure: "The word sur-veillance denotes a God's eye view from on high (i.e. French for 'to watch from above'). An inverse, called sous-veillance (French for 'to watch from below') explores what happens when cameras move from lamp posts and ceilings down to eye level" (620). Mann's project involves taking technologies like CCTV and putting them in the hands of private citizens so that they can redirect the gaze of surveillance onto authority figures. In this sense, sousveillance can be read as a parody of surveillance. It is as Hutcheon notes an "ironic signaling of difference at the very heart of similarity" (185). There is a human element and a presentness to sousveillance; it aims to be "Human-centered (e.g. cameras carried or worn by, or on, people). Recordings of an activity made by a participant in the activity" (Mann 626). In contrast, surveillance tends to be "Architecture-centered (e.g. cameras

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[5] In this sense, I am following Marshall Gregory's lead in limiting my analysis mainly to the aesthetic invitations of a text. Further analysis of readers would be a productive avenue of exploration, but it is beyond the scope of this thesis.

usually mounted on or in structures). Recordings made by authorities, remote security staff, etc." (626). My use of literary sousveillance apprehends Mann's notion of human-centeredness, the sense of participation, and the desire for artistic exploration. Literary sousveillance is a central concept of this study because it encourages behaviour that parodies surveillance measures; it synthethizes ethos, openness, and parody into a reading practice.

The context in which this dissertation is being written has undoubtedly influenced its development. Surveillance promotes the simplification of human beings; literary fiction, in contrast shows the complexity of other people and the complexity of lived experience. This texture and this ability to observe and to narrate the uniqueness, the otherness, and the sameness of various people is the gift that literary artists offer. To be clear, I am not saying that all authors should be restless questioners. I am saying, however, that the restless questioner is an ideal self for thinking about others and for thinking about oneself with a sense of openness. This self should be firmly grounded in an idiosyncratic reading of ethics that resists reducing creative people into a singular type. Thus, in the section that follows, I provide an overview of ethical criticism from both Anglo-American and European perspectives. My central argument is that the ethical imperative of literary artists should be to create new selves through literature. These selves offer moments of openness, but without parody, restless questioners risk becoming hypocritically dogmatic and closed minded. This thesis is cultivated from the discourse of ethical criticism and hopes to contribute to it through the concept of literary sousveillance.

A Short, Selective History of the European and the Anglo-American Ethical Critics

My focus on ethos, openness, and parody is informed by the "return" to ethics as it relates to literary studies. Late 20th Century and early 21st Century ethical critics tend to be divided into two groups: the European and the Anglo-American theorists. Namwali Serpell in *7 Modes of Uncertainty* (2014), describes this split as follows: "[Lionel] Trilling's vision of the moral uses of ambiguity planted the seeds of the branch of ethical criticism often called 'humanism' and epitomized by [Booth and Nussbaum ...] This version of ethical criticism is often contrasted with a branch influenced by continental theory and philosophy [influenced by Levinas and Derrida]; these critics tend to delineate the impasses of an ethics of alterity or otherness" (15). In what follows, I provide an overview of these two "versions" as they apply to this dissertation. My work leans more towards the Anglo-American thinkers, but the European ethical critics present arguments that demand attention. My ultimate goal is to implement both ways of thinking about ethics without reducing them to one type of ethical criticism.

Before I outline this short, selective history of ethical criticism, I would like to respond briefly to critiques of this discourse. In "Art and Ethical Criticism: An Overview of Recent Directions of Research," Noël Carroll explains three objections to the ethical criticism of art, and he also offers responses to these criticisms. The three terms used to describe objections include autonomism, cognitive triviality, and anticonsequentialism (351). Carroll describes autonomism: "The art lover fears that the ethical critic is prone to reduce artistic value to something else, namely, ethical value" (353). Simply put, rather than seeing ethics and aesthetics as complexly interrelated, the autonomist argues that they are completely separate. Secondly, the cognitive triviality argument runs that "if many of the moral 'discoveries' cited in the literature not only

are known, but need to be known for readers, viewers, and listeners to recognize them, then the

idea that we learn from art appears to be altogether without substance" (354). Finally, the

anticonsequentialism argument is that ethical critics cannot predict a response that someone will

have to a text (355). For example, in this study one could assume that David Adams Richards's

Hope in the Desperate Hour will make readers disparage self-serving writer-characters, such as

Cristopher Wheem, the character who exemplifies this quality. However, no one can really

predict how a text is going to influence other people (Carroll 356). All three objections are valid,

but they do not apply to the type of ethical criticism that this dissertation practices. Ethics and

aesthetics are not completely separate categories, particularly in relation to the novel; literary

works are aesthetic documents that elicit some kind of ethical response; even in choosing to

reject the interrelation between ethics and aesthetics, one would be doing it for quasi-ethical

reasons (352). There really is no escape from ethics. A powerful response to autonomism,

cognitive triviality, and anticonsequentialism can be found in what Marshall Gregory proposes in

"Redefining Ethical Criticism: The Old vs. the New": "The discourse of a ›new‹ ethical criticism

needs to refocus itself from two perspectives that ethical critics can actually make arguments and

produce evidence about, the two perspectives of ethical invitations and aesthetic tactics" (291).

Gregory does not talk about predictions but invitations, and he does not assume that one can

know how a text is going to influence a reader. He insists that art affects people in tiny

increments: "Even if each change we make is slight, our lives and character are made up of these

small changes" (297). The knowledge available in fiction is experiential, not factual: readers can

observe how someone constructs a worldview through aesthetic choices (Gregory 293). Thus,

Gregory's approach, which is influenced by Booth, effectively works around autonomism,

cognitive triviality, and anticonsequentialism. Later in this introduction, I will describe my own approach to ethics—which is influenced by Gregory among others—in the section on literary sousveillance.

Two of the most influential proponents of ethical criticism are Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida. Both philosophers emphasize an infinite responsibility to the "Other" that is prior to all rationality. From Levinas, ethical critics gain a rhetoric, using such terms as the Other, the Saying, and the Said. Two reasons that Derrida has been influential are the way in which he implements Levinas's concept of the Other and the emphasis he places on a process involving hesitation. The context in which both of these thinkers wrote informs their work: for example, Simon Critchley describes Levinasian ethics as a response to the "totalizing politics" of the Nazis (221). Their philosophy interrogates thinking that reduces all differences to similarities. Rather than communities of consensus, they desire communities of dissensus. They do not simply welcome otherness, they demand an infinite responsibility to others. The hyperbolic and poetic language[6] used by these philosophers is a strategic choice that demands the ethicist feel first for the Other before considerations of the self or community.

Levinas desires a way of doing ethics that will never allow people to insist that everyone should be the same. To achieve this goal, he develops the concept of the Other in *Totality and Infinity*, arguing that the ethical moment occurs when a person experiences alterity, or an otherness that cannot be reduced to sameness. Levinas writes, "The absolutely other is the Other. He and I do not form a number. The collectivity in which I say 'you' or 'we' is not a plural of the

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[6] In *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance,* Simon Critchley writes, "Levinas constructs what he calls an 'ethical language', composed of several strange, wonderful and hyperbolic terms" (61).

'I.' I, you—these are not the individuals of the common concept" (39). The force and weight of

Levinasian ethics are derived from this concept of the Other. Before any thought of right or

wrong, one feels responsibility to this difference that cannot be understood through similarities.

Simon Critchley points out that "The first time that Levinas uses the word 'ethics' [...] he defines

it as 'the putting into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the Other' (*Tel* 13/ *TI* 43).

Ethics, for Levinas, is critique; it is the critical mise en question of the liberty, spontaneity, and

cognitive emprise of the ego that seeks to reduce all otherness to itself" (Critchley 5). Levinasian

ethics demands purposeful action that resists totalitarian thought. This embrace of difference,

then, is the place to begin this trajectory of thought.

However, in "Violence and Metaphysics" Derrida criticizes Levinas's use of language in

Totality and Infinity. Essentially, Levinas desires a responsibility to the Other that is born of

sensory experience, but Derrida argues that "By making the origin of language, meaning, and

difference the relation to the infinitely other, Levinas is resigned to betraying his own intentions

in his philosophical discourse" (151). Although Levinas describes the ethical importance of the

Other, the way in which he writes can—according to Derrida—be read as a type of metaphorical

violence. Levinas wants the ineffable, but he has chosen a mode in which it cannot be achieved.

In "Derrida's Ethical Re-turn," Richard Kearney points out that "Derrida is of the view that the

language of ethics is intrinsically compromised by the language of ontology. An ethics of alterity

and infinity, as promoted by someone like Levinas, cannot be removed, he believes, from an

ontology of totality and violence. The language of ethics and the language of ontology

presuppose and precondition each other" (31). Levinas's route to the Other cannot bypass the

written word, and *Totality and Infinity* might have a crucial blindspot as a result. The challenge

that Derrida presents to Levinasian ethics then is how to write of the Other in a language that is somehow beyond language. How can one partake of the sensory experience of the Other when philosophical description inevitably reduces that experience to what can be understood?

In *Otherwise than Being,* Levinas responds to Derrida's critique and demonstrates how ethical responsibility to the Other can be enacted through language. Robert Eaglestone even goes so far as to argue that "*Otherwise than Being* can be read as a rewriting of *Totality and Infinity* after 'Violence and Metaphysics,' although the precise status of the relationship between the two works is contested" (131). *Otherwise than Being* is an extremely difficult text, largely as a result of Levinas's stylistic choices. It is more of a sensory experience than a logically developed, well-organized argument about one's responsibility to the Other. Levinas writes, "The gravity of the *otherwise than being* shows now, in a still confused way, its affinity with ethics. We have been seeking the *otherwise than being* from the beginning, and as soon as it is conveyed before us it is betrayed in the said that dominates the saying which states it" (7). The only way to do ethics is in these moments beyond language, and Levinas attempts to demonstrate this action repeatedly in his text through stylistic language such as hyperbole.[7] He also offers the dichotomy of the Saying and the Said, which makes the way to experience Otherness somewhat clearer. Critchley writes, "The great innovation in *Otherwise than Being,* although present in the Preface of *Totality and Infinity* (*TeL* xviii / *TI* 30), is the model of the Saying and the Said as the way of explaining how the ethical signifies within ontological language" (7). The Saying is the experience of the Other, and the Said is what happens to this experience in the act of describing (Critchley 7).

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[7] An example of Levinasian hyperbole in *Otherwise Than Being* is "Responsibility without prior commitment, without a present, without an origin, anarchic, is thus an infinite responsibility of the one for the other who is abandoned to me without anyone being able to take my place as the one responsible for him" (153).

Nevertheless, one wonders what is left to be said about the Other and how it can possibly be said without doing violence.

Although Derrida critiques Levinas in "Violence and Metaphysics," Levinas's influence is clearly marked in Derrida's own work (Kearney 30). Derrida's sense of the Other manifests as a restless questioning and an emphasis on undecidability; he wants to highlight otherness and uncertainty where there appears to be only certainty, and he does so through the process of deconstruction. As a double-reading of a text, deconstruction aims to reveal the blind spots of commonly accepted interpretations (Critchley 23). For it to work, there generally needs to be a consensus about a text's meaning that can be interrupted. This focus on the interruption of consensus means that deconstruction will inevitably be a voice of otherness. Critchley writes, "The goal of deconstruction, therefore, is to locate a point of otherness within philosophical or logocentric conceptuality and then to deconstruct this conceptuality from that position of alterity" (26). This questioning and interrupting is not just an aesthetic process, but it also aims to contribute to a just society through the continuous opening of debate where there was no previous conversation. Derrida's idea of an ethical community can be glimpsed in "Violence and Metaphysics" when he writes, "A community of the question about the possibility of the question. This is very little—almost nothing—but within it, today is sheltered and encapsulated an unbreachable dignity and duty of decision. An unbreachable responsibility" (Derrida 80). A person takes part in such a community through this constant, unending process of interrupting and questioning, bearing a responsibility to respond as a result. Deconstruction is ethical in this insistence on otherness, on dissensus, on openness, and on responsibility.

Derrida's deconstructive approach and his style have helped contribute to uncertainty within ethical discourse. A number of ethical critics credit Derrida with the emphasis on hesitation before a decision. For example, Jill Robbins writes, "The interruptions and the alterities with which Derrida's work is concerned may be shown to have an ethical force" (29). This ethical force is also articulated by Kearney: "literary writing puts the dominant language of moral and political institutions into question. It reminds us that all moral principles are impure in some fundamental sense, never totally adequate or absolute, never wholly certain about what is absolute good and what is absolute evil" (34). Derrida's emphasis on uncertainty challenges dominant forms of thought and of institutional power. Much like that of Levinas, Derrida's ethical push is against totalizing forms of thought. For Critchley, this hesitation before a decision is one of the key reasons that deconstruction is ethical, but it is also why deconstruction is often derided as never moving beyond an impasse to the political. He argues that deconstruction is unable to move from "undecidability to decision, from responsibility to questioning, from deconstruction to critique, from ethics to politics" (236). Critchley responds to this impasse by combining Derridean and Levinasian ethics. In doing so, he demonstrates how hesitation becomes political when it is paired with an infinite responsibility to the Other (Critchley xx-xxi). A pause is essential if one's decisions are to be ethical, but hesitation can only be temporary.

Thus, European ethics as understood through Levinas and Derrida emphasizes responsibility to the Other and encourages an oppositional stance to authority and to dominant modes of thought. These thinkers view their work as a break from traditional ethics. The Anglo-American thinkers, on the other hand, usually view their work as a return to traditional ethics. Gregory argues that two foundational critics for this group are Wayne C. Booth and Martha

Nussbaum (280). Booth's version of ethical criticism is about recognizing that novels affect

readers' desires and that they allow readers to experience various selves. In contrast to Levinas's

emphasis on the Other, Booth emphasizes the importance of friendship.[8] In *Poetic Justice,*

Nussbaum takes Booth's critical framework and attempts to transform ethical criticism into a

political tool. Nussbaum argues that novels can serve communities by teaching readers empathy.[9]

While Nussbaum presents a compelling theoretical framework, she has been criticized by

thinkers such as Charles Altieri for ignoring the power of aesthetics and the will of readers

(41).[10] The Anglo-American ethical critics argue that reading allows people to experience new

selves; the more experiences that readers have through texts, the more complicated their world

view becomes.

In *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction,* Booth points out that for a period of time

it seemed as though scholars were hesitant to discuss ethics in relation to novel studies; this

hesitation may have derived from the fact that attempting to impose one's ethics onto others is

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[8] Booth's friendship metaphor equates reading with keeping company; one should carefully
choose books in the same way one chooses friends (39). There are similarities between the
philosophies of Booth and Levinas. For example, both value uncertainty and unknowingness.
Furthermore, in Booth's framework, one should keep company with the Other. The emphasis of
Booth's friendship metaphor, however, is clearly towards how reading influences the self; others
are secondary to considerations of the self. Levinasian ethics, on the other hand, cares first for
others and secondly for the self.

[9] Nussbaum writes, "I shall argue that the genre [of the novel] itself, on account of some general
features of its structure, generally constructs empathy and compassion in ways highly relevant to
citizenship" (10). In this study, I follow M. H. Abrams's definition of empathy as "identification
of oneself with an observed person or object which is so close that one seems to participate in the
posture, motion, and sensations that one observes" (74).

[10] Such continuing debates about ethics highlight that there is much difference of opinion among
ethical critics. See pp. 18-19 of this Introduction.

akin to totalitarianism (27).[11] At the time Booth writes, many thinkers resisted being typified as ethical critics even though they were still doing ethics:

> Though anthologies of "literary criticism though the ages" obviously cannot avoid including great swatches of ethical evaluation in their selections, they disguise it, in effect, under other labels: "Political," "Social," or "Cultural" criticism; "Psychological" or "Psychoanalytic" criticism; and more recently terms like "Reader-Response Criticism," "Feminist Criticism," and "The Discourse of Power" [...] Until the late nineteenth century almost everyone took for granted that a major task of any critic is to appraise the ethical value of works of art. (25)

Booth's version of ethical criticism is not about attempting to impose an agreed-upon ethicality, but about recognizing that novels influence readers' desires and ethos. He writes that "we must avoid at all cost the effort to reduce literary 'goods' to one kind; instead, we should seek to clarify and embrace a plurality of goods, exhibited in particular coductions [or comparative readings], while vigorously expressing our reasons for mistrusting those narrative experiences that would, if taken alone, undermine all the defensible projects" (115). Limiting texts to one type of literary 'good' risks turning the field of ethics into a reflection of one individual's understanding of right and wrong. In this self-examination and moral uncertainty, a complex perspective on the world and on the reading process is cultivated. People are shown many ways of thinking about right and wrong. Booth focuses on how a text might make certain desires available to a reader and on how this desiring affects people as constantly changing selves.

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[11] This resistance to totalitarianism is one of the stronger links between the Anglo-Americans and the Europeans.

Like Levinas and Derrida, Booth desires to resist an ethics that totalizes; however, he proposes that readers should think of books as different types of company and that the test that these texts need to pass is one of true or false friendship.[12] The questions that Booth believes readers must ask every time they open a book are: "Should I believe this narrator, and thus join him? Am I willing to be the kind of person that this story-teller is asking me to be? Will I accept this author among the small circle of my true friends?" (39). Of these three questions the one that has continued importance for my work is "What does a story ask a reader to be?" Booth's metaphor of friendship, however, has been critiqued by Charles Altieri in "Lyrical Ethics and Literary Experience" for limiting the spectrum of reader-text relationships: "The image of texts as friends simply does not capture the many different kinds of intimate relations that texts enter in our lives, nor does it quite address the variety of productive energies brought into play by those intimate relations" (52). Booth's focus on friendship is an emphasis on the self without enough consideration of the Other. Our literary company should also include those who are different and those whom we do not comprehend. Despite the fact that Booth's theory of literary friendship has been criticized, it calibrates the responsibility to the Other that is argued for by Levinas and Derrida. I will return to this point later in the section on literary sousveillance.

In *Poetic Justice,* Martha Nussbaum argues that novels should function as pathways into the lives of marginalized groups, and she proposes that her framework would also work in bureaucratic structures. She writes, "thinking about narrative literature does have the potential to make a contribution to the law in particular, to public reasoning generally" (xv). The novel is Nussbaum's form of choice because of its ability to communicate the lives of other people. By

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[12] This friendship does not exclude a responsibility to the Other. One should seek company in books that encourage a sense of openness.

spending prolonged time with individuals of diverse races, genders, cultures, or incomes, readers
—be they judges, lawyers, police officers, or average citizens—can begin to think about people
who are unlike themselves and their friends with a greater sense of empathy. For Nussbaum, the
novel "takes as its theme [...] the interaction between general human aspirations and particular
forms of social life that either enable or impede those aspirations, shaping them powerfully in the
process. Novels [...] present persistent forms of human need and desire realized in specific social
situations" (7). Although it is completely reasonable to expect that certain novels could be tools
for social justice, Nussbaum's work has been criticized for limiting the reading experience and
for ignoring the power of aesthetics. Altieri complains that Nussbaum's overemphasis on pathos
may distract from the true strength of books and distort both public and private reasoning:

> [Henry] James, for example, is careful to make characters tempted by the appeal of
> pathos [...] learn to make judgements critical of the temptations to self-righteousness
> that occur when one lets one's awareness of public issues outweigh the need for concrete
> self-understanding. And one could argue that this emphasis on pathos allows precious
> little room for a corresponding emphasis on the various modes of ethos that literary
> imaginations pursue. (41)

Altieri fairly points out that Nussbaum's proposed institutional use of novels might narrow the
reading experience. One would not really be engaging with an author so much as using a novel to
support one's own politics.

Although Nussbaum's primary interest in *Poetic Justice* is how novels create pathos, her
theoretical stance is more complex than Altieri describes. Altieri's concerns are justified, but he

does not account for the fact that Nussbaum attempts to avoid an exclusively utilitarian approach by positing the concept of "fancy." With this idea, the metaphoric imagination is important for:

> its ability to endow a perceived form with rich and complex significance; its generous construction of the seen; its preference for wonder over pat solutions; its playful and surprising movements, delightful for their own sake; its tenderness, its eroticism, its awe before the fact of human mortality [...] this imagination [...] is the necessary basis for good government of a country of equal and free citizens. With it, reason is beneficent, steered by a generous view of its objects; without its charity, reason is cold and cruel. (43)

The concept of fancy is about allowing and even encouraging openness in a text. This point is further developed by Hale when she links Nussbaum's concept of fancy with Judith Butler's emphasis on the search for otherness: "Nussbaum, like Butler, believes that figuration enables us not only to apprehend alterity (to see one thing as another, to see one thing in another) but also to inhabit the conditions of possibility that ensure a future different from our 'now'" (902). In contrast to Altieri, Hale reads Nussbaum's theory as a model for flexible literary imagining. Furthermore, Nussbaum's theoretical stance remains important for specific types of narrative. It is perfectly reasonable to experience certain novels, such as *Hard Times, Native Son,* or in this study, Michael Winter's *The Death of Donna Whalen*, as narratives that can be useful for the criminal justice system or for the education system. All three novels have political and social interests that can be emphasized by scholars or critics sharing similar goals.[13]

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[13] However, novels become distorted by private research interests when critics attempt to read all texts solely in relation to social justice, to friendship, or to the Other.

The last critic in this short narrative about the Anglo-American ethical critics is Marshall Gregory, who was a student of Booth. Gregory uses arguments from cognitive science and evolutionary psychology to reinforce his approach:

> Ethics counts because ethics is an evolved adaptation that served the survival interests of the individuals among our ancient ancestors who figured out – behaviorally if not consciously – that a person's odds of survival were greater if everyone in the tribe observed certain injunctions about right and wrong, such as fairness in the distribution of resources, honesty in discussions about the adjudication of internal group conflicts, and compassion toward tribal members suffering from injury, illness, or loss. (284)

Thus for Gregory, ethics is a kind of survival mechanism that societies need to remain functional and healthy. One might wonder how this broad justification for ethics translates into a reading practice. To explain, Gregory relies on a particular interpretation of the self. He writes, "The self that defines a person is a process, not a thing, and it is always in motion. It is always becoming; it never just is, and the mechanism of anyone's perpetually emerging selfhood is the pattern of the ›yeses‹ and ›noes‹ that the person extends to all of life's invitations" (290). Literary art offers a host of these invitations to which readers respond. With each yes or no, a person changes minutely: "As we respond to the world's invitations in this way or that way, we make up a self out of these responses because such responses configure – or, more accurately, they consistently reconfigure – our intellects, our beliefs, our emotions, and our ethical judgments" (291). Gregory uses cognitive science and evolutionary psychology to justify a specific interpretive practice. He argues that ethical criticism needs to be an examination of a text's invitations based on aesthetic

choices that the author makes available to readers (291). Each one of these choices influences

readers "like cell division, [which] constitute the building blocks of a self" (Gregory 297).

The ethical approaches that I am highlighting from both groups of critics are not fully

compatible, but they have profound similarities. Both agree on the importance of questioning,

both desire to resist an ethics that totalizes, and both are concerned with negotiations between

self, other, and community. As Marjorie Garber, Beatrice Hanssen, and Rebecca L. Walkowitz

write in the introduction to *The Turn to Ethics*, "'Ethics' is not only a praxis, but also a principle,

and the essays in this volume ask how situated examples have reconfigured general theories.

Ethics, contributors suggest, is a process of formulation and self-questioning that continually

rearticulates boundaries, norms, selves, and 'others'" (viii). And yet, the Anglo-Americans and

the Europeans place different emphases on self, other, and community in their ethical

frameworks. Serpell points out that the Europeans are more focused on otherness and difference,

whereas the Anglo-Americans posit the importance of similarities. The diverging ideas of the

Anglo-Americans and the Europeans are not always strictly or simply identified. For example,

Richard Rorty is a thinker who values deconstruction as a process but still posits the importance

of seeking out similarities as opposed to differences, particularly in a public setting. In

Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity, he argues that "our sense of solidarity is strongest when those

with whom solidarity is expressed are thought of as 'one of us,' where 'us' means something

smaller and more local than the human race" (Rorty 191). My discussion of ethical critics does

not avoid these binary structures even though they are imperfect and fluid. The point of

discussing the two approaches is not simply to categorize thinkers in one school or another; the

point is to make the discourse discernible. One seeks out friends in the Anglo-American stream

and strangers in the European delineation, but all of these thinkers argue that ethics never ceases, that one should cultivate a mindset that is less cruel to others, and that one should be open and flexible. The focus on self, other, and community is a powerful link among ethical critics, but the emphases of each side prevent them from being considered as a uniform group.

Many critics have conflicting perceptions of what ethics should do, and this tension can be found in recent Canadian literary criticism. The "return" to ethics in studies of Canadian literature has received attention in a 2007 issue of the *University of Toronto Quarterly*. In "Introduction: Literature, Imagination, Ethics," Marlene Goldman explains that this special issue resulted from a conference that put out the following call for papers:

> It can be argued that an interest in the Real, either in the form of cultural materialism or
> communal responsibility, is rapidly superseding Deconstruction's world of signification;
> that the values of certainty and truth are increasingly supplanting concerns with the
> provisional, thus marking a widespread (re)turn to the ethical [...] Given recent
> announcements about the death of postmodernism and the resurgence of moralizing in
> literary studies, we are assembling a panel to discuss [...] this shift in a Canadian
> context. (qtd. in Goldman 809)

This proposed "return" to ethics does not incorporate the full scope of ethical criticism, and Goldman offers revisions. First and foremost, she critiques the connection between moralizing and ethics: "I found myself at odds with the assumption that that the resurgence of 'moralizing in literary studies' was an unequivocally good thing. While not aligning myself with Plato, I had reservations about assuming unproblematic links between philosophical and literary modes of thought and analysis" (810). There are several modes of ethical criticism that resist simple

moralizing and argue for an embrace of hesitation, uncertainty, and otherness (Critchley 42), or for an emphasis on cultivating multiple selves (Booth 268). A moralizing framework that is not grounded in some kind of uncertainty would impose a discourse of sameness onto ethical criticism. In her introduction, Goldman unravels a bias against deconstruction in the call for papers, which can be seen elsewhere in Canadian criticism, particularly *Confessional Fictions: A Portrait of the Artist in the Canadian Novel* (1991) by David Williams.

Williams's turn in *Confessional Fictions* is problematic in his reading of ethics and in his focus on a knowable self: "Each of the nine authors discussed [in *Confessional Fictions*] shows signs, if only in a single narrative, of upholding that most traditional (and imperilled) of Delphic and Socratic maxims, know thyself" (37). This exclusionary selection process negates the possibility of creating a textured, multifaceted discourse about authors and writer-characters. Instead of exploring the various ways that authors should be, Williams aspires to narrow his group to one type; he aims to totalize. His understanding of ethics is the result of a confrontation with the philosophy of deconstruction. As a result, his understanding of ethics and his theoretical framework suffer. He writes:

> my difference from the deconstructive critic is that I assign to a narrator or to a dramatic
> persona the burden of a system which he locates in language itself [...] In the "absence
> of the transcendental signified" (Derrida 249), I take 'truth' to refer to the ethos of a text
> which is ultimately discoverable in the sort of ethical choices it presents in the reading
> act. (11)

In many ways, Williams's turn to ethics is the antithesis of Garber, Hanssen, and Walkowitz's description in their introduction: "The decentering of the subject has brought about a recentering

of the ethical" (ix). Williams wants a way of reading that accepts that there are flaws and gaps in his selfhood but forges on in order to focus on what he deems knowable. Unfortunately, an ethics that rejects deconstruction presents a critical gap in Williams's theoretical framework. A critic might rightly wonder about what cannot be known about the self. Williams seems too focussed on answers when he could be equally fascinated by an outgrowth of questions. In his dismissal of deconstruction as an ethical practice, he does not account for one half of this discourse. He does not take into account more complex understandings of the self, particularly understandings that argue for the importance of an inability to fully know the self.

For some thinkers, such as Judith Butler, to be ethical is to admit that knowing the self is impossible (17). Since we can never fully possess a type of autonomous self-knowledge, we depend on other people to conceive a self. However, Williams's insistence on the Socratic maxim "Know Thyself" fails to incorporate a complicated understanding of selfhood; a more complex understanding should accept that there is otherness in the self.[14] In contrast, Butler's argument does not exclude the possibility that a revised, much more complex, unending, and always incomplete journey to self-knowledge is still possible. Instead of striving to know oneself, a person would also need to strive to accept the Other in the self: "If the identity we say we are cannot possibly capture us and marks immediately an excess of opacity that falls outside the categories of identity, then any effort 'to give an account of oneself' will have to fail in order to approach being true'" (Butler 42). This opacity should not result in the acceptance of defeat but

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[14] Similarly, in *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance,* Simon Critchley argues "for a notion of *originary inauthenticity* at the core of subjective experience which opens in relation to the facticity of an ethical demand that I cannot fully comprehend and to which I am not adequate" (78).

in persistence despite steady failure. One can still strive to know oneself so long as he or she

accepts that self-knowledge will always have gaps.

The question for writer-characters in Canadian novels for my study is how to discuss

such motifs with a more complicated understanding of ethics, one that includes a concern not

only for the self, but for the Other, and for community—in its various manifestations—as well.

The concept of a changing, opaque self, of a reading subject who experiences other selves but

who is also confronted by otherness, might be a way—not to unify these schools—but of having

them exist in authors and readers who can think in many different ways. To explore this

possibility, I argue that the best way to describe the world of authors and writing is through an

ethics of sousveillance.

An Ethics of Sousveillance

This section establishes sousveillance as both an ethical reading strategy and an ethical

creative practice. Literary sousveillance views texts from a variety of perspectives and

acknowledges that these perspectives are developed by idiosyncratic individuals. These

individuals will inevitably be influenced and informed by institutions and by socialization, but

they will still have traits and characteristics that are distinctive. The choices that individuals

make as they cultivate an ethos reveal these distinctions and differences. Literary sousveillance is

practiced through a self who is open to change, to otherness, and to parody. This self is derived

from both approaches to ethical criticism discussed previously.[15] The ethical imperative of

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[15] I describe this self as a social being with the concepts of Richard Rorty's liberal ironist and Simon Critchley's comic anarchist; even though their ethics seem incompatible in that Rorty tends to promote autonomy and Critchley insists on responsibility to others, the social self that I will describe is an odd amalgamation of the two.

sousveillance is to create a sense of openness among a variety of readers through literary

aesthetics and/or critique. The goals of this strategy can be realized with just one text, but its

aims are more readily achieved when a group of texts are placed in a literary conversation.

Literary sousveillance derives from a tension between responsibility to other people and a

commitment to craft. In *This All Happened,* the narrator, Gabriel English, observes people and

writes about them in his journal. Critics such as Peter Thompson and Chris Armstrong describe

English's watching as a form of surveillance. A more liberating metaphor for authorial

observations can be found in Steve Mann's concept of sousveillance, which he created to discuss

his experiences attempting to resist surveillance and to express his aesthetic enjoyment of visual

technologies. The essential difference between the two is that surveillance is structurally-

centered, operating in the service of an institution or a bureaucracy, whereas sousveillance is

human-centered, operating in the service of an individual or group of individuals (Mann 626).

Although Mann attempts to describe sousveillance as a counterpoint to the pitfalls of

surveillance, sousveillance needs to be treated with ambivalence. Mann writes, "While

surveillance tends to be exclusionary, and tends to present a very strong 'us versus them'

directionality, sousveillance can be made to operate much more like Peer-to-Peer, in the sense of

creating a level playing field" (625). It would be a mistake, however, to discuss only the benefits

of sousveillance. Like surveillance, it serves a variety of purposes, not all of them positive.

Anyone who goes online can witness the drawbacks of peer to peer interactions. The slang term

'troll' denotes individuals who use their internet personae to insult and badger people they have

never met. Peers can be cruel, ignorant, and intrusive. Nevertheless, increasingly persuasive and

sophisticated technology in the hands of private citizens can create a greater balance between

institutional power and the power of individuals. In "The Generalized Sousveillance Society" Jean-Gabriel Ganascia argues that this balance of power already exists:

> the notion of a surveillance society, which many of our contemporaries still dread, does not seem to characterize the present state of our postmodern societies [...] This does not mean that surveillance has disappeared, but instead that the global organization of the surveillance society has been replaced by a new social organization, more flexible and fluid, where surveillance and what we can call 'sousveillance' coexist. (491)

If Ganascia is correct, then it would make sense to look closely at how individuals observe and describe others. I want to live in a society that embraces openness and the creation of various selves. Literature cultivates both. Thus, the imperative for authors in this dissertation is to create texts that foster these complex moments of seeing and describing.

I argue that the ethical imperative that authors should follow is to create a sense of openness through their writing. In *The Ethics of Reading,* J. Hillis Miller views ethics as a response to an unavoidable demand or a categorical imperative that cannot be understood. He writes, "I still stand before the law of the ethics of reading, subject to it, compelled by it, persuaded of its existence and sovereignty by what happens to me when I read" (127). Miller's ethical imperative involves responding, with profound sincerity, to whatever may be powerful in a text. Critchley critiques Miller for not grounding his categorical imperative in other human beings. He writes, "ethics is first and foremost a respect for the concrete particularity of the other person in his or her singularity, a person who is not merely an example of the law, in the way that Miller claims that a text, analogous to a person can be an example of the law" (Critchley 48). The contrast between Miller and Critchley presents an ethical question for my work: Should I

ground the imperative of literary sousveillance in the text or in the other person? For restless

questioners, the first responsibility is to the text and to the creation of complex literary art. In this

circumstance, the imperative must be to the text or there would be no creation of a literary Other.

To rephrase Critchley's imperative and make it my own: sousveillance is a respect for the

particularity of a text and the idiosyncrasies of the creative process. To avoid misunderstanding,

the creation and the study of literary art should lead to responsibility to the Other in some

capacity. However, literary sousveillance is ultimately about the multiple ways of seeing that

literature invites.

Literary sousveillance is influenced by the advent of new digital technologies and how it

has changed the way people watch one another. A now classic metaphor to describe the ways in

which governments and companies surveil citizens is the panopticon, but scholars such as Kevin

D. Haggerty in "Tear Down the Walls: On Demolishing the Panopticon" argue that contemporary

surveillance studies is undergoing a paradigm shift (24). The panopticon was developed by

English philosopher Jeremy Bentham to create a more efficient and effective prison system. In

"Outline of a Plan for the Management of a Panopticon Penitentiary-House," Bentham writes:

> above all, by that peculiarity of construction, which without any unpleasant or hazardous
>
> vicinity enables the whole establishment to be inspected almost at a view, it should be
>
> my study to render it a spectacle, such as persons of all classes would, in the way of
>
> amusement, be curious to partake of [...] providing thereby a system of inspection,
>
> universal, free, and gratuitous, the most effectual and permanent of all securities against
>
> abuse. (200)

Furthermore, Bentham theorizes that if prisoners could not physically see their guards that they

would begin to practice self-discipline (Haggerty 25). This prison system is then used as a

metaphor by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* to explain the processes of socialization

in democratic societies. In Foucault's list of panoptic institutions, he includes, "schools,

hospitals, factories" (207), and he writes of the panoptic model that:

> It is a type of location of bodies in space, of distribution of individuals in relation to one
>
> another, of hierarchical organization, of disposition of centers and channels of power, of
>
> definition of the instruments and modes of intervention of power, which can be
>
> implemented in hospitals, workshops, schools, prisons. (205)

For Foucault, Bentham's prison reform was "destined to spread throughout the social body; its

vocation was to become a generalized function" (207). Power operates through this shared sense

of being watched; surveillance is thus a method of coercing citizens to adopt social norms as

defined by states and corporations. Haggerty writes, "Foucault proposed that the principles

inherent in the panopticon themselves served as a model for understanding the operation of

power in contemporary society" (25). Where Bentham argues that "the more strictly we are

watched, the better we behave" (277), Foucault would counter that the more strictly we are

watched, the more likely we are to conform. The problem of surveillance today is arguably more

concrete than when Foucault developed his metaphor; the data and the images of citizens being

compiled by governments and corporations are a profoundly invasive form of observation, and

these methods of watching are not fully disclosed to the public. Nevertheless, Haggerty writes

that the major shift from panoptic to contemporary surveillance is that the panopticon represents

a singular eye of judgement, whereas contemporary surveillance has numerous eyes: "The

multiplication of the sites of surveillance ruptures the unidirectional nature of the gaze,

transforming surveillance from a dynamic of the microscope to one where knowledge and

images of unexpected intensity and assorted distortions cascade from viewer to viewer and

across institutions [...] undermining the neat distinction between watchers and

watched" (Haggerty 29). In this period of multilateral observation, literary fiction is a mode that

could inform readers about the effects of watching and being watched; novels reveal the nuances

and the complexities of observation and of description.

However, the affect and the social influence of the novel are contested. According to D.A.

Miller, the novel creates stifling behavioural expectations, but Bakhtin argues that this genre

encourages a sense of openness in how one sees the world. Even if the technological eye of

judgement is multilateral, Miller in *The Novel and the Police* argues that the novelistic eye of

judgement is typically unilateral. Miller's theory derives from Foucault's concept of panoptic

discipline. He focuses on the Victorian novel, "whose cultural hegemony and diffusion well

qualified it to become the primary spiritual exercise of an age" (x). Through a clear demarcation

between the normal and the deviant, fiction imposes a set of traits onto the supposedly free,

liberal subject. This discipline "provides the novel with its essential 'content'" (18) and makes

fiction "the very genre of the liberal subject, both as cause and effect" (216). Miller's

characterization of the Victorian novel represents the author as the individual lurking inside this

three-tiered panoptic structure. On the other hand, one classic theoretical assumption about the

novel is that it infuses static worlds with the openness and the uncertainty of the present.

Observers who watch others via data collection or CCTV cameras do not experience their

subjects' day to day lives. In contrast, the novel form asks readers to spend prolonged amounts of

time with characters. Bakhtin theorizes in "Epic and Novel" that when the novel intermingles with forms like the epic, it challenges the elevated nature of time-honoured stories, and it makes heroic characters far more human (14). He lists a series of stylistic choices that contribute to the transformative power of the novel when it comes into contact with other genres:

> They become more free and flexible, their language renews itself by incorporating extraliterary heteroglossia and the 'novelistic' layers of literary language, they become dialogized, permeated with laughter, irony, elements of self-parody and finally [...] the novel inserts into these other genres an indeterminacy, a certain semantic openendedness, a living contact with unfinished, still evolving contemporary reality (the openended present). (6-7)[16]

The novel grounds readers in a contemporary and an indeterminate reality as opposed to the epic's basis in a concrete and distanced past. He writes of the novel that "Nothing is left of the distant epic image of the absolute past; the entire world and everything sacred in it is offered to us without any distancing at all, in a zone of crude contact, where we can grab at everything with our own hands" (26). In this sense, Bakhtin's argument is prescient in its focus on the novel as a zone of contact between different realities. When openness becomes a functional element of a

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[16] Contemporary critics, such as Franco Moretti in *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman and European Culture,* have been more skeptical of the novel's stylistic potential. Of heteroglossia, Moretti argues that when characters learn to communicate with each other, it is generally because they have found a middle ground: "heteroglossia tends to disappear and instead we find an 'average' linguistic tone potentially accessible to all" (195). Bakhtin's argument has remained strong, however, in its focus on the novel as a zone of contact between the past and the present. Certain stylistic choices, such as Linda Hutcheon's concept of historiographic metafiction, are more successful at imbuing the past with the immediacy of the present (2). Historiographic metafiction transforms untouchable heroes into living, fallible human beings. In doing so, it destabilizes the good self/bad other binary that is so troubling to Booth.

text, it encourages reader participation[17] and turns the novel into a dialogue. If authors have the authority to demarcate the normal and the deviant, they do not have the comfort of a unidirectional gaze. Often, they are under observation not only for what they write, but for their position as observers. Rather than unseen officials imposing a strict demarcation between the normal and the deviant, they are something closer to Bakhtin's characterization of readers in novelistic discourse, individuals in "a zone of crude contact" subject to a host of competing wills (26). Literary sousveillance seeks these moments in which readers observe other observers.

Literary Sousveillance

Literary sousveillance is a mode of ethical criticism that works in three stages. The first involves considering what desires a novel or set of novels invites and what desires might inhibit a reader from fully experiencing an authorial vision. The second stage requires looking for the aesthetic qualities of a text or texts that should invite a sense of openness. The third stage is an attempt to critique one's own interpretation through self-parody. Everyone who practices sousveillance does not need to go through these same stages. I am describing the processes that I have gone through in this study to observe authors, writer-characters, and writing multilaterally. Critics should develop a strategy that best suits their study. One should strive to enter a process of observing and describing a topic or a motif that encourages increasing complexity and nuance. Although ethics is concerned with what a text reveals or conceals about self, other, and

[17] Wolfgang Iser's "Indeterminacy and the Reader's Response" focuses specifically on how openness might increase reader participation through aesthetics. He develops the term indeterminacy as that which "embodies an elementary condition for readers' reactions [... moments when the] reader is shifted into the full operation of [the text's ...] intentions" (Iser 6). Essentially, indeterminacy can be cultivated through stylistic choices that make the reader more actively involved in the text.

community, my interest is mainly in describing a self who is adept at creating and observing

complicated selves, others, and communities. A self who can narrate and read other lives should

also have the potential to parody social norms. This self already is embodied by literary artists,

but to avoid describing authors as a homogenous group,[18] I strive to highlight differences within

this diverse collection of people.

Stage One: Ethos and Restless Questioners

For literary critics to be restless questioners and to practice sousveillance, they need to

first consider the ethos that authors imply through aesthetic choices. The basic theoretical

framework for this stage is derived from Booth and Gregory. However, the way in which choice

and desire are discussed by these Anglo-American thinkers could be accused of being too simple.

Thus, I aim to complicate their descriptions of the reading process with thinkers who have

presented arguments about desire, choice, or the self, such as Judith Butler, Charles Altieri, Rene

Girard, D.A. Miller, and Homi K. Bhaba. Authors create situations that invite readers to consider

alternative selves. There are also points of interruption that may or may not be invited. In *Altered

Reading: Literature and Levinas*, Jill Robbins writes, "Levinas's understanding of ethics [is] as

an interruption of the self's habitual economy" (132). I understand the imperative of the

interruption to mean that a critic should demonstrate otherness in the self. With the experience of

each ethos, a reader is invited to think in different ways or to interrupt assumptions and beliefs.

In this way, engagement with a variety of thought encourages minute changes (Gregory 297).

What Booth hopes to get out of ethical criticism is not certainty, but a conversation and a

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[18] Beebe's discussion of the artistic temperament and Florida's idea of the creative class both
tend to simplify through an emphasis on sameness among a diverse group.

"restless questioning" (478). In this state of self-examination and moral uncertainty, a complex perspective on the world and on the reading process is cultivated. The overall point of this stage, however, remains to consider the invitations and interruptions of texts and the wills of idiosyncratic readers.

During the reading experience, ethos is affected in a variety of subtle ways. Booth argues for an ethical reading practice that perpetually moves from one text to another. He describes the influence on ethos as a channelling of desires: "the most powerful effect on my own ethos, at least during my reading, is the concentration of my desires and fears and expectations, leading with as much concentration as possible towards some future fulfillment: I am made to want something that I do not yet have enough of" (Booth 201). As a result of this channelling of desire, two questions for literary sousveillance become:

1) What sorts of desire does an author make available?

2) How might the ethos of readers and the ethos of the author intersect?

For Booth, the ethics of a text is really the desires that readers are asked to experience by an author. Booth writes, "Does what Thomas Hardy asks you to desire and fear and deplore in the life of *Tess of D'Urbervilles* provide a good kind of life for you or for your sons and daughters? Does that 'slice of life' that critics used to talk about [...] turn out to be a good slice for you, as you re-create it for yourself?" (205). From Booth's ethics, one can cultivate a self who is perpetually shifting between selves, one who might feel empathy or alterity for different selves. This ability is key for the restless questioner, who aims to create or to observe selves through his or her descriptive practices. However, Booth's description of desire is not complicated enough to incorporate the twists and turns of the reading experience.

Desire is a complex force that operates in a text, and it can be difficult to trace. In *Deceit, Desire & the Novel,* Rene Girard describes the concept of triangular desire, in which the subject does not choose the object of his desire; instead, his desires are "determined for him" by a mediator (2). A key shift in this triangle occurs when "The novelist recognizes that he is guilty of the sin of which he is accusing his mediator" (299). Girard's representation of desire troubles Booth's more straightforward understanding, particularly in the sense that Booth describes it as a choice. In Girard's formulation, the reading subject might not understand the desires that he or she experiences as *Tess of D'Urbervilles* unfolds. Thus, whether the text is a good 'slice of life' or a bad one, readers might be bound, overcome, and altered by the author even if they have read a wide variety of books. Furthermore, in *Narrative and Its Discontents: Problems of Closure in the Traditional Novel*, D.A. Miller points out that only certain types of desire are narratable, or "capable of producing the waverings and variations that will make up a story line" (Miller 9). Thus, readers of the traditional novel are invited to experience only a limited number of desires. Booth is sometimes too comfortable describing desire as a manifest, discernible element in a text, but Miller refers to "the drift of desire" (xi). This sense of drifting implies that desire shifts and changes as one reads. Desire is amorphous, not a point on the book's horizon toward which one reads. Furthermore, Miller articulates how closure in certain novels can be viewed as evidence of failed authorial attempts to channel desire. He writes, "Jane Austen defines her conception of the operation of closure in a nutshell: a restoration of 'comfort' proceeding by an exclusion of what made things uncomfortable" (77). Although closure is supposed to return readers to a more comfortable representation of human life, some might be dubious about the author's attempt at closure and remain in the drift of desire. Miller writes, "the traditional

novelist gives play to his discontent only to assuage it in the end, much as the child in Freud

makes his toy temporarily disappear the better to enjoy its reinstated presence" (265). However,

"just as the child's toy does not answer to what has really been lost, so too, closure, though it

implies resolution, never really resolves the dilemmas raised by the narratable. In essence,

closure is an act of 'make-believe,' a postulation that closure is possible" (267). When Girard's

triangular desire is combined with Miller's drift of desire, a much more complex description of

the reading experience emerges. Desires pull readers into texts, and readers might be surprised

by what they want more of; they might not be able to move on from these desires by opening

another book.

Miller's and Girard's descriptions of desire problematize Booth's concept of discerning

readers. However, for Booth, the saving grace of reading authors such as Hardy or Austen lies in

the fact that they manage to create imaginative worlds that offer dense and complicated desires.

An unethical text is one that radically limits the spectrum of desires, such as a paperback thriller

or an action movie: "whatever is really 'other' is simply to be feared, not understood. Here we

are, average, normal, comfortably familiar folks, and there they are, the threat. In short, my time

with this friend [the novel] so far has been a narrowing time, a time bifurcating my world into

stereotyped victims and stereotyped, villainous 'others'" (Booth 203). For Booth, these types of

text present a more palpable risk of trapping a reading subject in its pattern of desires. Booth

fears that texts of this kind impose a limited perspective on human behaviour and reduce desire

to ethnocentrism. Encouraging readers to indulge in simple distinctions between self and other,

they fail to inspire a sense of openness. As opposed to accepting this clear binary of good self

and bad other, readers should be in a constant search for selves and others, encountering so many

different points of view that they are skeptical of a simplistic representation of good self versus bad other when it appears in a text. In this sense, Booth's philosophy of reading can partially work around D. A. Miller's critique of the traditional novel as a form that controls and impedes desire. Booth's counter to Miller would be to read *more,* to experience so many different desires through literature that one would begin to see how authors produce narratable moments and then attempt to resolve them through closure. Inevitably, some people will be trapped by certain desires and others will be able to escape them. For Booth, the act of reading literature is not necessarily moral or immoral, but it has the potential to gradually allow a person to observe more of the world. Nevertheless, if a complicated sense of desire can be added to Booth's reading philosophy, then it becomes a strong model for how one might be a restless questioner who shifts between multiple selves.

An awareness of ethos helps readers think about their selves and seek different ways to be. There is not one superior ethos, but readers have limited choices and some choices are better than others. Close scrutiny of the complex desires embedded in narratives, such as novels, provides readers greater agency in choosing the people they want to be. Booth writes, "The ability to form a second-order desire, this judgement about the ethos-I-would-prefer-to-have-and-will-therefore-cultivate, defines personhood" (271).[19] The novel is an excellent genre for contemplation of second-order desires because it allows readers to experience different lives with a sense of detachment: "When reading about fictional characters, one does not feel the need [...] to defend one's own perspective. One can simulate the workings of other minds without the fear of undermining one's own" (Djikic, Oatley and Moldoveanu 153). Readers can compare a

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[19] Booth develops his argument from Charles Taylor's essay "Responsibility for Self" (1976).

variety of different existences with their own, and whether they know it or not, they are always in the process of influencing their ethos. Gregory writes, "Apart from the benefits or afflictions of luck, everything else we do and create is a consequence of our ethical project, creating a self" (177). Although ethos is defined by choices, there are a host of social forces that make certain choices extremely difficult. In "On Cultural Choice," Homi K. Bhaba writes, "There are, of course, many social limitations to cultural choice—poverty, illiteracy, gender, economic hardship, patriarchal authority [...] It is worth noting that this liberal notion of choice is grounded in an iterative or supplementary logic: deliberative cultural choice 'knows' its freedom retroactively, once the revisionary choice has been made" (182). Discussions of ethos need to keep Bhaba's points in mind, and the idea of choice needs to be viewed with a degree of irony: choices exist, but a choice is not always a direct, obvious action, and some people have more opportunities to choose than others.

A focus on ethos is a way for some critics to make descriptions of the self more manageable. Booth, Gregory, and David Williams all fall back on the idea that behaviour can be observed in retrospect through the concept of choice. Thus, although the self might be unknowable, one can think about actions as choices that one has made and view the accumulation of these choices as the expression of an ethos, or one can go back to Aristotle's definition of ethos and think about one's habitual behaviour. This approach is not completely satisfying in its failure to fully consider the implications of an unknowable self. For Butler, the self is an enigma influenced by a host of social forces. Her complicated representation of the self presents a far more realistic and fairer sense of how choice is sometimes illusory, and even though actions reveal an ethos, these actions are not simply a reflection of choice. However, they

are not simply an absence of choice either. It is this complexity that textures understandings of ethos. Further complicating Booth and Gregory's emphasis on choice with Butler's emphasis on radical unknowingness proves to be a nuanced way of thinking about ethos. For Butler, subjects become responsible when they acknowledge that they do not fully understand their own actions: "I speak as an 'I,' but do not make the mistake of thinking that I know precisely all that I am doing when I speak in that way. I find that my very formation implicates the other in me, that my own foreignness to myself is, paradoxically, the source of my ethical connection with others" (84). This formulation means that since one cannot judge one's own action from a purely rational stance, then one cannot always impose reason onto the behaviour of others. Responsible behaviour is thus slow to judge; it accepts that self-knowledge is never fully possible and that people exist only in relation to other people: "we are in our skins, given over, in each other's hands, at each other's mercy. This is a situation we do not choose. It forms the horizon of choice, and it grounds our responsibility" (Butler 101). For Butler, this unknowingness about the self leads to an obligation to others, but for Booth and Gregory the difficulty of fully describing the self leads to an emphasis on actions. Although "choice" is not an ideal word, there is an element of choice in many actions, and over a lifetime, actions accumulate into a story of the self. That story includes gaps and narrative breakdowns. There is much left unsaid when an action is described as a choice, and these descriptions as Gregory suggests should be thought of as a creative act (177), not a factual account. To take a momentary step back, since this study is focussed on authors and on writer-characters, the idea of choice is a little more straightforward than it would be for the general citizenry. Authors need to make aesthetic choices throughout their work. Although there is an element of this unknowingness to the writing process and

although they are also subject to a host of social forces, it is fair to expect authors who have gone

through a lengthy and exhaustive writing process, to have some command over their writing.

They get lost in their work; writing can be akin to dreaming; but they still make choices.

Two of the most important tenets of sousveillance are that authors offer invitations to

their readers and that, in spending time with novels, the self is changed in minute ways. The

theoretical framework in this stage is very closely aligned to the framework that Gregory sets out

in "Redefining Ethical Criticism: The Old vs. the New." Some books ask to be read as critiques

of the criminal justice system or as sympathetic portrayals of a marginalized group; others ask to

be read as descriptions of an artist's growth from youth into adulthood. Some authors might

present a reading that should be interrupted by parody whether they invite it or not. No matter

what authors expect from readers, interactions with texts influence who and what readers desire

to be. Booth's basic premise is that time spent with a text can influence the self. In short, whether

or not readers think of authors as friends or strangers, readers need to take a close look at the

company they are keeping, at the characters and the narratives that change who they are.

Although critics might desire that texts be used to help foster compassion, empathy, autonomy,

or responsibility, such sentiments will be superseded by what is powerful in a narrative and by

what is powerful within the reader: "We are what we will most intensely, whether that be our

investment in reason or our investments in what provides material for reason to work

upon" (Altieri 53). Readers and authors have separate, idiosyncratic wills. A text might invite a

response, but a reader might desire to experience that text in a different way. Altieri argues that

most people create and read literature for its "affective qualities and values" (48). What

influences people, he claims, is not a book's potential within an ethical or a political discourse,

but its emotional and intellectual power deriving from aesthetic qualities. For this reason, literary sousveillance begins with a respect for the aesthetics of a text and then moves outward. The aesthetic is not a protected category in this formulation, but it is a point of initiation to the ethical and the political when one is talking about literary texts. Critics should work with what the text makes available, which might eventually lead to a political or to an ethical reading. However, if ethics and politics are the point of initial interpretation, then critics risk distorting the text. Powerful texts have the ability to alter ethos, just as powerful individuals have the ability to interrupt the language of an author. During the interpretive process, the world of the text and the world of the reader interact, and depending on what the text makes available, this interaction could create a host of different meanings. It is at this point of uncertainty that literary sousveillance needs to begin. Restless questioners welcome the tension between norms and choices as it complicates their observations and their descriptions.

Stage Two: A Sense of Openness

Since fiction breaks down the certainty with which readers may view others, one of the primary goals of sousveillance is to highlight the intellectual virtue of openness and the various ways that authors can create it. I choose openness as an umbrella term to incorporate various forms of not-knowing, which include but are not limited to indeterminacy, uncertainty, ambiguity, alterity, messiness, fancy, and hesitation. These are all forms of not-knowing because they require a moment or moments where one cannot or need not be absolutely sure of what one sees or believes. The ethical imperative for this unknowingness is that people who encounter such a moment as they read are more likely to be open-minded and pause before judging others

(Djikic, Oatley, and Moldoveanu 153). Valuing a sense of openness is common to both the

Anglo-American and the European ethical critics (Serpell 15). Although one tends toward

alterity and the other toward empathy, both forms of ethics should result in a hesitation before

judgement and a respect for others. Respect through empathy, however, means that one tries to

actively think as another person might think; respect through alterity means that one must accept

that one can never think as the Other. Openness is a key virtue in the ethos of restless questioners

because it appears to be one response to reading fiction that ethical critics can find a reasonable

connection even if they cannot agree on empathy or on alterity. Sousveillance allows for some

texts to invite empathy and others to invite alterity.[20]

One problem with the use of alterity or otherness to describe these moments of not-

knowing is that it is overused. Serpell is particularly critical of alterity as a ubiquitous concept in

ethical criticism. She writes that it "has become such a familiar trope of ethical literary criticism

that its various uses have been subsumed to the same upshot: a willing submission to Otherness.

This is the case whether the critic isolates a plot moment, a character's deliberation, or a piece of

language: to zoom in like this will almost inevitably lead to the discovery of uncertainty" (17).

Serpell argues that this common turn to uncertainty makes it paradoxically determinate and

devoid of affect. It is the equivalent of reading spoilers before watching a TV show; viewers or

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[20] Dorothy J. Hale writes, "For these new ethicists and a wave of others, the ethical value of literature lies in the felt encounter with alterity that it brings to its reader" (Hale 899). Hale concentrates on Nussbaum's development of the term "fancy" and argues that it grants readers greater opportunity to imagine new possibilities for their own lives and for others. However, Nussbaum's theory of the institutional uses of books in *Poetic Justice* depends on the ability to feel empathy, which presumes that readers can enter the minds of others. Alterity, on the other hand, is the acceptance of otherness and difference. Thus, although fancy works in Hale's formulation, Nussbaum's full argument in *Poetic Justice* presents some contradictions. For literary sousveillance, this incongruity is fine so long as a reader is able to move back and forth among various selves.

critics already know which surprises are going to occur, and they do not truly feel a moment of otherness. She asks, "So, how do we talk about literary uncertainty without reducing it to a monolithic otherness and without promoting a paralyzed or suspended indeterminacy?" (456). To answer this question, Serpell proposes that critics look for specific elements of texts that create moments of not-knowing. She writes, "This is the simplest way that William Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930) inspires my method. The idea that we might consider many different structures that afford uncertainty works against the tendency to keep it unlocatable and unverifiable" (19). What I want to extrapolate from Serpell's point is first and foremost that specific aesthetic strategies need to be described and secondly that the energy created by moments of not-knowing can be harnessed towards more ends than a concern for the Other. Identifying what is indeterminate is the first step to identifying what is determinate. Furthermore, the sense of not-knowing that I want to concentrate on is the assumption that embracing openness puts readers and authors into what Mikhail Bakthin would describe as "a zone of crude contact," where self and other could even exist together in the intensity of the present (26). This sense of openness is not unlocatable or unverifiable, and it is not suspended or paralyzed. In Chapter Two, I will show that Winter's novels demonstrate how specific aesthetic choices cultivate openness and encourage participation in the interpretive process. When openness, as a way of destabilizing simple interpretations, becomes a functional element of a text, it not only challenges depictions of a heroic past or of an archetype such as the artist as hero, it also encourages reader participation and turns the novel into a dialogue.

Not everyone who comes to a text will have encountered various selves during the reading experience, and it may be more difficult for some to experience "restless

questioning" (Booth 478). Some texts, however, are designed to cultivate openness. One of the basic assumptions of this study is that particular aesthetic choices possess the potential to be ethical in their resistance to simple understandings. In "Making a Mess of Things: Postcolonialism, Canadian Literature, and the Ethical Turn," Herb Wyile argues that the turn to ethics is about demonstrating the complexity of human lives. Aesthetically and critically, this means that the turn has involved "a sustained effort to reframe ethical considerations in the wake of poststructuralist scepticism towards metanarratives, emphasis on the rhetoricity of texts, and highlighting of the seduction of mimesis – the problem, that is, with viewing literature as simply a window onto the world" (821). Instead of merely allowing readers to compile knowledge about self, other, and community, novels invite readers to become more aware of the complexity of these concepts. Wyile argues that a focus on moral ambiguity is one of the central traits of ethical readings: "Perhaps more importantly, the ethical utility of literary texts may well reside most of all in their lack of amenability to clear judgment (whether that judgment be consensus or disagreement) – that is, in their recurrent ambiguity" (831). For Wyile, the turn to ethics is about wading into the complexity of literature and internalizing it as a way-of-seeing. He wants an interpretive practice that is comfortable with uncertainty, that encourages an acceptance of complexity, and that problematizes simple, clear understandings of self, other, and community. His sense of messiness, or textual complexity, is about probing a literary text to find contradictions and challenges to simple interpretation, and this approach leads to a constructive sense of not-knowing.

Enhanced participation created through indeterminacy, messiness, or what I am calling openness, conditions the reading experience to promote engagement and "restless questioning"

rather than agreement and acceptance (Booth 478). Although there are many ways to discuss and to describe openness, this dissertation develops the term in relation to the aesthetic choices made in Michael Winter's first four novels. The distinction between other senses of not-knowing and my own is the emphasis on literature as a "zone of crude contact" (Bakhtin 26). The ethical imperative behind this critical approach to literature is that it should create openmindedness and a complex form of judgement. However, I do not want to describe authors in such a way that could be typified as tidy or simple. To parody my own arguments about literature's power, I will critique and complicate what Hale and Serpell view as a common link among ethical criticism: alterity or uncertainty, or what I am calling openness.

Stage Three: Parody

"Parody" is an important term in this study because it is an aesthetic tool that will allow me to do more than posit the importance of openness. In parodying some of my own assumptions, I highlight the contested nature of ethos among authors, and I demonstrate how parody fosters a complicated understanding of authors and writer-characters. If "restless questioning" (Booth 478) is to be considered an intellectual virtue, readers need to find and discuss narratives that encourage this ethos. Readers and authors should also practice answering some of the questions they pose, but these answers should not be uniform. For example, I have focussed on how fiction creates openness, a state of mind in which one is halted and might feel or think in a host of different ways. However, fiction also has a restraining impulse, one that might work to close people's minds to certain possibilities. Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* offers a way of thinking about this

closure and openness in the same text. Novels that function as parody pose a question and an

answer; they challenge established genres or forms of thought, but they also reaffirm them

(Hutcheon 32). What I want from texts in this third stage of sousveillance is not simply to

counter my previous argument, but to parody it in Hutcheon's sense of the word: "Most theorists

of parody go back to the etymological root of the term in the Greek noun parodia, meaning

'counter-song,' and stop there [...] However, para in Greek can also mean 'beside,' and therefore

there is a suggestion of an accord or intimacy instead of a contrast" (32). In parodying their own

argument or their own text, restless questioners are both against and beside themselves. They are

perpetually asking and answering questions. In doing so, they disperse into a variety of selves.

Restless questioners sometimes fully assent to texts, and other times they aspire to read or

write texts with the critical distance of parody. Gregory assumes that when readers enter a text,

they inhabit a different self than in their daily lives. Stories affect ethos through the rhetoric of

the author: "when we assent to a story's demands—when we feel as it asks us to feel, when we

believe, and when we judge as it asks us to judge—what happens to us is that we take another

step in becoming the persons that we turn out to be" (Gregory 67). He insists that readers

experience a story on its own terms and that they attempt to remove private interests from the

interpretive process. Essentially, Gregory wants them to yield to the desires of the author.

However, part of the pleasure of experiencing a narrative derives from dissent, from the ability to

fluctuate between agreement and disagreement with the author's rhetoric. Serpell describes the

fluctuation between empathy and alterity (44), and a similar kind of flexibility might prove

useful to restless questioners. Booth discusses texts that embed a counter-argument to the desires

they ask the reader to experience; they work "hard to alert the careful reader to the need for a

double vision—a combination of joyful credulity [...] and shrewd sophistication" (Booth 432).

This doubleness is a formal structure of parody (Hutcheon 32). My problem with the type of

balanced assent and detachment that Hutcheon, Serpell, and Booth describe in different ways is

that they all presume a similar type of reader for each text. This reader is not really one who has

the opportunity to be various selves. She or he is a single self who strives to maintain control

among a host of different texts. Thus, Gregory's description of assent might suggest the only path

to a multiform self.

What makes me uneasy about Gregory's theoretical framework, however, is the

possibility of becoming a self who I truly do not want to be. If we desperately will a particular

response, be it in conjunction with or in opposition to the text's desires, we are subject to our

own private pendulum "of joyful credulity [...] and shrewd sophistication" (Booth 432). As

Altieri might argue, it is not that difficult to ignore a counter-argument if we find a self within a

text that is particularly intoxicating. Booth, for example, argues that acquiring imaginary selves

should not be problematic so long as there are more texts available to contribute to each new

construction of the self:

> If [...] I am not an individual self at all, but a character, a social self, a being-in-process
>
> many of whose established dispositions or habits belong to others [...] then I need have
>
> no anxiety about finding and preserving a unique core for the various characters that in a
>
> sense have colonized me and continue to do so. I should be able to embrace the
>
> unquestioned ethical power of narratives, in order to try on for size the character roles
>
> offered me. (268)

The issue that I have with Booth's concept of character roles or of Gregory's description of assent is not that I disagree, but that I have anxiety about the possibility of the right texts surfacing for me to read. Although a series of selves can be cultivated, it seems difficult to imagine the type of person who possesses the self-awareness and the honesty to identify these various selves and secondly, to have the time and resources to find the narrative experiences that will properly parody each self.

Instead of relying on chance to place these parodies and parodic moments in conversation, this study creates a forum for readers to observe the selves of various writer-characters in the first two chapters, and then critiques them through parodic readings in the final chapter. *Hope in the Desperate Hour, Mean Boy, The Shadow Boxer* and *How Should a Person Be?* reinforce, interrupt, or reformulate the belief that authors are cultural heroes. However, creative writing tends to be the central focus of each writer-character's existence. Their obsession with literature reduces the available conversations about writing to people who assume it is of extreme importance to Canadian society. In the first four novels by Michael Winter, literary artists are not cultural heroes, but they view and they describe the world in powerful ways. Their complex gaze asks readers to experience openness. The inclusion of a writer-character in a novel invites a critical eye, not simply directed at the fictional literary artist, but at the author as well. In the four novels discussed in the chapter on parody, writer-characters still foster openness, but they also offer narrowing points of view. Writer-characters can be stubborn, foolish, or ignorant; their texts can encourage similar behaviour. Parody reveals a more nuanced representation of the reading and the writing experience.

Parody encourages a multidirectional gaze, that is both a push and an embrace. Literary sousveillance is an odd amalgamation of the Anglo-American and the European ethical critics, and it utilizes both sides through the concept of openness (Hale 190, Serpell 15). This push of parody, however, takes the discussion one step further. Restless questioners cannot simply be comfortable with the ethical imperative of generating complex literary selves, others, and communities. They need to parody and satirize themselves; they need to challenge their self-perceptions; and they need to question their own ethics constantly. Paradoxically, they also need to move forward from these interruptions; they need to be persistent; and they need to occasionally feel certain of the good that can be derived from creative activity. As citizens living in a country where books and free time are available, we should be concerned about our ethos and about our national character. If we do not, then they will be defined for us. In the section that follows, I set out a framework for the restless questioner as a social self. Reading and writing books take place in the world; restless questioners are political beings who embrace parody of themselves, their communities, and their culture.

The Restless Questioner as a Social Self

I argued earlier it is necessary to have an ethical imperative, but ethicists also tend to propose a preferred social self for their readers. By a social self, I refer to the ethos that restless questioners recommend to others in their public or their professional lives. Two contrasting examples of such concepts that inform this study are Richard Rorty's liberal ironist in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* and Simon Critchley's comic anarchist in *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance.* Literary sousveillance aims to create

a self who is adept at creating new selves, others, and communities through aesthetics or argumentation. This self is also a citizen who has social and political goals for his or her literary or critical work. One essential distinction between thinkers such as Rorty and Critchley is the type of solidarity that each desires to promote. Rorty's solidarity promotes public commonalities and private autonomy, whereas Critchley wants a community of differences and a self who embraces responsibility to others. Restless questioners as critics aspire to shift between the social selves described by Rorty and Critchley depending on what a text makes available (they might also fuse the compatible elements of these two thinkers if the opportunity arises). As authors, restless questioners aspire to invite these shifts through aesthetic choices. However, the key distinction between these other selves—which describe hypothetical citizens—and the restless questioner is that I am discussing a self who performs specific actions in his or her society: creative writing.

Rorty details the ethos of the liberal ironist whom he believes would make an ideal citizen. The private self searches for autonomy, and the public self's imperative is to reduce cruelty in the world. He writes,

> I shall define an "ironist" as someone who fulfills three conditions: (1) She has radical and continuing doubts about the final vocabulary she currently uses [...] (2) she realizes that argument phrased in her present vocabulary can neither underwrite nor dissolve these doubts; (3) insofar as she philosophizes about her situation, she does not think that her vocabulary is closer to reality than others. (Rorty 73)

For Rorty's ironists, language is a path to autonomy. They construct a vocabulary that is distinct from previous vocabularies, and in this way, the ironist becomes free from the influences of

others. This ironist self, for Rorty, is only half of the equation. The liberal is composed of a self

"for whom (to use Judith Shklar's definition) 'cruelty is the worst thing they do'" (74). The

division between the private ironist and the public liberal is a result of a political failure of the

ironist self. He writes, "I see this [ironist] line of thought as largely irrelevant to public life and to

political questions. Ironist theorists like Hegel, Nietzsche, Derrida, and Foucault seem to me

invaluable in our attempt to form a private self-image, but pretty much useless when it comes to

politics" (Rorty 83). In contrast, Critchley argues in *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and

Levinas* that a thinker such as Derrida can be used to political ends if his work is combined with

the ethical philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas (xx-xxi). Thus although the liberal ironist could

marry private autonomy with pubic solidarity, Rorty doubts that ironist thinking could be an

important component of the political.

There are basic problems with the idea of the ironist philosopher, specifically Rorty's

focus on autonomy through language. Butler's description of a self who can never fully trace its

own origins comes into conflict with Rorty's description of the ironist. A limited autonomy,

however, is still a reasonable social aim. Rorty writes, "To fail as a poet—and thus, for Nietzsche,

to fail as a human being—is to accept somebody else's description of oneself, to execute a

previously prepared program, to write, at most, elegant versions of previously written poems. So

the only way to trace home the causes of one's being as one is would be to tell a story about

one's causes in a new language" (28). In contrast, Butler describes the impossibility of

autonomy, even the necessity of forfeiting it as a goal. In *Theories of Subjection: The Psychic

Life of Power,* she writes, "only by absorbing the other as oneself does one become something at

all. [...] Indeed, by forfeiting that notion of autonomy survival becomes possible" (195-196). One

can never be free from the descriptions of others and the descriptions that are imposed by social norms. In *Giving an Account of Oneself,* she argues that there is no fully going back to one's origins in order to redescribe one's selfhood (Butler 39-40). Autonomy through language is illusory, and instead Butler argues that this not-knowing should lead one to embrace responsibility through language (84). One must simply accept that there are limitations to self-knowledge and that there is no complete way to rework one's language into something wholly new. In this sense, ironists are also always failures. However, neither Butler nor Critchley would reject the possibility or the relevance of a modified, limited sense of autonomy. Whether authors choose to strive for autonomy or responsibility, they might wind up feeling a very similar sense of failure. With Critchley's sense of the comic, however, the ironist author should be able to endure.

Critchley also writes of a divided self, but his division is between the self that we desire to be and the self that our behaviour actually reveals. He writes, "the ethical subject that I have chosen to be enters into conflict with the self that I am, producing a divided experience of self as self-failure" (22). This failure is not cause to give up. Instead, failure is cause for a type of self-deprecating humour and stubborn persistence. Critchley argues for a way-of-being that bears similarities to Albert Camus's conception of the absurd, in which a person recognizes "the ridiculous character of the habit, the absence of any profound reason for living, the insane character of that daily agitation, and the uselessness of suffering [...] in a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger" (Camus 6). Critchley describes a Sisyphean demand in the sense that it will never be achieved but one must still push forward. For Critchley, the metaphorical boulder is a continuation of Levinasian ethics: one must "love your

neighbour as yourself, but that is not enough, you should also love your enemies [...] if you love only those who love you in return, then you are not open to the more radical demand of the stranger, the foreigner, the adversary" (52). This impossible demand is simply part of the comic struggle of trying to be an ethical person. He writes, "far from failure being a reason for dejection or disaffection, I think it should be viewed as the condition for courage in ethical action" (Critchley 55). For Critchley, "the tragic paradigm distorts the picture of human finitude by making the subject too heroic [...] Humour [in contrast] is a more minimal, less heroic form of sublimation that allows the subject to bear the excessive, indeed hyperbolic, burden of the ethical demand without the demand turning into obsessive self-hatred and cruelty" (77-79). In short, humour allows the ethical subject to persist in a never-ending struggle to meet his or her ethical demand. Critchley describes an individual who is self-disparaging and humble enough to pursue a good despite consistent failures. Tragedy requires an end and that generally entails the end of the subject. Critchley's proposed self is not a tragic figure who achieves autonomy but a "divided self, an originally inauthentic humorous self that can never attain the autarchy of self-mastery" (11). Critchley's comic anarchist experiences a profound responsibility to other people, and this imperative could be used to political ends. Rather than a self who must live his or her life bearing a Sisyphean demand, Critchley proposes a self who accepts this demand strategically. To adjust Critchley's framework, I want a self who can be various people, ones that sometimes seek commonalities and at other times embrace differences.

Critchley and Rorty are both flexible thinkers who posit complex ethics. One complicating factor is that Rorty's ironists are generally European theorists, philosophers such as Hegel, Nietzche, Derrida, and Foucault. However, his sense of solidarity, like that of the Anglo-

Americans, is focussed more on the search for commonalities than on an embrace of differences. Rorty describes both modes of being in a divided self. Similarly, Critchley is flexible enough to consider the advantages of both sameness and otherness. He does not "rule out autonomy" (127), but his push is clearly for a self who focuses on the Other. This flexibility is helpful in thinking about the Anglo-Americans and the Europeans at the same time. Serpell wants to combine these two into one thinker who oscillates "with an extreme movement between empathy and alterity" (44). This oscillation appears to be a path forward from an overemphasis on otherness or on sameness. Serpell describes this approach as a "flinging of the self toward the other that nevertheless recognizes its own futility and thus neither dissolves the self nor appropriates the other" (58). The trick for Serpell in this oscillation is to remember that one's attempt to understand the other is also always a projection onto the Other (71). Although Serpell presents a promising way to combine the Europeans and the Anglo-Americans into one self, she is also changing what it means to approach the Other. The absolutely Other does not allow for any association with the self; that is its ethical force. Thus, we cannot really experience an oscillation that Serpell describes in one self. We could, however, experience a different oscillation, one that shifts among a variety of selves. The restless questioner could be a Levinasian self who is responsible to the Other at one time and a Boothian self who seeks commonalities at other times. In this theoretical framework, I am removing the term "infinite" from responsibility. The social forces of the selves that Rorty and Critchley describe are not compatible, but a person can choose to oscillate between them and among other selves. Restless questioners are comfortable oscillating between selves; they do not view any self as a totality; they never settle on a final,

linguistic vocabulary; they aim to use whatever language might prove to be advantageous to create or to interpret a text.

The self I am describing is one who is contradictory, divided into many selves, and constantly changing. The restless questioner is a living, breathing person who creates or interprets literary fiction. Their ethical imperative is to generate openness through their writing or criticism, and this goal means that their first responsibility is to their texts. They are social and political selves. Far from negating responsibility to others, however, restless questioners create opportunities for readers to experience alterity as well as empathy depending on who they are striving to be in that moment and what the text makes available. In contrast to Critchley, the selfhood that I propose does not necessarily need to be active in anarchic politics but might feel an ethical responsibility to such a cause. Restless questioners could be liberals in the flawed way that Rorty describes them, or they could be socialists, or conservatives, or simply uninterested in politics. Restless questioners should be many people, but there are limitations to who they can be, for they must also respect otherness. They might be a person who feels a profound responsibility to the Other, but they cannot actually be the Other. At their core—and they do have a core that they can return to when necessary—the force of their selfhood is directed to creativity and to sharing their creativity with others. One essential difference between Rorty's and Critchley's selves from my own is that the restless questioner is a writing and a reading self. Rorty wants an autonomous ironist private self combined with a liberal public self who seeks commonalities. Critchley wants an anarchist self who feels responsibility to others and persists through comic self-deprecation. I want a multiform self capable of combining the compatible elements of both but also capable of oscillating between various incompatible selves. Restless

questioners are constantly looking inward and outward, and in their limited position as creative

beings, they make the world a little more complicated, a little more nuanced. In this sense,

literary sousveillance as a form of ethics begins with aesthetics and close attention to descriptive

practices but must move outward to a community of consensus or of dissensus depending on the

contingencies of their time and place.

In the remainder of this dissertation, I practice literary sousveillance but in slightly

different ways from one chapter to the next. In the first chapter, I discuss ethos and desires

related to the world of authors and writing. I consider how the concept of the artist as hero—

which I will describe at the beginning of chapter one—might influence the reading experience.

David Adams Richards' *Hope in the Desperate Hour* features two writer-characters in the

subplot. One is an ostracized genius, while another uses writing to manipulate and take

advantage of people. A comparison of these two characters reveals information that can be read

as a guide for how one might become recognized as an artist of genius. When Richards'

representation of a doomed writer-character is paired with Lynn Coady's more parodic take on

the world of writing in *Mean Boy*, a conversation happens that traverses rich ethical territory. The

parodic elements in Coady's novel challenge idealistic understandings of authorship. The

narrator's intellectual growth occurs while he is away from home at university where he

befriends a troubled but gifted poet-professor whom he idolizes. The arc of the novel follows the

narrator's gradual realization that his hero is a fallible human being. Steven Heighton's

Künstlerroman, *The Shadow Boxer,* reworks Romantic concepts in a contemporary environment.

The Shadow Boxer's protagonist, Sevigne Torrins, is heroic and foolish in his passion to be a

literary artist. His ethos provides an excellent example of the persistence and the sacrifice

required of literary artists. His sacrifice, however, also leads to questions about whether or not

literary art is worth such intense struggle. Sheila Heti's *How Should a Person Be?* is about one

writer-character's examination of her ethos through writing. Heti takes language that people have

employed to discuss art, and she uses it to describe incongruous topics such as hairstyling and

oral sex. This incongruity highlights the fact that people in a variety of communities think of

themselves as distinct and uniquely important to their culture. Ideally, these texts create a

conversation about literary artists and the concept of the artist as hero. Initially, Coady, Heighton,

and Heti appear to reject Romantic influences, but upon careful rereading, they are revising older

theories for a constantly changing world. Although these books allow readers to encounter

various selves, those who are entranced by the motif of the artist as hero will not necessarily see

these possibilities. Ideally, they facilitate a reader's movement from simple naiveté to a selfhood

that is comfortable in a state of unknowingness.

The novels in the second chapter have been selected based on one of the consistent

principles throughout ethical criticism and one of the central concepts of this dissertation:

openness. An individual author can develop different types of openness with distinct theoretical

goals for each text he or she produces. To illustrate this point, I have chosen the first four novels

of Michael Winter, all of which feature writer-characters or a rationale from the author himself,

and all of which foster different types of openness. In *This All Happened,* Winter offers a journal

written by a literary artist. Some readers and critics assume that Winter uses fiction as a mask to

gossip about his friends and family (Armstrong 37-38). He blurs fact and fiction, and he

demonstrates how novels have the potential not only to change perception, but to create reality.

Criticism of *This All Happened* has focused on surveillance; I offer a parodic reading with the

concept of sousveillance. In *The Big Why*, Winter challenges the truth of first-person historical

accounts through his artist character, Rockwell Kent. In *The Architects Are Here,* the confusion

of immediate experience is contrasted with the certainty of hindsight. Finally, *The Death of*

Donna Whalen presents a murder trial and its effect on a number of people in a St. John's

community. Winter questions the functionality of the criminal justice system as a creator of

truths, specifically in deciding who is guilty and who is not. In all of these texts, he creates a

sense of openness about authors and writing. He either presents scenarios in which literary artists

might observe their society, or he insists on aesthetic choices that will make his readers less

certain of what they hear and see.

The third chapter continues with this theme of openness and challenging certitude

through fiction. Since a parody offers a different, sometimes inverse, perspective on a novel or

story, I have selected books for this chapter based on how well they add texture to the discourse

created by the novels in the first two chapters. By adding texture to a discourse, I mean that

novels simultaneously criticize and reinforce established fields of thought. Russell Smith's

Muriella Pent and Edward Riche's *Easy to Like* have been paired because they explore arts

funding. When budgets are slashed and people in various fields are expected to demonstrate that

they make direct contributions to the economy, the value of literary artists risks being

overlooked. Through a focus on bureaucracy in the world of writing, Smith highlights the fact

that, even when there is money for literary artists, it is sometimes distributed in a way that does

not benefit creative writing. Riche's protagonist quits writing early in the narrative to become an

executive with the CBC. Unfortunately, he treats his subordinates in accordance with the same

narrow-minded and self-serving managerial style that he despised when he was a screenwriter.

When placed in conversation with each other, these two novels respond to the question, "How should authors be when they are expected to contribute to the economy?" Lawrence Hill's *Any Known Blood* has helped me to think of writing outside of the insular, European-centric self to which I was accustomed. Hill's character does not have the opportunity to ask, "How should an author be?" The questions that he uses to direct the processes of self-creation are always complicated, and not necessarily in a bad way, by race. Langston Cane V must ask, "How should a black author be?" Or even more complicated, "How should an author of mixed race be?" It should not be inferred that white authors do not need to think about their race in relation to writing or that whiteness is not a raced subjectivity; however, *Any Known Blood* clearly invites readers to think about connections between race and writing. Lynn Coady's *The Antagonist* is narrated by Gordon Rankin Jr., who feels as though he has been unfairly characterized in his friend's novel. Rankin writes his own version of their shared past from his point of view. *The Antagonist* responds to the question, "How should a reader be?" In this sense, Rankin's narration parodies the writer-centric perception of the majority of the novels in this study. These books have specific targets that align well with the earlier portions of this dissertation; they challenge the ethical imperative for restless questioners: to create a sense of openness through writing. Restless questioners can never stop critiquing themselves. Through perpetual self-critique they help highlight the contested nature of ethos in relation to authors and writing in Canada.

The anxiety that threads this thesis together is that surveillance is a force that totalizes; it limits the various ways that people might get to be. My wager is that literary artists are among the best candidates to create various complex imaginary selves, others, and communities. They need critics who also operate as restless questioners to describe how these various selves, others,

and communities come to life through the interpretive process. This task of authors and ethical

critics becomes an imperative when placed in the context of contemporary society and the

anxieties brought on by surveillance. An ethics of sousveillance does not need to operate solely

as a direct counter to surveillance. It simply has to multiply possible selves, others, and

communities. The personhood of the restless questioner, who enacts an ethos that is derived from

both the European and the Anglo-American ethical critics, is the ideal person to practice

sousveillance and to create new selves. How should an author be? Authors should be many

different people, and they should facilitate this multiplicity in others.

Chapter One: Ethos and Restless Questioners

In the introduction, I engage in a discourse on the ethics of reading, and I argue for the value of texts that encourage a sense of openness. By constructing complicated texts, authors invite readers to encounter various selves, others, and communities. However, literary artists should also be aware of how they are represented in their culture and how these representations might influence their ethos. The discussion to follow utilizes the motif of the artist as hero in *Hope in the Desperate Hour, Mean Boy, The Shadow Boxer,* and *How Should a Person Be?* to seek moments of openness and to demonstrate how, taken together, these novels encourage readers to enter into a state of unknowingness. George Elliot Clarke defines literature as aesthetic documents that are deemed important by a thoughtful community (43). The person or the group of people who produce these documents are also deemed to be important in one way or another. Although literary criticism has moved away from thinking about authors as isolated Romantic geniuses (Hutcheon 86), criticism about authors and writer-characters still needs to wrestle with this Romantic archetype and even interrupt it occasionally. The idea of the literary artist in this study is informed by the English Romantics, some of whom became or wanted to become heroes to their culture.

My use of the motif of the "artist as hero" is meant ironically. It was developed by Maurice Beebe, who writes, "As long as art was considered chiefly a matter of imitation, the artist seemed less important than his subject. When he claimed a special faculty—the imagination—which permitted him to perceive deeper truths than those known to the less visionary, he made the one who sees more important than what is seen" (26). Although Beebe is

admittedly an older source, his concept of the artist as hero is still influential. Chris Armstrong

uses this term in "The Rock Observed: Art and Surveillance in Michael Winter's *This All*

Happened," and it is also used by Lisa Salem-Wiseman in "Divided Cities, Divided Selves:

Portraits of the Artist as Ambivalent Urban Hipster." Furthermore, Richard Florida's influential

description[21] of creative people in *The Rise of the Creative Class* bears similarities to Beebe's

'artistic temperament' in that he groups a diverse array of individuals by class, or "a cluster of

people who have common interests and tend to think, feel and behave similarly, but these

similarities are fundamentally determined by economic function" (Florida 8). Although Florida

attempts to portray creative people as diverse and multifaceted (13), he also describes a set of

transhistorical characteristics among the so-called creative class. For example, he writes,

"Creative people always have experienced and even cultivated a blurring of time. Writers, artists,

musicians, scientists and inventors often have erratic and irregular schedules, working from

home and seemingly playing at work" (Florida 14); and later, he adds, "Creative people have

always gravitated to certain kinds of communities" (15). Thus, what emerges is a gross

simplification of diversity and multiplicity that can be harnessed for economic purposes: "The

main point I want to make here is that the basis of the Creative Class is economic [...] The

creative class consists of people who add economic value through their creativity" (68). Rather

than cultural heroes, in Florida's formulation, this group of creatives help the economy.[22] In the

third chapter of this dissertation, I discuss how Sarah Brouillette in *Literature and the Creative*

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[21] Sarah Brouillette describes how and why Florida's work has been influential in *Literature and the Creative Economy* (20).

[22] Florida's descriptions of the creative class can be disturbingly utilitarian in this respect: "Access to talented and creative people is to modern business what access to coal and iron ore was to steelmaking" (6).

Economy criticizes Florida's construction of the Creative Class; for now, however, I want to note that Brouillette connects Florida's description to a Romantic archetype: "Florida's definition of creativity makes the language of the market and the language of individual expressivity inextricable, and it reimagines the original genius of Romantic ideology as one who has found the ideal commercial outlet for a given innovation" (23). Heroes come in many forms; in Florida's model, perhaps this is how the so-called creative person becomes a heroic figure. In any case, my usage of this phrase is designed to critique the concept of the artist as hero, which appears to be connected to a white, European selfhood that can be traced to the English Romantics.

The motif of the artist as hero influences authors and cultural perceptions of writing. In *Culture and Society: 1780-1950,* Raymond Williams's description of artists from the Romantic period explains how certain authors felt wrongly trivialized and needed to assert their social relevance by emphasizing the importance of literary art. He writes, "at a time when the artist is being described as just one more producer of a commodity for the market [a cultural producer], he is describing himself as a specially endowed person, the guiding light of the common life [an artist]" (Williams 36). A gap exists between the importance assigned to artists by society and the cultural significance artists assign themselves. From the perspective of the market, literature is only one product among many, but for literary artists, their product is unique and important. In Williams's description of the English Romantics, the joy of art is a protest against the monotony and the dread of industrialization; moreover, there is "an emphasis on the embodiment in art of certain human values, capacities, energies, which the development of society [...] was felt to be threatening or even destroying" (Williams 36). Although dilemmas from the Romantic period

may seem dated, similar issues persist today, but for different reasons. The protagonist of

Heighton's novel, Sevigne Torrins, does not live at the beginning of the industrial revolution, but

he feels solidarity with the Romantics. He feels that city life is threatening to destroy his

authentic self. However, the true enemy of Torrins's artistic vision is his own inability to

redescribe his idea of literary artists in a reasonable way. The force that nearly crushes Torrins is

the concept of the artist as hero and its popular mythologies, which tend to be skewed to straight,

white, European, and male experience.

Gender, race, and sexuality are all categories that also influence how people think of

literary artists. In *How Should a Person Be?,* Sheila Heti challenges gender norms in her

conflation of the words "messiah," "genius," and "cock." She points out that literary discourse

socializes and that the talent of male authors is more readily recognized than that of female

authors. Gender influences male authors in that they tend to assert their masculinity through a

violent search for autonomy. In two of the novels by male authors in this study, *The Shadow*

Boxer and *The Architects Are Here,* boxing takes on a metaphorical aspect.[23] Fighting is not an

exclusively male phenomenon, but there does appear to be a connection between the metaphor of

surviving a fight and male authorship. Furthermore, in *Mean Boy,* Larry Campbell's family

members, particularly his father, connect Campbell's interest in poetry to an effeminate streak.

While women lack examples of great female artists, literary men seem to perform an exaggerated

masculinity in order to keep their manhood intact. Race influences and affects the way that

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[23] I will return to this point in *The Shadow Boxer* later in this chapter. In *The Architects Are Here,* Winter writes, "We both boxed and were in the same weight division, although I was tall and jabbed while Dave worked inside and hooked to the kidneys. Once, while sparring, Dave sent a hook to the temple. I was down. I felt the buzzle and lightness of my body [...] I was out for about ten seconds. It made me realize this is what death is like. There is no life after death. There is no duration in the dark of waiting" (4).

authors and writing are understood, but the white authors in this study generally do not discuss this detail. For example, although Heti points out the bias of literary discourses to male authors using the words "messiah," "genius," and "cock," she neglects to add the word "white." In contrast, Lawrence Hill's *Any Known Blood,* which I talk about in chapter three, most obviously deals with the way that race influences the world of authors and writing. He often struggles to negotiate his blackness and his whiteness in relation to his desire to be a literary artist. Each one of these authors and writer-characters struggles with norms either latently or manifestly, and some influences are more difficult to trace than others.

The books in this chapter are not exclusively *Künstlerroman*, but aspiring authors might focus on writer-characters simply because of their powerful desire to be an artist hero. The criterion for an artist hero involves the quality of an individual's imagination[24] and the significance of that imaginative capability to a community. A subplot in Richards's *Hope in the Desperate Hour* creates a dichotomy between a heroic writer-character and a villainous writer-character. The heroic writer-character suffers while he is alive, but he appears to be revered after his death.[25] For some readers, this contrast might prove so powerfully intoxicating that they ignore the nuances and the complexities of Richards's text. In Coady's *Mean Boy,* poet-professor Jim Arsenault appears to be an artist hero and a temperamental genius, but as the novel progresses, the narrator, Larry Campbell, realizes that his hero is human and fallible. Campbell is only partially aware, however, of how stifled and abused Arsenault feels in the university system.

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[24] This is a subjective category that can be evaluated in relation to Clarke's definition of literature. A thoughtful community decides on the quality of an author's imagination.

[25] Whether or not Dexter is actually appreciated by his community is debatable. He has a building at a university named after him, but much of this text invites criticism of this university and its professors.

Heighton's *The Shadow Boxer* critiques the world of literature, but he also emphasizes the inspirational qualities of being a literary artist. Ultimately, however, both *Mean Boy* and *The Shadow Boxer* revise Romantic notions of the artist as hero, offering more realistic valuations of a literary artist's significance to his or her community. Heti highlights and ironizes the gaps between older theories of literature and contemporary life. Her text invites readers to observe the sexist nature of the artist-as-hero discourse. Although Heti presents an ironic surface, she implies that literary artists are deeply important figures to their communities. These four novels have the potential to create a host of different desires in readers, and when all four are read in conjunction, these desires are reshaped with each new reading experience.

When these books are placed in a discourse with each other, they complicate understandings of authors and of writer-characters, and they have the potential to alter ethos. Literary sousveillance identifies what is powerful in a text, but it also needs to anticipate what may be powerful in readers of that text. The strongest desires in a reader change the way he or she interprets a novel during the reading experience (Altieri 53). For example, a reading of *Hope in the Desperate Hour* could be profoundly influenced by the artist as hero motif. If a reader is overwhelmed by a powerful desire to become an author of genius, then sections of the text might be ignored by someone who is captivated by the dichotomy of the heroic versus the villainous literary artist. Changes in a reader's thinking about authors and writer-characters could be influenced by other books, such as *Mean Boy.* For example, Coady's novel can be read as a challenge to representations of authorship in *Hope in the Desperate Hour*. For some readers, one obstruction to reading with an open mind is this confused understanding of authors as cultural

heroes, even potentially tragic figures.[26] Thus, one goal for this chapter is to highlight multiple

ways of interrupting this archetype so that restless questioners reading these texts might forge an

alternative ethos.

David Adams Richards's *Hope in the Desperate Hour*: The Artist as Hero

How does a reader's ethos intersect with the ethos of the author and the ethos of critics

who have written about a novel? To answer this question, Booth proposes the idea of coduction,

a way of "comparing my [reading] experience with other more or less qualified observers" (72).

In this section, however, I am going to take a slightly different approach and compare the desires

in a text with the desires that a hypothetical reader wants satisfied. There are a number of

aesthetic invitations—as Marshall Gregory might term them—in David Adams Richards' *Hope

in the Desperate Hour*. One of the more powerful and potentially overwhelming aesthetic

elements of this novel is a dichotomy between a heroic writer-character in Emile Dexter and a

villainous writer-character in Christopher Wheem. For a passionate, aspiring author, this

representation of a good self and a bad other can overwhelm the rest of the text. The desire to be

a heroic literary artist alters the reading experience and reduces *Hope in the Desperate Hour* to a

novel about two writer-characters. Several characters write in this novel, and all of them attempt

to reveal truths, but only Dexter understands his community and feels sincere compassion for his

subjects. Wheem, on the other hand, is arrogant and manipulative; he writes only to further his

own interests. Even though readers might choose to accept this aesthetic invitation in their first

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[26] When I discuss tragedy or the tragic in this chapter, I am using the definition that can be found
in *A Glossary of Literary Terms:* "The term is broadly applied to literary, and especially to
dramatic, representations of serious actions which eventuate in a disastrous conclusion for the
protagonist" (Abrams 321).

reading, Richards's text also invites interruptions. Readers who are fascinated with these two

extreme representations of the heroic self in Dexter and the villainous other in Wheem might

indulge in a heroic narrative about a tragic writer-character. To interrupt this reading, however,

one could consider Dexter's ethos alongside Wheem's ethos and question how their creative

activity affects their communities.

Emile Dexter exists in *Hope in the Desperate Hour* as a troubled outsider and a

misunderstood genius. Unlike Wheem, Dexter remains humble and reserved about his artistic

interests, which are born out of a deep compassion for his community. Wheem's interest in

writing is self-serving and self-indulgent. In contrast to Dexter, he attempts to write about trendy

issues, and he flaunts himself as a literary artist. Differences between the two are established

early in the novel when Wheem reads from his manuscript: "The senator's wife ended up having

an affair with a student much like Wheem. The sexual prowess of the young man was laboured

over and discussed in detail—this seemed the most serious part of the text" (Richards 30). While

Wheem uses his fiction to brag, Dexter sits quietly in the background and eventually says,

"'Well, I don't know much about it [...] so I wish you luck'" (Richards 30). In contrast to

Wheem, Dexter avoids the spotlight, acknowledges his ignorance and offers a potential

competitor his best wishes. Afterwards, a mutual friend who witnessed the scene describes the

difference between these two writer-characters: "'Wheem is bright, very, very bright, in a crafty

way. He will always get along—in everything. He will cross the stream into the new world. But

Dexter is the man [...] Dexter, however, will not get along—even his friends will curse him. He

will never be able to cross. He will die before he does'" (Richards 31). The novel proves this

friend to be correct. Wheem thrives in the university community through his intelligence, his

cunning, and his performative nature. Dexter's compassionate observations of his community are

misunderstood as judgmental, and he is ostracized. Time, the only revealer of truth, proves

Dexter to have been right all along and Wheem to have been self-serving and manipulative.

Dexter remains uncompromising in his artistic vision, whereas Wheem attempts to follow

whatever fad might grant him recognition. Despite his sincerity and his compassion, Dexter is

attacked by his community and by the arbiters of taste in academia. Literary critics object to his

work on ideological grounds: "he was wealthy, and he wrote about 'poor people,' which gave his

province, already struggling against this fierce stereotype, a worse reputation than it

deserved" (Richards 38). This critique would surprise him since he is writing about what he has

witnessed in his own community. He would not see his characters as negatively representing the

province because he loves them with a deep sincerity. In response to this supposed reinforcement

of provincial stereotypes, the narrator offers a forceful and a stubborn assertion of humanist

values. Dexter's community does not reject his work on philosophical grounds. On a more

visceral level, they feel affronted by the mirror he holds up to his community. Two characters

agree that "'He don't understand the people'" (Richards 54). Nevertheless, when his novels

become prophetic, his understanding of his community is validated. The way in which he

represents people, however, can make it difficult for them to appreciate what he has written:

"Vicki [the wife of Dexter's close friend, Garth Shackle] had hated this man's work when she

had first heard she was written about, because she could not imagine herself or anyone like her,

represented as a tragic[27] figure, and couldn't begin to read it" (Richards 55). Vicki thinks of

herself as a heroine, and any contradiction of her self-perception proves to be a source of anger.

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[27] I understand this usage of "tragic" as colloquial rather than literary.

The academic community and his hometown both fail to understand that the redeeming factor of Dexter's work is its "terrible compassion [... and] Dexter's books were always an affront to anyone who did not understand this compassion" (Richards 55). His inability to compromise his vision makes him a target to the people he has offended; Vicki Shackle accuses him of pedophilia. Although he suffers for his art, his work is eventually revered. Wheem, on the other hand, is quickly forgotten. Dexter's story resembles that of Christ's death and rebirth, but instead of an actual resurrection, his words and his name rise again. A building at a university is named after him. His compassion and his persistent assertion of humanist values become tragic when he is treated as a pariah by the people he loves. The immediate benefits belong to Wheem, but Dexter eventually is lionized by the same people who viewed him with disdain.

During his life, Dexter avoids seeming important and attempts to allow his writing to speak for itself. Wheem, in contrast, uses his status to get attention and to influence others. In this dichotomy, the good writer-character's ethos involves the removal of self-interest in order to write with true compassion, whereas the villainous writer-character can only ever think of himself. The values of the heroic writer-character are admirable, ones that an aspiring author might want to emulate. Upon closer examination, however, there appears to be a way of interrupting Dexter's ethos. He presents himself as a humble and a simple person while articulating his community and pronouncing the doomed futures of his friends. These are not the ambitions of a humble person, but Dexter avoids seeming hypocritical by denying the importance of his own work: "Dexter said he didn't think he would ever write any more [...] writing, he said, was simply a mistake" (Richards 44). Even if others assign importance to his novels, he resists their social significance. Wheem, however, is outwardly interested in the

potential rewards that he can garner in being identified as an artist. Not only does Dexter avoid

seeming self-important, he believes the similarities between his characters and the people in his

community are accidental: "Dexter had not consciously written about Garth or Vicki. It was

simply that everything he had written seemed to Neil to have a link to Garth's world" (45).

Dexter never attempts to articulate his community, but he feels such a deep connection to the

people in his town that his writing inevitably reflects his time, his place and the people he knows.

His observations and descriptions are not excused solely by his personality and by his professed

ignorance. He also knows his community intimately, and he attempts to avoid being judgmental.

The narrator describes Dexter's fiction as a "non-judgmental, knowledgeable

intrusion" (Richards 45). It is questionable as to how Dexter's novels avoid seeming judgmental

since so many characters feel judged by his descriptive practices. The comparison between the

good writer-character and the bad writer-character works in Dexter's favour, however, because

no matter how judgmental Dexter may be, he is not as damaging as his foil, Wheem, who

publishes "a brief but startling article on her [Vicki Shackle] called 'When the Dream Fades.' It

was published in an Upper Canadian magazine. It was about the life of a woman betrayed by

hockey" (Richards 77). Whereas Dexter's novels must be judgmental despite the claims of the

narrator, Wheem's judgement is worsened by his ignorance. Richards writes, "he had tried his

best to slant the article to make her [Vicki Shackle] look ridiculous, and to paint him [Garth

Shackle] in the worst light [...] He claimed to know all about her terrible life and wrote about it

for magazines. But he couldn't even begin to write her dialogue" (96). Unlike Dexter, he does

not know these people well enough to pass judgment on their lives. He uses their biographical

detail to make them look bad, but Dexter attempts to narrate his characters with compassion.

Both writer-characters have a negative influence on people's lives, but in the world of the novel Dexter's intrusions are excusable. Wheem's writing harms the marriage of Garth and Vicki Shackle, a couple who once seemed poised for a much better life. Dexter's portrayal of Mickey Dunn, a manipulative local businessman, turns Dunn's daughter against her father. The distinction between these two for the narrator is that Dexter tells truths, whereas Wheem tells half-truths. The meanness of Wheem's writing distorts reality and convinces Garth and Vicki Shackle that their lives are miserable: "It was as if the marriage had ended at the moment. This was after the man, Professor Wheem, published one of his hockey articles" (Richards 167). Even though Dexter imbues each one of his characters with dignity and compassion, Vicki Shackle is more offended by his novels than Wheem's articles. She is persuaded by Wheem's position as a university professor. Richards writes, "Wheem did not know that she loved him so much, until now, or loved some idea of his gracious learning, his doctorate degree" (91). Despite Dexter's terrible compassion, Wheem's writing is more important to her because of what he represents. Wheem meets the cultural criteria that Shackle has for authors; he is bold and well-educated. Dexter, on the other hand, seems ordinary. Wheem abuses the respect and the admiration that people have for him as a professor and a poet. In the long-term, Dexter turns out to be the greater artist, but Vicki Shackle and the majority of the characters in this novel do not realize it until Dexter's prophetic writing becomes reality: "All of this was almost exactly as Emile Dexter had written ten years earlier" (Richards 204). His novels do not prevent disaster, but for those who are willing to read his work, Dexter's novels reveal truths about his community. Some of these truths can be just as damaging as Wheem's hockey article: "There was a storm forever in Mickey Dunn's heart [...] A storm because his daughter, whom he called 'Puppsa-Wuppsa,' had gone to

university and had found herself reading about her father in Dexter's second novel [...] he controlled many small and terrible lives about him" (Richards 127-128). It would seem that Dexter causes just as much harm as Wheem, but in *Hope in the Desperate Hour*, Dexter reveals the truth and serves as a type of artist-seer. Dunn deserves to suffer for his behaviour, whereas Vicki and Garth have already suffered enough. This dichotomy implies that the writer-character who truly represents a community is an unknowing moral-ethical vigilante who is punished by the ignorant and the ungrateful.

There are a few points of interruption to *Hope in the Desperate Hour,* and one that has already been discussed is the assumption that Dexter's story arc is a cloaked autobiography. Dexter's life resembles Richards's life, and it seems as if the contrast between Dexter and Wheem is a way for the author to indirectly portray himself as an artist hero. Most novels featuring a writer-character have an alluring *roman à clef* component. Authors describe a character who is also a writer, and since they are inevitably limited to their own worldview, there will be some similarities to their lives. In "Beyond the Miramachi - Maria Kubacki with David Adams Richards," Maria Kubacki notes the similarities between Richards and Dexter: "One of the characters—the only really perceptive one in the novel (he's clairvoyant, in fact)—appears to be partly a self-portrait. A writer who drops out of an arts program, as Richards did (three credits short of his degree) and then comes 'out of nowhere' to publish three books in seven years (Richards published three in four years)" (Par. 13). Despite the similarities between author and fictional character, the actual processes of representation through writing are far more complicated. If Richards were using Dexter to characterize himself as a type of tragic hero, this novel would be self-indulgent and manipulative. Although there are definite similarities between

Dexter and Richards, it is more likely that Richards was using this writer-character to express a particular ethos that he believes literary artists should attempt to pursue, that of the compassionate observer. The portrayal of Dexter is also reminiscent of David Williams's description of authors as bridges between communities, in which he proposes that literary artists need to allow their communities to speak through them (Williams 170). In Richards's interview with Kubacki, Richards denies that Dexter is an autobiographical character, and he offers a number of literary figures, both local and international, in his place:

> "There are a few people I thought of as Emile Dexter. One was the young poet I knew from New Orleans who died at the age of forty-four, and his name was Everett Maddox [...] Of course after he died, now there's a festival in his honour every year. I also thought of John Keats, and of a friend of mine I got to know before his death, Ernest Buckler. I think of the shots Buckler took from people in the Annapolis Valley—and you know, I'm not criticizing them, but he did, when he wrote *The Mountain and the Valley*. I think of him as kind of their protector [...] So in a way Dexter is like Buckler. In a way, too, he's like another friend of mine, Milton Acorn. I mean, Milton Acorn—people wouldn't cross the street to see him when he was alive. Now they have a festival in his honour every year." (Par. 15)

As an author, Richards feels a bond to these authors, and that bond might be confused with the assumption that he perceives himself in a similar way. This quasi-autobiographical appearance affects the desires that the text invites, but it is not the strongest point of interruption to the good writer-character/bad writer-character dichotomy. Richards' explanation of how he based Dexter on other authors clarifies that, although he appears to be authoring a narrative that characterizes

himself as a heroic figure, he may have actually combined biographical information about a number of authors.

A second interruption to this dichotomy is the disparity between Dexter's ethically coherent self and the influence of his terrible compassion. The rhetoric of *Hope in the Desperate Hour* appears to have had a positive effect on Eric Tretheway, who concludes his review with an expression of how this novel influenced him: "*Hope in the Desperate Hour* has the power to change one's view of the World, to enlarge one's inner space, one's capacity for understanding and empathy. I go away from such a novel profoundly moved, committed all over again to the endless project of being a better, more compassionate human being. How can one not feel deep gratitude for this powerful work of the literary imagination?" (Tretheway Par. 18). Many readers want to be better, more compassionate human beings. Tretheway's response indicates the point of interruption that I want to emphasize, which is Dexter's terrible compassion. This heroic figure speaks and feels in a way that is somehow more relevant than others in his community. Whatever damage he may do is justified by the ethos of the good self. Although he acts as though he is insignificant, the way that he writes implies that his thought and feeling are profoundly important. There is a type of "ethical coherence" to Dexter upon first glance; there appears to be "discernible continuity from ethical principle to practice" (O'Rourke 1-2).[28] However, Dexter is a divided self: there is the self who aims to be compassionate, and there is the self who damages

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[28] James O'Rourke argues in *Sex, Lies, and Autobiography* that fiction reminds people of the complexity of lived experience. He writes, "Literary works are uniquely capable of challenging the narratives that give our lives a sense of ethical coherence when their polysemic qualities— their ironies, ambiguities, and indeterminacies—falsify the central premise of moral philosophy, the presumption of a discernible continuity from ethical principle to practice in everyday life" (O'Rourke 1-2).

others' lives through the writing of this terrible compassion. Despite the fact that he is more

ethically coherent than Wheem, his heroic narrative invites this interruption of a divided self.

Furthermore, if a person's desires are channeled through the dichotomy of Wheem/

Dexter, this path to a better self might essentially turn a novel about a New Brunswick

community, half of which details a failed casino deal at a reserve, into a *Künstlerroman*. Readers

who desire to experience a novel about two writer-characters might gloss over significant

portions of *Hope in the Desperate Hour* as they enjoy the contrast that is developed between

Dexter and Wheem. In this way, time spent with *Hope in the Desperate Hour* becomes a

narrowing experience. If this same reader returns to the book, he or she might see that that there

are a variety of writer-characters and most of them are women, which is another point of

interruption that the text invites. Diane Bartibog "worked sixteen hours a day. She chainsmoked,

was writing a book on racism, and had poor eyesight" (Richards 177). Bartibog is a First Nations

community leader who uses writing to highlight gaps in European representations of history. She

might not follow the same tragic arc as Dexter, but she suffers, and she struggles for her

community. Vicki Shackle is also an avid reader, and she writes poetry. Unlike Bartibog and

Dexter, Shackle does not attempt to use her skills to support her community. She is reminiscent

of Madame Bovary: "She loved to read true romances—for she found herself in them all. She

wrote poetry" (Richards 12). Fiction tends to reinforce a grandiose notion of her life and her

personality. Shackle's subplot shows that when people want something too much, they risk

ignoring reality and becoming victims to desire. A third writer-character who might be ignored is

the unnamed writer-in-residence, who "wrote one book—about a single mother and the tragedy

of a single mother's life [... and for whom] never a day went by when there wasn't some

complaint filed [...] about some crisis: the sun was in her eyes where she worked; her writing students hadn't read all of a certain writer she admired; her office was too cramped" (Richards 37). With the exception of Diane Bartibog, the majority of characters who claim to support social justice are actually supporting their own interests. Although there is a rhetoric in the text implying that people who promote social causes are generally self-serving, the various representations of writer-characters are still far more nuanced than the Wheem/Dexter dichotomy. These more nuanced invitations, however, will not be accepted if one's desire to be like Dexter is overwhelming.

One of the most powerful elements of *Hope in the Desperate Hour* is the contrast of a good writer-character in Dexter with a villainous writer-character in Wheem. Richards' representation of the reserve and Garth Shackle's failed hockey career are compelling, but the story of two writer-characters is so skillfully developed it becomes a more conspicuous element of the text. Dexter lives a short, brutal life. Ostracized and alienated by the people he loves, even he is dubious about his own work. After his death, his writing is used by the same individuals who criticized him while he was alive. His prophetic novels do not prevent misfortune, but contribute to the futility and the sadness of the events. There seems little purpose or reward for his life or his work. Why would anyone want to be like Dexter? Some might be struck by the representation of a heroic figure living in an unjust world. The contrast between the writer-character's inner goodness and the wickedness of his community undoubtedly creates an appealing narrative. The fact that his work is eventually revered should reaffirm an aspiring author's sense that, even though he or she is not currently successful, time will eventually reveal his or her skill and talent. For these reasons, *Hope in the Desperate Hour* is an extremely

powerful and persuasive novel. The contrast between Dexter and Wheem invites readers to consider the importance of specific values: be compassionate; do not abuse social status; avoid arrogance. Authors should not use writing to better their own lives, but to better the lives of others. These are all valuable lessons that can be derived from this dichotomy, but for some authors, writing about a community paradoxically—perhaps hypocritically—requires viewing oneself as a tragic, misunderstood hero whose reputation will be redeemed in time.

Critiquing the Artist as Hero: Lynn Coady's *Mean Boy*

A restless questioner might obsess over the Wheem/Dexter dichotomy in *Hope in the Desperate Hour*. However, there are also elements in Richards's text that invite an interruption. Although Emile Dexter is a compelling example of a literary artist, it is clear that he is not the best writer-character to emulate even if one could write with a "terrible compassion." A few novels and a literary reputation are small compensation for a miserable life and an early death. Nevertheless, literary stars, famous dead authors and artist mythologies are extremely influential to aspiring authors. Combined with a sincere joy in stories, they are a gateway into the world of creative writing. As my reading of *Hope in the Desperate Hour* demonstrates, however, artist mythologies can also be a distracting and a misleading influence. In Lynn Coady's *Mean Boy,* Lawrence Campbell, an aspiring poet, is ecstatic to meet celebrated literary artists during his time at university. One of his underlying desires is to become known in the same way as his literary heroes. To achieve this dream, he assumes that he needs to imitate their behaviour. His focus on renown, combined with the charismatic influence of his professor, Jim Arsenault, leads Campbell to lose sight of the person and the literary artist he wants to be. Until he realizes the

gap between Arsenault's professional persona and home life, Campbell is not critically engaged with the development of his own ethos. Similar to *Hope in the Desperate Hour, Mean Boy* critiques a pompous university professor. Coady's representation of academia's institutional pressures, however, invites a more sympathetic and complex reading of Arsenault than of Wheem.

Mean Boy is a critique of the university system, but readers are simultaneously invited to shrewdly observe literary artists and their pretensions. Stories of renowned authors such as Arthur Rimbaud or John Keats can be influential and exciting for young aspiring literary artists like Campbell. He assumes that in order to write great poetry he needs to behave like Lord Byron, drink like Dylan Thomas, and take drugs like Allen Ginsberg. As he competes with his fellow creative-writing classmates and idolizes his poet-professor Arsenault, he focuses his energy more intensely on posturing as a poet than on writing verse. However, the gap between the public persona of an intellectual authority and his private self becomes readily obvious in the novel's characterization of Arsenault. The half-real, half-imaginary world of Westcock University is a site where readers can evaluate their own experiences. Like Arsenault, the literary artists and the professors whom readers admire might also become human and fallible. The parodic elements of Coady's novel are targeted at contemporary misuses of artist mythologies rather than the historical authors. For example, Arsenault uses William Blake's quotation about grandness in art being "'obscure to WEAK MEN'" to shield himself from his failure at a disastrous poetry reading (Coady 235). Coady does not mock Blake; she mocks how people attempt to use mythologies about him, and she satirizes people who fail to make distinctions between themselves and revered authors. Coady evaluates such famous quotations in a Canadian

context and describes how they might be used or misused in a small university town. Gradually, Campbell realizes that his heroes are human, even at times childish and pretentious. The secularization of his poetry gods grants him the agency to cultivate his own personality as a poet rather than mimic Byron, Rimbaud, or Arsenault.

Campbell's initial understanding of what it means to be a poet is energizing, but also limiting. He expresses pleasure not just in the writing process, but in acting as he imagines a poet might act. He writes, "Sometimes, even if I'm not writing, just the feeling of being alone in my apartment in front of the typewriter is enough. I take off my shirt. I can see myself, I can see what I look like sitting here wearing nothing but jeans and glasses, me and my pale teenage limbs. I look like a poet. I know that I do. I believe in it, those days" (Coady 4). He savors the pose and the posture of being a poet as much as putting pen to paper. Although it might distract him from writing, pretending to be poetic also helps him to gather confidence and belief in his own talent. It is not always enough for authors to be talented and engaged in literary discourse; for Campbell, they also need to look the role. He writes of his friend Sherrie Mittens, "*What's your deal anyway, Tweety?* I want to say to Sherrie. *Girl poets don't look like you. They're gaunt and sucked-in and wear hippie clothes. They're ethereal and sexless. The only thing you've got down is the frizzy hair*" (Coady 52-53). It is not stated in the novel from where or by whom Campbell's perception of female authors is informed, but it can be surmised that, since he does not know any living female poets, he has seen photographs on dust-jackets or video from CBC interviews. Mittens is bubbly, womanly—everything he deems non-poetic—and as a result she does not earn his respect. Poetry becomes more pose and posture than style and rhythm. His

presumptions about the appearance of poets make him judgmental, and they narrow his

engagement with his peers. He needs to find a way to interrupt his own ethos.

The discourse of great authors and literary celebrities not only influences and informs

Campbell's appearance and his perception, but it also affects his behaviour. Instead of being open

and conversational, he decides, "It has to fester inside me, that stuff, and get warped and stewish

until it blurps out onto the page like tomato sauce splattering onto the white of a stovetop. That's

what poets do, real ones. Real poets are careful. They are circumspect. They don't just call each

other up in the afternoon to see if everything's okay [as he did to Jim]" (Coady 35). He has an

ideal of how a poet should be, and he attempts to become that person even if that means being

closed off and rude to family and friends. Similarly, Campbell accepts Arsenault's division of

Canadian poets between the "hucksters" and the "real thing." He dreads being classified as a

"huckster" so deeply that he is willing to conform to Arsenault's arbitrary whims. Not only does

he model his behaviour according to Arsenault's shifting definition of the 'real thing,' he justifies

and reads his actions in relation to the lives of famous authors: "Dylan Thomas was a drinker.

Ezra Pound. Eliot. Good old Anse Surette is, from what I hear coming out of Fredericton. Too

many of them to count. Acorn. Oh, all of them are–were. All the greats, they were all drunks for

some reason. That derangement of the senses thing" (Coady 19). From his selective history,

Campbell posits a connection between great poets and alcoholism to justify his hangover.

Furthermore, just as Rimbaud used hallucinogens to help him write poetry, the student poets in

Mean Boy experiment with magic mushrooms, but they end up sick and paranoid. He quickly

realizes that Rimbaud's method of deranging the senses does not prove fruitful for himself or his

classmate, Todd Smiley. He writes, "Todd [...] is paralyzed with self-consciousness about how

high he is. This strikes me as an appalling repudiation of everything I've ever heard regarding drug use" (Coady 179). Instead of opening their minds to a new consciousness, experimenting with mushrooms actually stifles their perception, making them unable to move or think clearly. The discourse of great authors influences Campbell's behaviour, but it does not necessarily improve his poetry. Ultimately, he finds a way to interrupt his own ethos through observations of his hero, Arsenault.

Campbell grows from his interaction with other poets, but he remains stifled as a poet until he becomes aware of the gap between literary reputations and the imperfections of his heroes. When Campbell begins to humanize Arsenault, he understands that the mythology of great authors is misleading. Before Campbell meets the author of his favourite text, *Blinding White,* his experiences of Arsenault are mediated through a newspaper interview and through Arsenault's poetry. He knows Arsenault's carefully cultivated persona only as an exciting and fiery voice in Canadian Literature. Campbell, however, gradually becomes aware of the gap between Arsenault's construction of reality in *Blinding White* and Arsenault's actual life. He writes, "Jim describes her [Moira] as having a face like the Madonna, a moonface, radiating bliss and wisdom like you see in paintings. Similarly, I seem to recall, he describes her as silent. That's also how the virgin is depicted–smiling, close-mouthed like the Mona Lisa. Soft and round. The other thing is, Moira's talk is crazy talk. *Tree died. Dragon blade*" (Coady 82). Arsenault's poem uses religious mythology to express the persona's adoration of his beloved. From Campbell's point of view, however, Moira is the rough and harsh antithesis to Arsenault's poetry. Observing the disparity between literature and reality allows Campbell to realize that individuals do not always live up to their own mythology, or to the lore that others cultivate

around them. Campbell gradually escapes the shadow of Arsenault, but he must first face his disillusionment during a dream in which he declares to Jim, "'You're not fooling anyone'" (Coady 306). This dream, for Campbell, "sets off a mini-cascade—it's as if a dammed-up part of my brain," he writes, "has broken through. I write sixteen ghazals in the course of one marathon afternoon at Carl's [tea shop]" (Coady 309). Campbell learns to disentangle himself from the discourse of great authors when he accepts that Arsenault is also trying to play the role of the great literary genius. Rather than mimicking famous poets, Campbell chooses self-analysis and sincerity in cultivating his own ethos as a poet.

Unlike early Canadian authors discussed by Margaret Atwood in *Survival* whom she believed were "deprived of audience and cultural tradition" (184), not to mention like-minded literary artists, Campbell is stifled by his community in an altogether different way. He has an audience; he has the beginnings of a cultural tradition, and he has friends who are also aspiring literary artists. Campbell's output as a poet is hindered by the discourse of great literature and great authors. Until he realizes the duality, perhaps even the inauthenticity of his idol, Arsenault, his craft suffers. His interactions with Arsenault, whom he initially believes to be "the greatest living poet of our time" allow him to understand that his hero also strives to be poetic (Coady 3). Campbell interrupts the discourse of great authors and tragic geniuses in part through a careful analysis of the gap between Arsenault's real life and the life Arsenault constructs through writing. In certain ways, the arc of Campbell and Arsenault's story is summarized by Northrop Frye in *The Bush Garden*: "once society, along with physical nature, becomes external to the writer, what does he then feel a part of? For the rhetorical or assertive writers [like Arsenault] it is generally a smaller society, the group that agrees with them. But the imaginative writer [like

Campbell], though he often begins as a member of a school or group, normally pulls away from it as he develops" (237). Arsenault remains stuck in his posture as the poet who opposes the establishment, believing that "'The philistines don't grow miraculously enlightened, the hucksters never see the light and walk the straight and true path. *What is Grand is necessarily obscure to WEAK MEN*'" (Coady 235). In contrast to Arsenault, once Campbell humanizes his hero and secularizes poetry, he is able to move beyond the influence of the artist as hero motif. He interacts with Arsenault because he still has much to learn, but he has far more agency in his own education. Campbell continues to engage with his classmates and friends, but he learns to view his peers and his heroes with a sense of irony. He knows that no matter how they might present themselves, there will be something unsaid. He still aspires to be a visionary and to see beyond everyday perception, but he does so on his own terms, with a cup of tea rather than a handful of mushrooms.

Mean Boy adds texture to Arsenault's representation as a false hero with a critique of the university system. Aside from the *Künstlerroman* elements of *Mean Boy*, a second powerful potential reading exists in the narrative of Arsenault's denied tenure and how it is mediated through Campbell's point of view. *Mean Boy*—to use Campbell's own words—is "A good argument against the study of creative writing in a university setting" (Coady 98). Arsenault is a respected and fiery Canadian poet who draws prospective students to Westcock University and consistently challenges them once they arrive. However, the head of Arsenault's department, Dr. Robert Sparrow, does not see creative writing as an essential field of study. Instead, Sparrow stresses the importance of studying the Western Canon. Arsenault's temperamental behaviour can be read as a response to institutional marginalization and bureaucratic shortsightedness.

Campbell's narration elucidates two key dilemmas for authors in academia: first, it shows how a naive but talented student-poet is co-opted by a well-meaning administrator; and second, *Mean Boy* demonstrates how a literary star is damaged by a system that should allow him to flourish.

Even though literary artists are not cultural heroes, some still possess a nearly indescribable power. Arsenault feels misunderstood and underappreciated because there are moments when he embodies this power, but he is not rewarded by his institution. One of the strengths of *Mean Boy* lies in the expression of ineffable moments that can be felt through art. In listening to a visiting poet and scholar, Dermot Schofield, recite poetry, Campbell experiences "a sense that there's a language there, that something is being expressed, communicated. Something infinite, beyond words. But Schofield did use words" (Coady 154). These quasi-religious experiences do not make poets such as Schofield or Arsenault heroic figures. As teachers, however, they can contribute to their institution by helping students learn about art in ways that are not made available solely by close readings of the Western Canon. The problem with the ineffable and the inexpressible is that they can prove to be dangerous. Campbell observes, "The madmen like Blake, the exiles like Rimbaud, the squadron of those who drank to death. Insect Icaruses. Why? Because of that notion—that unnameable thing, concept, idea—now embedded in the names of the poets who've been singed by it. In some cases, burnt up" (Coady 186). *Mean Boy* narrates how individuals such as Arsenault are not necessarily made mad by "that unnameable thing" (Coady 186) but also by the contingencies of their time and place. If authors and writer-characters can create this ineffable power through language, but they are living in a society or working in an institution that cannot appreciate their gifts, then they might behave in ways that could be described as temperamental or childish.

Ideally, an institution such as a university should create an environment where creative writing professors and students could both thrive. However, its structure stifles change and creativity. The daily requirements of a bureaucracy necessitate a focus on various tasks and responsibilities that may have little to do with actual writing. Arsenault tells Campbell: "'We forget in this place, it's a forgetting-factory, we get so buried in things like grades and texts and committees and meetings and then one day you wake up and say, Wait a minute. This is about writing. This is about art. What in hell are we doing?'" (Coady 200). Without this focus on minutia, the bureaucracy would not work, and there would be no teaching environment. The deeper problem in *Mean Boy,* however, is that the administration of the English Department stifles the writer-characters by attempting to direct students to more traditional studies. For Arsenault, this administrative focus is deeply frustrating. He shouts, "'It's not about writing, it's about *lit-ret-chaw.* It's not about teaching, it's about dogma. It's about this fucking Victorian *bullshit'"* (Coady 11). Arsenault or Campbell might attempt to challenge the status quo, but this focus on fighting the administration is a further distraction. Furthermore, it may contribute to his removal from the bureaucracy. Although Arsenault desires to create a place that is supportive of creative writing, his attempts to do so are cut short when his tenure is denied. Ultimately, Arsenault is dependent on students who will explain why they want to have him as a professor. However, the students are only learning how to articulate their desires, and they are often intimidated by figures such as Sparrow. Campbell cannot fully express why or how much he wants Arsenault to be granted tenure: "It's a perfect opportunity to say all and any of these things [about Arsenault and Westcock University], but I don't. I'm too busy blushing at having articulated my fondest wish [publishing a chapbook] to this English guy" (106). Campbell wants

to help Arsenault, but he is unsure of himself, and he is justifiably distracted by his own desires. Arsenault is forced to defend his professional worth and to worry about his job when he should be focusing on teaching and writing poetry.

Mean Boy offers a number of different aesthetic invitations. When Coady's narrative is placed in conversation with Richards's novel, new layers of complexity are added to the artist as hero motif. The entire novel can be read as an interruption to invitations in *Hope in the Desperate Hour.* Arsenault and Schofield demonstrate the powerful yet inexpressible moments that gifted artists create. These writer-characters are not cultural heroes, but they produce a type of "magic" and for that, they should, at the very least, be in a system that allows them to do good work. At the same time, *Mean Boy* articulates strong criticisms about authors and writing. If *Hope in the Desperate Hour* teaches a questionable compassion, then *Mean Boy* challenges this hypocrisy and offers a more desirable self for readers to inhabit. Infusing Campbell's narration with "a double vision" (Booth 432), Coady consistently reminds readers that mythologies of artists motivate her writer-characters, but these same mythologies can also result in a type of arrested development as exemplified by Arsenault. One of the central differences in the tragic ethos of Dexter and the comic ethos of Campbell is articulated by Simon Critchley in *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance* when he compares the tragic and comic modes of thought; tragic figures might appear to be more heroic, but comic figures continue living and working (77-79). Coady's *Mean Boy* combines representations of the ineffable power of art paired with comedic observations about the pretentiousness of the writing world. In contrast to the tragic death and rebirth of Emile Dexter, readers are invited to experience a humility that will encourage them to persist.

Steven Heighton's *The Shadow Boxer*: The Persistence of Artist Mythologies

Tension between a heroic and a comic ethos is also evident in Steven Heighton's *The Shadow Boxer*. Although humour helps Campbell to persist and grow as a literary artist, the protagonist of Heighton's novel, Sevigne Torrins, relies on passion. Torrins is not sure who or what he is fighting, but his path to being a literary artist is akin to a prolonged, brutal boxing match. His sincerity marks him as an easy target among the super-ironic literati of Toronto, and although his beliefs are consistently challenged, he attempts to remain true to what he perceives as a core self. In the city, he becomes anxious about the possibility that he might be turning into what, in "Divided Cities, Divided Selves: Portraits of the Artist as Ambivalent Urban Hipster," Lisa Salem-Wiseman would describe as an "an ambivalent figure, caught between the demands of a cosmopolitan urban lifestyle and the myth of a more simple existence" (163). Troubled by the increased imposition of technological interfaces between self and nature, he believes that he needs to return to a more authentic being, and in order to do so, he risks death by moving to a remote island. This self-imposed exile from modern life is both absurd and rousing. Torrins's desire to live intensely inspires faith in literary art, not as a path to greatness, but as a way of life. Literature allows Torrins to poeticize experience and to transform moments in his life through dramatic language. This desire to live intensely might occasionally make him appear ridiculous, but it also gives him a profound reason for being. The passion that he feels is a gift, but to persist as an artist, he must learn to humble himself and to harness his desires.

Of any of the texts in this study which can be described as *Künstlerroman*, *The Shadow Boxer* offers one of the best examples of the persistence required to survive as a literary artist. However, in contrast to Campbell's comic persistence, Torrins's narrative is reminiscent of

Dexter's tragic story arc. While Dexter dies at the end of *Hope in the Desperate Hour,* Torrins escapes death and continues his literary career. Readers might dismiss his stubbornness and want Torrins to treat creative writing as a hobby rather than a career. What feels like a mystical, heroic struggle for some is just misguided youthful exuberance for others. In either case, writing and boxing both allow him to tap into a primitive part of his psyche. As a young man Torrins argues, "'If you just look at things objectively [...] a good poem is—a poem is made from the same energy that, the same carefully controlled, channelled passion that counts in a fight'" (Heighton 68). The passion and the energy of his youth allow him to produce a high volume of work and to send it to a variety of publishers. Without this initial flurry of effort he may never have gotten started as a literary artist. Torrins's first draft of his novel is written in haste, but with a current of excitement: "He wrote the way the locals drove their small, smoggy cars, and even through the streets of the Cities of the Dead—fast, straight ahead despite obstacles, in the wrong lane more often than not, and no looking in the mirror" (Heighton 141). As he matures, he begins to understand that this energy is helpful in the initial stages of composition but editing requires restraint. The passion that literary artists might feel during the writing process does not always transfer into the product. Heighton writes, "The many poems that he wrote that winter were rejected. As they straggled back to him in their self-addressed envelopes he reread them with faltering anger. Great souls were often misunderstood; but these, he soon saw, were not great poems and carried none of the power, the burning emotional voltage that had run through him as he wrote" (99). This lesson is difficult for Torrins to learn, and although he takes his share of metaphorical punches, he keeps fighting to realize his dream. After a humiliating evening, Torrins "wanders back through the city to his bachelor cell, and with little hope works on the

novel till dawn" (Heighton 185). To continue using Heighton's boxing metaphor, if Torrins is going to produce a work of lasting beauty, he needs to survive into the late rounds and struggle with his aesthetic vision. The primal element to writing is traded in for more reserved, cool-headed critical analyses. He is able to grow as a literary artist through his stubborn belief that his work is inherently important.

The Shadow Boxer demonstrates the danger of youthful soul-searching when taken to its extremes, but it also highlights the excitement of slowly building a career as a literary artist. Literary artists may put themselves in precarious positions through their desire to experience life with a certain intensity and to survive from the meagre returns offered through publication. Heighton elucidates how writing can be dangerous and consuming for people who want to be literary artists. There is a risk of losing out on a personal life for the sake of being a literary artist. Torrins's friend Ray, another writer-character, succinctly describes the trade-off he made:

> "You see a father and a son sometimes and you think, right, you've traded that in for two books that took years, years off your life and went out of print in less time than it took to write them."
>
> "But they still matter, Ray—they're great books!"
>
> "Can't see how, really." (Heighton 236)

By the novel's conclusion, Ray becomes a mythic literary artist. He disappears and people write books about his life. Ray's literary celebrity is more sad than heroic, particularly because his success is inextricable from the fact that he fits into a tragic artist narrative that is similar to Dexter's story arc in *Hope in the Desperate Hour*. A small section of the population cares about literature, and only a tiny fraction of published works actually receive lasting attention.

Nevertheless, the thrill of writing can prove intoxicating, and minor successes grant incredible highs. Torrins gets his first acceptance letter from Lois Shapiro, "And the boy—till now listless and remote after two nights of sleepless travel—had read the letter with open mouth, cheeks reddening, then whooped and hooted and rolled down his window and thrust his face out into the wet, baptizing wind, making a victory pennant on his hair" (Heighton 105). This letter energizes the exhausted young writer-character and makes him feel as though his efforts have been validated. The high of being published can prove misleading, however. Literary artists seek out the next high and ignore the practical aspects of their lives: "As if this acceptance were a sign that he truly was called, that his muse had not been crying wolf, Sevigne refused to apply himself when he went off to university in the fall, focusing instead on his writing" (Heighton 105). The practical work of his studies is ignored for the fanciful dreams of becoming a successful literary artist. This focus on writing would be fine if he could turn his passion into material rewards, and he nearly does. When Torrins's first novel is tentatively accepted by a major publisher the experience is quasi-religious: "In the backyard, barefoot on the gravel path in rain-pocked slush, he lifts his glass by the skeletal apricot, twigs beaded with gelid drops like incipient silver fruit. *For you,* he whispers as rain rills slowly down his forehead and cheeks, chill baptism into the next stage of his life. Tears follow like warm spring rain" (Heighton 258). Although publishing his first novel seems to be an important moment along his path to wider fame and fortune, the novel is ultimately rejected, however, and Torrins is distraught. The incentives offered at each stage in his career are intoxicating enough that he is willing to take great risks in moving closer to achieving his dreams even if that means risking his life.

Torrins's deep sincerity makes him vulnerable to the more ironic and reserved literati that

he meets in Toronto. Instead of opening himself to this vulnerability, he stubbornly persists in his

vision of how a literary artist should be. His early stages as a writer-character are marked by his

intensity, his belief in himself as a literary artist, and his belief in the importance of literature as

an art form. His later stages as a writer-character are distinct for his growing sense that he needs

to be more entrepreneurial. Although Torrins passionately devotes himself to literature, the

narrator's detached and ironic style interrupts the burgeoning literary artist's rhetoric. Steven

Ross's review, "The Künstlerroman Goes Postmodern: Or, How to Write a First Novel without

Writing a First Novel," highlights these ironic self-referential moments: "We are, it seems, in for

a full-blooded novel of clichéd youthful soul-searching. But there is a note of cynicism tacked

onto the opening sentence; the narrator finishes off his catalogue of Torrins' ambitions with the

declaration that they are 'all the old dreams' [...] Irony keeps the narrative honest even when it is

most tempted by self-dramatization" (Ross 118). Heighton is able to blend the intense passion

that his writer-protagonist has for fiction with a more detached, occasionally mocking narrative

voice. Throughout the novel, the young writer-character's illusions are challenged but in

particular when he moves to Toronto, and he is exposed to contemporary aesthetic trends. He

writes, "In front of a used clothing store a signboard is planted in his path: SUPPLYING YOU

WITH CAMP, KITSCH & IRONY SINCE 1989 [...] CAUSE YOU NEED IT! For a moment he

[Torrins] stands staring blankly, as if the scene displays runes or petroglyphs" (Heighton 152).

His lack of awareness of these trends becomes embarrassingly obvious at a literary gathering,

and he becomes an object of mockery: "Sevigne's intention was to glitter, but in the black boots,

black jeans and billowy white chest-laced blouse he found in a second-hand boutique on Queen

West he looks, Eddy says, like someone auditioning for a remake of *Tom Jones*" (Heighton 180).

Repeatedly, Torrins is teased for appearing to have outdated beliefs about creative writing. One

of the more important ways that he recontextualizes his Romanticism is that he eventually thinks

of writing as a business. Eddy tells him to avoid false humility in relation to his career: "Success

isn't a dirty word. This is now, Sev, act all retro-sentimental and you won't survive. Don't be shy

about getting to know people who can give you a boost up or a blurb" (Heighton 167). To truly

demonstrate that he has abandoned his overly sentimental perception of creative writing, Torrins

needs to actively sell his work and himself in order to make a living from his skills and his

talents. A major part of his artistic development involves contextualizing his beliefs in new

surroundings: the passionate hopes and ideals that he has for writing blind him to the fact that he

is creating a product to be consumed for a niche market. His attempts to produce literary art do

not remove him from his position as an entrepreneur. He is taught this lesson in Toronto, but it is

not until he leaves the city for a deserted island and attempts to live as an isolated artist that he

truly learns the difference between his ideal self and his ethos

      Torrins leaves Toronto for a variety of reasons; two pressing issues that contribute to his

departure are the barrier that urban life places between the self and existence, and the conflict

between his ethos and the perceived aesthetic philosophies of his artist circle. He wants to

experience life in its most primitive form, to be completely connected to his immediate

surroundings. The poetry he writes as a young man reflects these interests. He attempts to create

work that is visceral and charged with emotion, but when he enacts this ethos around his ironic,

hipster friends in Toronto he feels absurd and dissatisfied. Heighton writes:

Climbing the stairs, Sevigne eyes the figures carved into the [totem] pole. Human,

raven, grizzly, wolf—the faces move him, their elemental fierceness and firmness

tempered with calm dignity and compassion. There it is, the state he aspires to, while

day by day he's being initiated deeper into the Scene and drifting further from what he

envisaged: the noble friendships, night-long confabulations about poetry, favourite

artists, films and music, lovemaking, love. (212)

More than anything, Torrins wants to escape intense self-consciousness. He wants to live in a

state of primitive being, acting without over-thinking his every move. Part of Torrins's anxiety

about city life is in the change that he feels occurring in himself the longer he stays in Toronto.

He feels that he is losing an authentic, core self due to the influence of opportunistic and worldly

friends. He needs to travel to Rye Island to lead a more authentic life. What he discovers,

however, is that it is impossible to avoid some kind of performance: "Trubb [Torrins' guide to the

island] took off his cap and raked back his hair, staring levelly though tinted glasses, eyes visible

but unreadably dimmed. For the first time it seemed clear that he was playing a part, whether

consciously or not—inventing himself, the Frontier Guide and Trapper. Even him. Even here. It

made Sevigne anxious for him to go" (313). Torrins's decision to leave Toronto and escape to a

secluded island paradoxically marks him—to borrow a term from Salem-Wiseman—as an urban

hipster (163). Heighton writes, "Clear days the glare through the high windows onto his page is

so dazzling he wears sunglasses, which along with his bristly hair and stubble-beard must make

him resemble some latte dabbler in the Annex" (315). The isolation on Rye Island and its lack of

current technologies, such as computers, do not resolve the anxiety Torrins feels about modern

life. Instead, his time on Rye Island helps him to realize that there is a gap between the way he

understands himself and the way others understand his behaviour. Heighton invites readers to consider what James O'Rourke would describe as the difference between Torrins's good self and his shadowed self.[29]

The narrator provides consistent reminders that while Torrins is on this passionate, idealistic, soul-searching journey, he is also writing to build a lasting monument to himself and his family. Ray tells Torrins, "'None of this matters anyway, Sevigne. I mean none of this posh gala shite. It's the work on the page that matters and all the rest only pretends to. The jury remains out on me, and it most certainly remains out on you—it's out for the next half-century'" (Heighton 267). There are hints that Torrins desires to become, like Dexter, a tragic literary hero. He knows that the reception of a literary artists' work might not be fully discussed until well after his or her death. Some literary artists are revered and others are forgotten, but an untimely passing calls attention to an author's or a writer-character's work. Torrins and Ray both desire to be memorialized and remembered for producing great works, if not for themselves than for a loved one. Heighton writes, "It was in the shanty-cafes of the Eastern Cemetery that Sevigne drafted his first novel [...] And he would write with a grief compounded by guilt—you weren't there to help at the last; you were there for freedom's sake half wished him gone anyway; you haven't grieved as deeply as you should. *For my father, Samuel Rayland Torrins, 1932-91"* (119). Tied into this desire to be remembered for producing great works is a

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[29] Although O'Rourke chooses to focus on the confessional genre, his criticism still reveals an important distinction. O'Rourke argues that the confessional best reveals this gap between the perceived self and the outward self. He writes, "This story of the good self is a narrative of interiority that centers on the feelings and intentions of the autobiographer [...] this narrative of the good self is shadowed by an account of acts and consequences in which the autobiographer profits from the misfortunes of others and plays some role in the production of those misfortunes" (O'Rourke 2). Heighton's text invites readers to observe the disparity between these two selves.

competitive impulse which requires squashing rivals who also want to be memorialized: "he

carries his novel forward with a will and a vengeance, determined to write something of durable

beauty; unconsciously aiming to outdo Una [a love interest and a more successful writer-

character]" (Heighton 188). Thus, Torrins possesses powerful passion for literary art, but his

shadowed self also desires to be an artist hero. Nevertheless, although Torrins is far from

innocent or altruistic, his self-interest does not negate the sincere, spiritual nature of his artistic

journey.

Torrins's desire to become an artist hero and his trip to Rye Island could prove to be two

extremely frustrating elements for readers who do not desire to be literary artists. If Torrins is

willing to face near-death situations, then why not do it for a political cause or for a marginalized

group? If he wants to become a cultural hero, then why does he not fight climate change or

protest global economic imbalances? What such a reading fails to see, however, about a character

such as Torrins is that writing keeps him awake and open to the wonder in his own life. He

refuses to abandon his dreams, and he fights for what he believes is good in the world.

Understanding his life as a poetic experience is dangerous and self-serving at times, but his

fighting spirit and his constant desire to remain present in his own life, are inspiring and even

heroic. His girlfriend, Mikaela, describes him as "always working [...] hard at being

alive" (Heighton 376). This desire to stay awake to his own life is not simply self-serving.

Through poeticizing his experience, Torrins fights to stay present and alert to good in the world:

"*The seeker must always be moving on, always touching new strangers and seeding goodwill*

through spontaneous acts of generosity and love. He was sleeping little. He felt high on

poetry" (Heighton 92). Leading a life as a seeker places one in situations that might prove to be

dangerous, such as traveling to Rye Island. In reworking and contextualizing Torrins's Romantic ethos in a contemporary urban landscape, Heighton shows how authors can still be heroic figures who fight to keep people awake to their own lives.

This ethos is extremely similar to the one that Raymond Williams describes as characteristic of the English Romantics, who viewed themselves as "the guiding light of the common life" (36). However, Heighton contextualizes his writer-character's beliefs in a contemporary environment while maintaining the inspiring and even heroic aspects of being a literary artist. "Passionate soul searching"—after witnessing Campbell's clumsy path to self-creation—these are difficult words to take seriously. Nevertheless, it is better to have searched, to seek out new selves and to challenge the person we once were. If people truly believe that a certain task is integral to their self and beneficial to their community, then persistent belief in themselves and their dreams may be something that they need to fight for if they are going to lead their lives with a sense of purpose and integrity. The problem with this way of thinking is that people have diverse valuations of literature. For this reason, an artist's passionate soul-searching needs to be tempered with a more cool-headed understanding that authors exist in a community of likeminded people. To people who are outside this community, books are often only products. Novels might entertain and distract, but they are at the bottom of their social totem. The self-promoting, entrepreneurial spirit might help writer-characters like Torrins contextualize their work with a pragmatic sense of their significance in Canadian society. To do so, they need to acknowledge that they are not just creating art, but they are also making a product to be bought, sold, and experienced. Leading the life of a seeker does not negate

pragmatic needs and material rewards. Writing keeps Torrins awake to his own life, but he needs

food, heat, and light as well.

       The Shadow Boxer invites an interruption to the artist as hero motif through Torrins's

acceptance of practical needs, but overall Heighton's critique is not as successful as Coady's.

Torrins is addicted to intense moments during the writing process. Similar to Campbell, he

revises his beliefs and his aesthetic philosophy after a series of challenging experiences. Coady

invites readers to vicariously experience Campbell's growing awareness that his idol is a fallible

human being, and Heighton sends his protagonist to a deserted island, where Torrins attempts to

become the ideal of the isolated Romantic poet. Heighton's relocation strategy is far less

successful in critiquing the artist as hero motif since Torrins has to willfully remove himself from

everyday experience and place himself in uncommon danger. Campbell goes to university.

Torrins's experience is extraordinary, whereas Campbell's experience is relatable for anyone who

has attended a postsecondary institution. Furthermore, Heighton's critique feels obvious in

comparison to Coady's. Of course the Romantic ideal of the isolated, self-sustaining genius

cannot be fully realized in contemporary life. This idealism is important, not because it is

supposed to be realized, but because it opposes a strict utilitarianism (Williams 36). In contrast,

Coady demonstrates how believing in the artist as hero motif can result in behaviour that is often

absurd and occasionally cruel. The aesthetic invitations in *Mean Boy* are more pragmatic than

those in *The Shadow Boxer,* and as a result, Coady's comic critique is far more successful than

Heighton's reworking of Romantic theory.

       When the first three texts in this chapter are placed in conversation, the artist as hero

motif appears to be skewed to male authors. In this sense, authors should consider how gender

influences this discourse. Heighton invites readers to observe a young male writer-character in the throes of passionate soul-searching as he struggles to compose his first novel. There is ironic distance to the construction of this narrative (Ross 118), but the sacrifices that Torrins makes on his journey are still admirable in that he proves that he is a true believer in the power of art. Readers might want to emulate his behaviour. Although his actions are easy to admire, they also reveal a connection to characters such as Dexter, Wheem, Campbell, and Arsenault. Torrins places himself in danger, and he hurts other people in his life in order to continue experiencing these intense, passionate emotions. In short, like Arsenault, Wheem, Campbell, and Dexter, the way that he thinks and feels is more important than the way that other people think and feel. All four of these characters isolate themselves and seek autonomy from others through their writing. The imperative of sousveillance is a respect for the particularity of a text and the idiosyncrasies of the creative process, but this does not negate a responsibility to other people. To improve one's writing, negotiating the ideas of other people alongside one's own is a necessary process. Seeking autonomy through writing is not exclusively male behaviour, but there is clearly a connection between gender and ethos. In *How Should a Person Be?,* Sheila Heti interrupts such masculine biases of the artist as hero motif.

Sheila Heti's *How Should a Person Be?*: Just Keep Asking That Question

If one were to open Harold Bloom's *Genius: A Mosaic of One Hundred Exemplary Creative Minds,* and read it chronologically, it would take 283 pages to get to Jane Austen, the first woman to have her own section in the book. Once at the part on Austen, it might prove to be even more disappointing to see that Bloom has measured her gifts against William

Shakespeare's, talking about her "Shakespearean strengths" rather than Austen's own, unique

gifts as an author (285). Even Virginia Woolf could not resist explaining why there was no

woman as prolific as Shakespeare (46). The sexist nature of this artist as hero discourse is

critiqued in Sheila Heti's[30] *How Should a Person Be?*. From reading the previous three novels, it

should be clear that literary art is a questionable forum in which to pursue self-improvement and

self-knowledge. Subsidiary incentives, such as cultural capital and monetary rewards, have the

potential to misdirect a person's ethos. In each novel from this chapter, male writer-characters

struggle with the desire to become their ideal version of the artist as hero who suffers and

struggles but is ultimately redeemed. Heti interrupts the gender bias of this motif and ironically

highlights the hyperbolic language used by communities who are interested in creative writing.

The polysemic qualities of *How Should a Person Be?* do not necessarily negate these self-

serving and hypocritical undertones of literature, but they reformulate these incentives in a new

language, one that is more pragmatic and less sexist. The titular, central question of Heti's text

suggests that she desires to seek out answers that are inherent in the theoretical framework of this

dissertation. However, the narrator, whose name, like the author's, is Sheila, struggles because

she has not developed the proper language to explore these questions. Initially, she desires to

cultivate an ideal self, and in this sense, she is not seeking for a way to be, but a path to

becoming. It is not until she forgoes the desire to create a final, perfect version of herself that she

finally learns to *be*.

The narrator's attempts at self-creation generally involve critical engagement with her

experiences through writing. Thinking about her life and attempting to cultivate her ethos,

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[30] When I refer to Sheila Heti or Heti in this section, I am referencing the author. When I refer to
Sheila, I mean the narrator and writer-character.

however, tends to cause her anxiety. She observes, "I know that personality is just an invention

of the news media. I know that character exists from the outside alone. I know that inside the

body there's just temperature. So how do you build your soul?" (Heti 2). Part of the problem

with the narrator's inability to answer her own questions is that they are inherently confused with

the statements leading up to them. If she claims that there is no internal, core self, how can she

then be concerned with building her soul? The simplest answer to this question is that she is

human, and even though she may be aware of theoretical language, she has embedded popular

ways of talking about the self since she learned how to listen. These conflicting ideas blend

together in Sheila's world, and they contribute to the confused nature of her artistic journey.

Thought causes her anxiety because she is aware of an ideal person she would like to become,

but she does not understand how to reach that state of being. She writes, "I have read all the

books and I know what they say: *You* [should be you]—*but better in every way*. And yet there are

so many ways of being better, and these ways can contradict one another!" (Heti 6). The typical

doctrine of self-help books is that people must constantly desire to improve on their current state

of being. The frustrating element for Sheila is that she is aware of the subjectivity of each word

that composes a sentence such as, *You should be you but better.* To improve on their state of

being, people would first need to be able to understand their subjectivity and then be able figure

out the best desires to live by. This task seems impossible, especially if the person asking the

questions is seeking conclusive answers.

Success as an artist can prove to be an intoxicating possibility for aspiring authors. Rather

than thinking about how they should be, they end by asking how they can become cultural

heroes. Sheila writes, "Now that I had no hope that I would find my soul by staying where I was,

all I wanted was to take a different route to the one thing that would justify the ugliness in me: I would become important" (Heti 179). She does not like the person she is and seeks out ways of excusing and modifying her behaviour through the written word. She first believes a committed relationship will improve her character, but when her marriage fails, she hopes that the creation of great art will make her a more desirable person. As she attempts to remove the worst aspects of her ethos, she simultaneously develops a project that will make her more important. Sheila writes, "I am writing a play. I am writing a play that is going to save the world. If it only saves three people, I will not be happy [...] If this play does anything short of announcing the next cock—I mean messiah—I will shit into my oatmeal" (Heti 79). Despite the ironic tone, she does assign importance to the task of writing and its potential to influence the lives of others. This attempt to seek out better desires through literature, however, is troubled by her perceptions of authorship. She is not just attempting to make a better self; she is also trying to make a more important, culturally significant self.

Similar to the protagonists of *Mean Boy* and *The Shadow Boxer*, Sheila discovers that the available theoretical frameworks for being an artist do not connect with the contingencies of her time and place. Theories of the genius artist, the zeitgeist, and the sublime do not make sense in the contemporary world. Urban artists, implies the narrator, do not have the opportunity to connect with nature and experience its profundity in the same way that rural artists did two hundred years ago. In a conversation with Margaux, her friend and fellow artist, Sheila argues about whether or not contemporary artists actually experience the sublime:

When I tried to explain what I had learned in class about the sublime, she didn't

think it had anything to do with us, or why we liked our drugs.

"We like our drugs for the opposite feeling," she said, "for the feeling of nullity.

Not for the awesome power of the universe."

"No! No! We ingest it. We swallow it, we put it inside us—the awesome power of

the universe. We're not looking at a mountain range because there are no mountain

ranges in the city." (Heti 132)

Sheila wants to shift the sense of awe away from nature and ingest that wonder into the self. Her

claims for the importance of the artist in society are often counter-balanced with polysemic

strategies, such as irony and heteroglossia. These strategies make the theories that she critiques

denser and more interesting in a contemporary context, but she still paradoxically presents

herself as what Raymond Williams in *Culture and Society: 1780-1950* describes "as a specially

endowed person" (36). Polysemic strategies do not change the fact that Sheila wants to become a

great artist. She simply desires to do so on her own terms. She wants to distinguish herself from

those who came before, and she wants to contextualize their language in her surroundings.

Heti invites readers to observe the disconnect between contemporary life and Romantic

aesthetic theories through heteroglossia. One conflation of the language of high art and crass,

bawdy language is the interchanging use of "genius," "messiah," and "cock." On some level

Sheila wants to be an artist hero, a person of great feeling and astute perception, but it is difficult

to be this figure in a secular environment. Sheila compares the imaginary city of Thule with

Toronto: "I felt keenly the difference between Thule and here—Thule, where everything was

sacred and here, where there was not a single thing you could give that word without

hesitating" (Heti 133). Despite the narrator's belief that she lives in a secular environment, she

still has religious impulses that she satisfies through art. Artists of genius are akin to secular

messiahs, but this discourse still suffers from the same gender biases as its religious counterpart:

"One good thing about being a woman is we haven't too many examples yet of what genius

looks like. It could be me. There is no ideal model for how my mind should be" (Heti 4). The

slippage between the words "genius," "messiah," and "cock" stresses this male-centeredness of

the language used to discuss great artists. Her rhetorical strategy involves ironizing older ways of

speaking, but she still paradoxically asserts her importance as a creative being. In ironizing

words like "genius" and "zeitgeist," she highlights the fact that literary artists often use this

language to discuss the importance of people in their own community.

By shifting the context of her discussion from painting and literature to hairdressing, she

demonstrates that this type of language might not be as credible outside the insular communities

describing themselves. When Sheila becomes a hairdresser, she says, "When my birthday

arrived, Misha gave me a book called *Hair Heroes,* which profiled the most important

hairdressers of the twentieth century. In it, one of the hairdressers was quoted as saying, 'I know

all the secrets of the Western world—but I'll never tell!' The secrets of the Western world! I had

found my kin" (Heti 47).[31] The hairdresser may be talking about gossip rather than the spirit of

an age, but the narrator's ironic use of the word "kin" still resonates. In *Culture and Society:*

1780-1950, Raymond Williams points out a dichotomy between the artist hero and the cultural

producer (36); Heti reconfigures this division in the world of hairdressing. One stylist represents

the temperamental artist and the other represents the consistent craftsman. Sheila writes, "And

that was how Alfio saw himself—as an artist—whereas Ulrich had the simple goal of the

craftsman: excellence" (Heti 157). It is extremely difficult to critique this aesthetic move without

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[31] *Hair Heroes* is an actual book that can be purchased on Amazon.com.

being dismissive of hairdressing. There is certainly artistry to that world, but it does not seem as complex or as artistic as creative writing. To be blunt, the quotation sounds ridiculous; these hairstylists clearly take themselves far too seriously. However, anyone who is not interested in the world of creative writing might have the same response to literary artists. By mixing together the language of literary communities and the world of hair-dressing, Heti highlights the histrionic and self-important undertones of certain discourses about authors. Make no mistake, however, Heti and her narrator are as deeply invested in literature as many of the other writer-characters in this chapter.

Despite her ironic style, Heti resembles a contemporary Percy Bysshe Shelley, who famously argues that "Poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present; the words which express what they understand not; the trumpets which sing to battle, and feel not what they inspire; the influence which is moved not, but moves. Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world" (159). Echoes of Shelley are found in Heti's response to a *Globe and Mail* article in which she describes herself and her fellow authors as the unacknowledged arbiters of taste:

> It's a rich, complex, and intelligently critical world we inhabit: a world that produces great art, and that does not burn brightest when the CBC or the *Globe* take notice, or when the Americans or Brits do. It's a world populated by writers and artists who give help and recognition without scoping the horizon for whether the arbiters are near. We are the arbiters. Whether the myth of Canadian achievement includes this world or not, this world exists. It's true. (par. 9)

The language that Heti and Shelley use to make their points is different, but the core message is not. Literary artists may be many things, but both Heti and Shelley see them as arbiters of culture. Shelley is open about the sacredness of art, whereas in *How Should a Person Be?,* Heti applies the sentiments of "A Defence of Poetry" to hairstyling and to oral sex. Despite her ironic stance, however, Heti's response to the *Globe and Mail* article indicates that she views her position as artist with sincerity and that she is deeply passionate about "great art."

Heti's polysemic strategies create a sense of openness about literary artists, but these same strategies also reveal the narrator's deep investment in what it means to be a literary artist. Sheila says, "I look at all the people who are alive today and think, *These are my contemporaries. These are my fucking contemporaries!* We live in an age of some really great blow-job artists. Every era has its art form. The nineteenth century, I know, was tops for the novel" (Heti 3). A word like "contemporaries" carries the weight of historical significance. To use it in relation to one's friends is absurd and pretentious since it implies that oneself and one's friends will be deemed important by future scholars. Using "contemporaries" to discuss present day people highlights the fact that the way we discuss historical figures inevitably distorts the openness of their time periods. When Sheila shifts the discourse of culture from novelists to blow-job artists, her tone seems flippant and dismissive of art. Paradoxically, however, as the narrative progresses, it becomes clear that Sheila values literary art as a traditional forum for considering one's life. Nevertheless, she spends time practicing her blow-jobs: "For days I had been at Israel's with my cellphone battery dead, working on my blow jobs, really trying to make them perfect. I was feeling somehow proud, like I was something meaningful in the world—and not for one moment did I think to myself that I should be doing something more oldfashionedly

significant, like finishing a play" (Heti 138). At no point in the narrative is oral sex a sincere

topic of aesthetic discourse. In contrast, she values her play and its development. Referencing

blowjobs highlights that there is something left unsaid in her commentary. "Oldfashionedly

significant" art helps Sheila consider how a person should be; blow-jobs are an ironic and

shallow counterpoint. Although she goes to great lengths to disguise her idealism, art is in fact

sacred for Sheila.

Sheila's breakthrough occurs when instead of focusing purely on cultivating a better self

and attempting to become an ideal, she accepts and reveals her imperfections through writing. In

an interview with David Naimon in *The Missouri Review,* Heti says, "One of the things I wanted

to kill in myself when I wrote this book was this modernist artist. To me the modernist is the one

who tries to create one great monument. I guess it worked because I'm not thinking that way

anymore. I just think about the things that would be fun and interesting to do" (Naimon 117).

This quotation provides insight into the interconnectivity of Heti's ethos and her aesthetic

philosophy. She desires to create a novel that is experienced as a process as opposed to a product;

the narrator, Sheila, comes to the same realization about her character. At no point is literature a

panacea for her troubles, but it is at the root of her troubles. The impetus for her "restless

questioning" (Booth 478) is born out of an experience with a play. Sheila writes, "When I got up,

I found, there on the screen, an outline for a play [written by a boyfriend] about my life—how it

would unfold, decade by decade [...] I was determined to act in such a way as to erase the fate of

the play, to bury far from my heart the rotting seed that he had discovered—or planted—

there" (Heti 23). The play strikes Sheila as true and prophetic, but unlike Dexter's prophecies,

her boyfriend's writing is deliberately mean and judgmental. She is frightened into believing

what the boyfriend wrote. In contrast to this search for continual improvement and inner beauty,

two of Sheila's friends, Sholem and Margaux, begin an "ugly painting" competition. Margaux's

boyfriend, Misha, argues that:

> Sholem was saying that freedom, for him, is having the technical facility to be able to
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> execute whatever he wants, just whatever the image he has in his mind. But that's not
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> freedom! That's control or power. Whereas I think Margaux understands freedom to be
>
> the freedom to take risks, the freedom to do something bad or appear foolish. To not
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> recognize the difference is a pretty big thing. (Heti 17)

It takes Sheila the course of the novel to realize that she, like Sholem, is attempting to create a

picture of herself that she has in her mind. She wants control over the person who she will be,

but she needs to be free to take risks, as Margaux does, and to appear foolish. If she cannot

accept her imperfections, then they will pollute everything she writes. Her characterization of

Margaux, for example, is hurtful because she cannot think outside her own perception: "Instead

of sitting down and writing my play with my own words—using my imagination, pulling my

words up out from the solitude and privacy of my sould—I had used *her* words, stolen what was

hers. I had plagiarized her being and mixed it up with the ugliness in me" (Heti 171). Heti echoes

David Williams's fears of the moral cannibal, or authors who believe that they are writing about

other people, but are only ever writing about themselves: "The artist who can see only his own

face in the mirror [...] is the moral cannibal of a community for which he still pretends to

speak" (Williams 170). To be able to see herself clearly, she needs to take risks in her writing and

to reveal her more negative traits. Sheila says, "Now it was time to write. I went straight into my

studio and thought about everything I had, all the trash and the shit inside me. And I started

throwing that trash and throwing that shit, and the castle started to emerge" (Heti 251). Until this point, she has not really attempted to *be*, but to become an ideal. She can only make this transition through her writing once she accepts and confesses what is ugly in her ethos.

How should a person be? This question needs to be perpetually and sincerely asked. The desire to seek out an ideal self focuses one's attention on a troubled past and an impossible future. Becoming an artist hero for Emile Dexter means a definitive conclusion to one's self-creation, which is an untimely death. For Sheila, it means imposing her self-loathing onto her representations of friends. There are alternatives. Heti's novel does not invite a reader to cultivate an ideal self, but to be aware of his or her whole being as an intermingling of both good and bad qualities. Authors might not be "the guiding light of the common life," (Williams 36) but they do offer a glimpse into different selves that one might encounter or inhabit. For this reason, literature is an excellent form to pursue the question of how a person should be. Older language used to discuss artists and art often sounds silly in a present day context. The "guiding light of the common life," (Williams 36) for example, calls to mind a melodramatic Christian television show. Novels offer guidance for people's lives; it is not always clear, however, what that guidance will result in; a text offers invitations and interruptions, but readers have their own distinct wills. Heti's text invites readers to ironically observe the language used to discuss authorship. Restlessness about this language helps authors to contextualize literature and to have more control over how it might influence their ethos. When these four novels are placed in conversation, the artist as hero motif becomes identifiable, its hypocrisies, its absurdities, and its gender biases. Instead of attempting to become an ideal, authors might be able to focus on their art.

Attempting to Become an Ideal Versus Being In-Process

The artist as hero motif presents a particularly powerful and intoxicating narrative that could cloud a restless questioner's vision and prevent him or her from developing a complex ethos. Much like Sheila in *How Should a Person Be?*, such a person concentrates on becoming an ideal instead of being perpetually open to change. In these four novels, there is a recurring connection between literary artists and heroic figures. Generally, this connection demonstrates a disparity, but in *Hope in the Desperate Hour,* Emile Dexter is a tragic writer-character who articulates his community before an early death. His prophetic writings and literary resurrection bear similarities to a messianic storyline. Larry Campbell is intoxicated by the mythology of literary artists. Although his idol, Jim Arsenault, is no hero, Arsenault cultivates the persona of the misunderstood genius. Campbell eventually sees Arsenault as a charlatan, and in doing so, he gains agency over his creative process. Sevigne Torrins feels that he has been called to become a literary artist. The trajectory of his story is eerily similar to that of Dexter's life, but he fortunately escapes an early death. This experience forces him to reconsider his perception of the literary artist as a cultural hero. In *How Should a Person Be?,* Sheila points out that words like "genius" and "messiah" generally refer to men. Unlike Dexter, she is not the originator of prophecy, but its subject. To prove her ex-boyfriend's prediction wrong, she attempts to become an ideal. However, it is not until she chooses to think of herself as constantly in process that she can truly focus on the present and write with a sense of honesty. Identifying and interrupting this artist as hero motif is one step to being able to experience these novels and to encountering their characters with an open mind.

Although new reading experiences allow restless questioners to deal with their most intense desires, some critics claim that these urges can never be fully escaped. Richard Rorty writes, "Freud's claim [is] that every human life is the working out of a sophisticated idiosyncratic fantasy [...] no such working out gets completed before death interrupts" (42). However, when the contingencies of time and place change, so too do a person's desires. The most powerful novels throw readers into new worlds and new contingencies. Although fiction may not change a reader's desires, it allows readers to think about the possibility of other types of desiring (Booth 271). The desire to be a great literary artist will inhibit some readers from experiencing the full narrative of *Hope in the Desperate Hour* and lead them to focus almost exclusively on the subplot. Furthermore, a desire for practical mindedness will make it difficult to appreciate the intensity and the passion that Torrins experiences in *The Shadow Boxer.* Narrow-minded desiring initially obstructs the potential interaction between text and reader, but this narrow-mindedness can be counteracted by persistence as a reader. For example, the artist as hero motif can be interrupted by texts from this chapter. These interruptions should become increasingly complex when these novels are placed in conversation.

How does a person's ethos change? Ethos is the choices that people make when they are faced with specific situations. The way in which they respond to these situations is inevitably influenced by their values. Nevertheless, values do not always translate into action, and so they are not an accurate indicator of character. The metaphors that people use to understand the world, however, often suggest how they will respond to a given situation. For example, if readers believe that authors are unacknowledged heroes, then they are more likely to ignore people in their lives so that they can focus as intensely as possible on reading and writing. Conversely, for

someone who thinks that authors are cultural producers, creative writing is a distraction from more practical life choices. Some might insist that literary artists are not exclusively cultural producers or cultural heroes; authors and writer-characters offer experiences that are quasi-religious in their ineffable power; these experiences are then turned into products; in this sense, they are both. In any case, Rorty would argue that individuals are most likely to change when they are able to view themselves and their language as finite and radically contingent (43). For example, one's self-perception and idiosyncratic fantasies are not only subject to change, they were never concrete realities in the first place. These fantasies and desires are ways of dealing with anxieties that might include fears of meaninglessness and anonymity (Rorty 35). To change their ethos, they need to identify the metaphors, such as the artist as hero, that compose their idiosyncratic fantasies and their sense of self. Once these metaphors have been identified as contingent and finite, they have the opportunity to seek out new metaphors, or to modify the ones that they already have in practice.

One interruption to the artist as hero motif is a narrative that demonstrates the contingencies and the finitude of this metaphor. Lynn Coady's *Mean Boy* invites critiques of the artist as a cultural hero. As a narrator, Campbell demythologizes stories about poets as troubled geniuses through his characterization of Jim Arsenault. Initially, Arsenault is his idol, and Campbell attempts to emulate him in every possible way. The more he knows of Arsenault, however, the metaphor of the poet as troubled genius is gradually replaced by the awareness that his hero is petulant and childish. Once Campbell realizes that Arsenault's persona and his ability are two different things, Campbell no longer desires to behave like the talented poet. In this text, writer-characters disastrously emulate the persona or the behaviour of established poets. Initially,

they accept the metaphors of other literary artists when they ask the question, "How should an author be?" Instead of accepting Arsenault's metaphors, Campbell learns to develop his own about writing. In doing so, he rejects Arsenault's persona as a heroic figure, and he gains agency over his self-creation as a literary artist. Campbell's rejection of his idol's metaphors for the development of his own allows readers to witness the contingencies and the finitude of the artist as hero motif.

Whether or not an aesthetic is likely to change a reader's values and influence his or her actions is a moot point if that person does not understand the self as finite and contingent. As a tragic character, Emile Dexter reaches a definite and final end; there is no possibility for change after death even if the writer-character is revered after his or her passing. Change happens to the writer-character's reputation, but the writer-character can no longer push his or her will into the world. People who are fascinated by narratives such as Dexter's may desire to inhabit this same selfhood of the tragic, misunderstood genius. They make the dangerous mistake of attempting to literally become an ideal versus continuously encountering selves. In *How Should a Person Be?,* Sheila undergoes the transition from attempting to become an ideal to viewing herself as in process. This desire to become an ideal self is problematic for a variety of reasons. Firstly, it negates the possibility of faults and imperfections, which everyone has in varying levels. Secondly, the focus on becoming a perfect self forces one to dwell on past failings. Thirdly, it presents an illusory conclusion to the project of self-creation. Being means living in the present and opening one's mind to the possibility of perpetual change. This seemingly minor adjustment in the language that Sheila uses to think about her selfhood allows her to enact a new ethos. Prior to this transition she had used autobiographical content from her friends' lives in an insulting and

misleading way. Her own fears and insecurities cloud her ability to fairly portray the people in her life. Once she accepts her imperfections and begins to think of herself as in process, she is able to write far more fairly. Simply put, the language that she uses invites a change in her ethos.

Although the ability to change is clearly valued in this discussion of authors and writer-characters, it must be noted that people have trouble with the concept of change, particularly in relation to the self. For example, Wayne Booth would tell Torrins that he only ever exists in a polis and that he "need have no anxiety about finding and preserving a unique core" (268). However, Torrins understands change in his character as a betrayal of his father. The guilt he feels leads, in part, to his trip to Rye Island. He believes that only in extreme isolation can he return to his most authentic self, and he never stops struggling with the idea that his ethos is in process: "he began to grasp the attraction of calculus and theoretical astronomy and quantum physics and the other abstract fields his heart usually recoiled from; they meant freedom from the pathless jungle of language and from the slow rot of becoming—from life in all its chaotic flux and bustle, niggling our urgent details, scams and shamings, sucker-punch surprises" (Heighton 157). Reading a few books hardly seems like a remedy to counter the "chaotic flux and bustle" of daily life. Ultimately, a new locale results in a drastic change in Torrins's ethos, but not according to his initial design. Heighton writes, "On Rye [...] Nature had broken him, had all but killed him, forever reducing and complicating his romanticism" (377). Instead of an escape from urban phoniness, he realizes that his trip to Rye Island is contrived and performative. He maintains some of the heroic qualities of Romanticism while renegotiating his beliefs so that they correspond with his lived experience. Contrary to Booth's breezy description of change,

Torrins's change in ethos is traumatic, and he nearly loses his life. However, there are less dangerous ways to renegotiate Romantic values.

Heti's complex and ironic language parodies the artist as hero motif. "Genius," "messiah," and "cock" are used interchangeably to indicate the fact that men are more often typified as great artists. In the world of the novel, the metaphor of the artist as hero is contingent on whether or not one is a man. Heti's criticism is not simply about fairness and equality, but the fact that gender is not indicative of talent. This bias about viewing men as geniuses and heroes suggests that discussions of art and artists is inherently narrow-minded. Furthermore, the incongruity of Romantic language in the contemporary world demonstrates that once-functional metaphors no longer work as well. A classic Romantic distinction between different types of creative beings is that of the cultural producer and the artist hero (Williams 36). Ironically, she describes this in terms of the difference between two hair stylists. In doing so, Heti highlights the fact that artistic communities often use hyperbolic language to discuss themselves. Outside of these artistic communities, these extravagances often appear ridiculous. Despite all of these complex, parodic, and ironic reformulations of Romantic metaphors about art and artist, Heti still implicitly presents herself as "the guiding light of the common life" (Williams 36) in that her story offers an experience to readers that suggests how a person should be. This distinction does not make her an artist hero or a Romantic hypocrite. She is a contemporary author who has selectively chosen and adapted older language to suit the context of her life.

This chapter has considered how cultural understandings of authorship might intersect with the various invitations and interruptions in these novels. Despite the weight of culture and socialization, ethos remains a valid way to discuss literary artists. The choices that authors get to

make are limited, but they are not negated by nationality, community, culture, gender, race,

sexuality, or the artist as hero motif. The true removal of choice would be to not know about

these social forces. If one has a sense that a concept, such as gender, influences one's choices,

then one can at the very least consider its effect. One might then choose to behave differently or

to redescribe elements of that concept. In this way, literary artists can think about the forces they

need to resist, to harness, or to simply abide. One motif that clearly influences authors and

writing is the artist as hero. Furthermore, it has been shown in this chapter that this motif is

gendered: male characters such as Dexter, Arsenault, and Torrins tend to violently seek

autonomy. The artist as hero is an intoxicating concept that can cloud an aspiring author's vision

and prevent a reader from fully encountering a text. However, by placing these texts in

conversation with each other, readers can try on different selves and practice interruptions. By no

means is Emile Dexter constructed as an endorsement for a particular lifestyle. He is a minor

character who is disparaged by his community and who dies an early death. Nevertheless, an

author might be completely fascinated by the legend and the mythology of these tragic artists.

When it comes to influencing the values of a reader and possibly changing his or her ethos, the

aesthetic invitations of some authors are more likely to succeed than others. Coady, Heighton,

and Heti all take metaphors about literary artists and contextualize them in contemporary

Canada. Coady shows how the isolated poet of genius can also be petulant and childish.

Heighton elucidates the danger of attempting to literally live out a Romantic ideal. Heti ironizes

Romantic theories and demonstrates how they no longer make as much sense in a present day,

urban environment. Coady's representation of Arsenault as a self-absorbed, occasionally juvenile

and manipulative teacher is the strongest interruption of the artist as hero motif; his behaviour

demonstrates the cruelty and the absurdity of viewing oneself as a specially endowed person. However, these invitations and interruptions may not influence readers who believe that the process of self-creation has a definitive and final end. Change can occur only if he or she views the self as a composite of metaphorical language that is always subject to change. This shift from becoming to being means that the self must be viewed with a sense of openness. When these four texts are placed in conversation with one another, restless questioners are invited to be openminded and to consider alternative selves. One of my central points in this dissertation is that restless questioners should ask themselves how they should be, and they should do their best to answer this question throughout their lives. Each time they ask, their responses should vary. Such variations indicate that their minds are flexible and open to new forms of thought.

Chapter Two: Complicated Windows

Openness in Michael Winter's First Four Novels

This chapter examines the ethics of observation and description for authors through

Michael Winter's first four novels; it argues that authors should choose to create a sense of

openness through their writing. In the previous chapter, I focused on four authors who reworked

Romantic notions of the artist as hero. To be clear, I am not arguing that authors are "the guiding

light of the common life" (Williams 36) or "the unacknowledged legislators of the

world" (Shelley 159). However, my argument implies that literary art is special in its ability to

create a sense of openness in the minds of readers. Thus, I also imply that some literary artists

are special in the way that they write about their worlds. However, I hope that the previous

chapter indicates that I am not attempting to position authors as heroes, but simply that their

work calls attention to a depth of human experience that is lacking in other modes of observation

and description. This chapter is a continuation of Chapter One, but instead of a group of related

texts by different authors, I focus on the first four novels of a single author. The imperfections of

Winter's protagonists' are an essential component of the complexity of their humanness and of

their observations and descriptions.

In *The Architects Are Here,* a minor character tells the writer-character Gabriel English,

"You have complicated windows you look through" (239). The complexity of English's

observations is connected to the fact that as a literary artist he is practiced at watching and

describing in ways that most people are not. His gaze and his language choices are probing, even

if they are not always accurate. Since there is a pre-existing discourse on *This All Happened,* this

body of criticism will also serve as the groundwork for the discussion of his next three novels. For this reason, extended consideration is given to Gabriel English's journal, *This All Happened*. In each one of his texts, Winter attempts to problematize certitude and conviction through stylistic choices that create a strong sense of openness—mostly in the form of indeterminacy, but Nussbaum's concept of "fancy" is also at play. Judgement of events and characters inevitably accompanies the reading experience; indeterminacy encourages readers to be open-minded and thoughtful as they observe the behaviour of the characters and the rhetoric of the narrator. In contrast, certitude and conviction, while important in specific circumstances, tend to narrow the field of interpretive possibilities.

Winter's descriptive practices create openness in a variety of ways. In *This All Happened,* he deliberately blurs the lines between fact and fiction, highlighting the power of the written word to create reality. In his next two novels, Winter invites openness about the past through historiographic metafiction and textured descriptive practices. He challenges the concrete nature of history through wild fictional details in *The Big Why*, and in *The Architects Are Here,* English favours the confusion of immediate perception as opposed to the clear and the structured narration offered by hindsight. Finally, in *The Death of Donna Whalen,* Winter directs his writerly gaze at the criminal justice system; openness takes on its most clearly political and ethical function in challenging the cause and effect thinking of the legal system. In each example, openness serves an ethical purpose in disrupting certitude and conviction. Literary artists, be they the writer-characters, Gabriel English and Rockwell Kent, or the author, Michael Winter, complicate the ethos of authors through cultivated observational and descriptive practices; they infuse static worlds with the openness and the uncertainty of the present.

The following section begins with an examination of how Winter and his writer-character, English, have been discussed by academics as a source of surveillance. Chris Armstrong, Paul Chafe, and Peter Thompson have all examined the observational practices of English in *This All Happened*. Surveillance has been a recurring theme in Winter's writing. In *The Big Why,* Rockwell Kent is under the watch of the government for professing his love of German culture during World War I. David Twombly gets a "no-fly caution" in *The Architects Are Here* when he says, "something sarcastic about blowing up the plane" (132), and in *The Death of Donna Whalen,* the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary is scrutinized. Surveillance technologies, such as CCTV, create the illusion of a concrete perception through the video recording of moments that could only otherwise be recalled through memory. Individuals can rewind to an event and witness it repeatedly. It appears as a real experience despite the fact that it lacks the interiority and the confusion of immediate perception.

I offer a reading of Winter's work that is different from those of Armstrong, Chafe, and Thompson, and I argue that his stylistic choices, primarily his tendency to create indeterminacy and irony, are strong sources of parodic surveillance, or sousveillance. I follow Bakhtin's usage of indeterminacy in "Epic and Novel" when he describes it as "a certain semantic openendedness, a living contact with unfinished, still evolving contemporary reality (the openended present)" (6-7), and I am using Linda Hutcheon's definition of irony in "Irony, Nostalgia and the Postmodern" as the moment "when two meanings, one said and the other unsaid, come together, usually with a certain critical edge" (par. 15). If a byproduct of surveillance is ethical or moral certitude, then openness created through language is one stylistic feature of the novel that frustrates the belief that what one sees or records is absolutely true. As

Martha Nussbaum writes in *Poetic Justice*, "When simplified conceptions of the human being are in widespread use for predictive purposes, it is all the more important to keep reminding ourselves of the richer picture of human life to which such simplified models are ultimately accountable" (47). The indeterminacy of the present and the irony of the reading experience permeate Winter's texts; readers are actively encouraged through the author's stylistic choices to participate in critiques of ethos, authorship, technological innovations, and government observation. As his writing career has progressed, he has developed and refined his style to produce a different type of openness in each one of his first four novels.

Openness is no social panacea, but it does have a few important potentialities. By infusing the present into descriptions of perception, Winter offers to make readers more open-minded and aware of their social realities. Simultaneously, according to Wolfgang Iser's theoretical stance, indeterminacy encourages greater participation from the reader in the creation of the text's meaning (6). In the previous chapter, I discussed ethos and change in relation to writer-characters. I argued that the artist as hero motif can prevent a reader from fully experiencing a text. If people are certain that they want more than anything to be an artist hero, then they will project that desire onto the reading experience, and they will register only affirmations of their own beliefs even when there are powerful interruptions. If, however, readers approach a text with openness, then they will be far more likely to appreciate the texture and the nuance of an author's work. These four novels will not create a sense of openness for everyone who reads them, but they are structured, through different stylistic choices, to invite readers to have an open-minded approach. This response is ethically valuable in its potential to create

readers and authors who are more analytical about themselves, their institutions, and their

authorities.

Surveillance Criticism and Michael Winter's *This All Happened*

Authors have a practiced and cultivated gaze. They watch; they remember and they will

report what they see in their fiction. If authors have power, however, it is less in how they

observe and more in how they describe. Contemporary surveillance, in contrast, can be stifling

and intimidating purely through its observational practices. Two recent works of criticism on

This All Happened examine writer-characters and authors as ethical observers through

contemporary surveillance theory. Chris Armstrong's "The Rock Observed: Art and Surveillance

in Michael Winter's *This All Happened*" and Peter Thompson's "Surveillance and the City in

Michael Winter's *This All Happened*" both question art's compliance with or resistance to the

ways in which contemporary society observes and judges citizens. Armstrong expands on Paul

Chafe's representation of English as a flâneur, or one who "is amongst the crowd, but not part of

it [...] both participant and recorder, a roving reporter who maintains critical distance even as he

threatens to melt into the masses" (Chafe 119-120). Analyzing the ways in which surveillance

stifles class mobility, Armstrong uses *This All Happened* to question whether or not literary

artists can compete with the ever-growing technological eye of judgement. Thompson highlights

the ways in which English uses art to further his own interests and to gain control over his

friends and family in social situations. For him, English represents a transitional figure from the

old ways of surveilling people to newer forms such as CCTV. While I want to keep their

criticisms in mind, I also want to challenge and reformulate their representations of surveillance and of the literary artist as an observer.

In "Beautiful Losers: The Flâneur in St. John's Literature," Chafe describes English as a flâneur who reinforces class divisions. Chafe writes, "His flâneur-ish contempt for the masses is coupled with the comfort and identity that his observations afford him. Though he grows tired of the city and its people, he is linked to them as is the flâneur, walking amongst them like the ragpicker, collecting stories and conducting inspections through which he legitimizes his idle existence" (134). English distinguishes himself by his ability to see in a particular way. Without his creative and perceptive lens on the world, English would simply be another person without a job. In one journal entry, English describes his reactions to impoverished St. John's citizens while he is at a Coleman's grocery store. Chafe writes, "Gabe can mock the hefty patrons of Coleman's grocery store and their clichéd purchasing of junk food with government cheques, though he is technically unemployed and beleaguered with student debt. He can look on them with disdain, for they are on welfare and doing nothing while he is a 'writer'" (135). Despite Chafe's reading, it is not actually clear that English looks upon the customers at Coleman's with disdain. He seems to pity how similar they are to each other, indicating a lack of imagination about the possibilities of their own lives. For Chafe, English's writerly gaze is also a way of saving face and distinguishing himself from the idle poor. After all, he too is buying his groceries on government cheque day; he gets his money from the arts council, but it is still a form of government assistance. I will return to this point near the end of my argument on *This All Happened.*

While Chafe views English as a hypocrite, Armstrong questions whether or not English might be a figure of resistance. Armstrong seeks out ways in which artistic observations might oppose surveillance's structuring and stagnation of class divisions. For Armstrong, *This All Happened* explores "the stakes for social justice under contemporary surveillance, a view of surveillance that moves beyond today's pervasive discourse about the loss of privacy, monopolized as it is by the more privileged and mobile middle class. Traversing surveillance regimes of the traditional, modern, and postmodern, the novel examines how in their contemporary, coercive form, technologies of surveillance effect 'social sorting,' the marking and maintaining of class divisions" (38). Armstrong is justifiably anxious about surveillance technologies. He acknowledges that contemporary society depends on surveillance to produce a sense of security; it becomes problematic, however, when it is used as a tool by those who are in positions of power to reinforce hierarchical social structures (Armstrong 39). He expands on Chafe's insight into the flâneur when he begins to question how English in his position as a writer-character might represent some resistance to the more questionable forms of observation and social sorting.

Armstrong asks how art might resist ubiquitous, stifling surveillance, and he is not confident in its potentialities as a means of opposition to ways in which visual technologies define and objectify human beings. He writes, "I want to view Gabriel's aesthetic stance alongside the threats to identity and personhood posed by electronic surveillance, specifically, the electronic (video and digital) data-image, while also suggesting that the prospects of resistance staged in the precincts of art, at least for Gabriel and perhaps his fellow cultural producers, seem severely limited, and dubious at best" (Armstrong 48-49). One response to the

technological objectification of human beings through surveillance would be a textured and subjective account of an individual's experience in writing. Even more appropriate, this literary resistance would concern the individual's idiosyncratic contemplations of various forms of surveillance. Armstrong anticipates this argument and rejects it: "In Gabriel's implicitly social vision, the artist collects and transforms moments of experience in his art, redistributing them in the primitive social currency of the gift. Exchanged by mutually authoring subjects, the literary impression, moreover, contrasts the data image and the electronic network, with the latter's one way transmission of information, its categories confined to observed (not lived or shared) action, and its potentially wide dispersion and destructive effects" (50). Armstrong's complaint about this form of resistance is rooted in English's representation of himself as a specific type of artist. In this sense, Armstrong echoes a similar critique to Chafe's observation of English as a flâneur. The fact that the artist can be identified as a type frustrates the attempt to be a unique recorder of experience. For Armstrong, English is not simply a flâneur, but expanding on the various types, he is also "a clownish misfit, a portrait of the artist as media cliché or commodity, at best perhaps an ironized romanticism" (51). His experience loses its subjectivity and its individuality as a result. He becomes a composite of the available data on artist types rather than a unique and idiosyncratic creator. The texture of his experience is reduced to a minor variation on a major cliché. Ultimately, Armstrong is ambivalent about the potentiality of art as a form of resistance to ubiquitous surveillance technologies. His ambivalence results in part from his focus on how living moments become a static gift that English distributes to friends.

Although Armstrong focuses on the potentialities of art as a form of resistance, Thompson illustrates the ways in which English uses writing as a method to gain control over his

surroundings. He argues that Gabriel English represents a transitionary phase in theories of surveillance, from the subjective interpersonal note-taking of individuals to the objective data gathering made possible by new technologies such as CCTV: "[Winter's] protagonist in *This All Happened* finds in surveillance a strategy for preserving traditional forms of community and sealing off Newfoundland to outsiders. The text offers on the one hand a critique of the impersonal nature of contemporary forms of surveillance and an uneasy analysis of Newfoundland's 'ironic' urban culture on the other" (Thompson 72). Where Armstrong was dubious about the use of art as a form of resistance to visual technologies, Thompson sees journal writing as an outmoded tool of social control. Textured subjectivity does not reveal human fallibility or the hypocrisy of one individual's gaze. Instead, literature elucidates the ways in which people use art as an avenue to gain power and influence: "While his obsession with surveillance is closely related to his aesthetic vision—he tells Lydia at one point that his binoculars 'make colour appear' and 'create sound' (70)—Gabe seems less interested in the way in which this activity informs his writing and more concerned with using the information he gleans from observing the city to his advantage in social situations" (77-78). Thompson brings up a vital concern in relation to art as a form of resistance to surveillance technologies. If art provides authors cultural authority or interpersonal advantages, then there will be people who will abuse these benefits.

Part of the experience of reading *This All Happened* involves witnessing the ways in which one individual abuses his position as a powerful observer. Winter makes English's failings and occasional creepiness a discernible element of the text. Thompson writes, "While Gabe goes to great lengths to present himself in his diary entries as an 'ethical observer' interested in

guarding traditional forms of social monitoring that exist in small communities, his actions are ultimately self-serving" (88). The fact that Gabe is not an "ethical observer" is a recurring theme of the text. This point becomes clear as soon as he talks about spying on his girlfriend through a pair of binoculars. Sometimes he uses his position as observer to his own advantage, but he also describes these moments in his journal, which readers then observe and judge by their own standards. Each statement in the text is underwritten by this voyeurism. The way in which readers are invited to observe English as he describes his own life is one of the text's stronger examples of parodic surveillance. One individual surveils his community over the span of a year, and he reveals the vast extent of information that is missing from a CCTV recording. One obstruction to viewing the novel as a parody of contemporary surveillance strategies, however, has been the conflation of Winter with English.

To be fair, the blurring of English and Winter is justified by the novel since it possesses elements of the *roman à clef*. Armstrong points out that this "text [...] calls itself a 'fictional memoir,' yet offers a truth claim as its title. Indeed, if the journal form of this novel, with its 365 entries extending over a calendar year, heightens our truth-telling expectations, then the preface, with its twist on libel disclaimers, insists on our looking past the fiction" (37).[32] As a result, the impulse arises to conflate Gabriel English with Michael Winter. To do so however, would obscure the fact that although English may not be aware of his own failings at the time that he writes, Winter constructs his novel so that English's misuses of his authorial position can be observed and analyzed. Despite Armstrong's blurring of reality and fiction early in his argument, he indicates this distinction in his conclusion: "Winter senses the limitations of art and of a

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[32] Although libel disclaimers usually distance the work from living people, Winter writes, "Any resemblance to people living or dead is intentional and encouraged" (xii).

humanistic response to surveillance, yet despite its deficiencies art satisfies the socially instituted

pleasures of seeing and being seen, of knowing and being known. With biases and pitfalls

exposed in the course of the novel's calendar year of journal writing, Winter's artist is implicated

in social surveillance in unavoidably problematical ways, struggling to foster human response in

the face of increasing intrusive and debilitating forms of social coercion" (51). The split between

English and Winter is important not only in elucidating the ways in which artists are complicit in

surveillance, but also the fact that readers also observe voyeuristically and hypocritically. We

entertain ourselves and stimulate our intellects through one person's most intimate truths. How

can talk of surveillance not include academics searching for heroic examples of opposition to

social injustice?

     If Winter's novel and English's journal are not clearly defined as separate experiences,

then the ironic implications of reading a seemingly voyeuristic text are lost. The novel and the

journal are often blurred into one experience as opposed to two, related but separate texts. The

text begins with a preface, written by Winter in which he signifies English as a literary artist and

as a fictional character: "Gabriel English was the protagonist in a book of stories I wrote entitled

One Last Good Look. Let me tell you about Gabriel English. He is a writer" (xii). Readers are

thus encouraged from the beginning to observe English as a writer-character and as a

construction of Winter's imagination. Furthermore, although Winter used autobiographical detail,

he mixed people and incidents so well that the events and characters became their own reality.

The truth is that Winter's friends tended to know that some element of their characters were

going to be used to inform the fictional people in his novel. Many of them read drafts of *This All*

Happened before it was published. What people could not have anticipated, however, is the

discourse about the book after publication. In *This is My Country, What's Yours?,* Noah Richler

writes, "Within the novel, described by the publisher as a 'journal-à-clef,' the trouble Gabriel

gets into for writing his buddies, and Lydia, so closely is remarked upon. Winter went so far as to

show drafts of his work to his friends [...] Winter even showed his developing novel to his

partner at the time, the filmmaker Mary Lewis, and she gave him her imprimatur. But it's odd

what the printed word can do" (337). Details from real life had been woven into the novel and

characters had their counterparts, but *This All Happened* never actually happened outside of the

multiform experience of its readers. Winter was so successful in creating a realistic account of a

year in the life of a St. John's writer-character that people assumed that he was using fiction to

hide the fact that he was writing about himself and his friends (Richler 338). In truth, he poached

real life to animate his fiction, but he never used it in a simple or a direct way.

The appearance of a direct connection between fact and fiction has allowed critics to

characterize the observations of Gabriel English as harmful to the friends and family of Michael

Winter. Both Thompson's and Armstrong's representation of writing as surveillance assumes that

although there are benefits to the feeling of being watched, for the most part, it creates a sense of

uneasiness. Armstrong focuses on the hurt inflicted on Winter's friends and family, but the range

of responses at being fictionalized was more nuanced. He writes, "'Fiction' like this didn't sit

well with real people in St John's, especially those acquainted with the author" (Armstrong 37). I

was under the same impression as Armstrong until I talked to Larry Mathews, who taught Winter

creative writing and remains close with the author. Mathews pointed out that people experience a

range of emotions that can be anywhere on the spectrum from betrayal to delight to a sense of

artistic solidarity (Mathews). Supporting this textured response to Winter's playful use of life

writing, Richler relates a conversation he had with two people who were the basis for Winter's

character Max Wareham:

"What Michael did brilliantly [...] is that he put so many of the St. John's

characters and experiences into the book and yet never has anyone ever felt kind of like

well, *the next time I see him...*"

"The next time I see him, what?"

"The next time I see him–*you know*."

"Nobody feels that," said the one. (330)

This account also contradicts previously published responses to *This All Happened*. People were

not unanimously annoyed and offended by their fictional representation. Some individuals were

honoured and flattered by their inclusion in Winter's novel. For these people, it *was* a type of

gift. Others were indifferent and a few found it amusing. The range of emotions is more

complicated than betrayal and uneasiness. When the negative results of fictional life writing are

overemphasized, this imbalance results in an inaccurate representation of its ethical dilemmas,

and authors are unfairly characterized as cruel and aloof.

Every reader who opens a book takes part in surveillance. The original cover of *This All

Happened* features a man gazing back at the viewer through binoculars. Thompson's reading

situates English as a hidden observer: "As much as he enjoys watching over the city and his

friends, he detests the idea of the gaze being turned back on him. As the image on the front cover

of the text, a photograph of Winter looking back at the reader through binoculars that shield his

face—a play on Alex Colville's *To Prince Edward Island*—suggests, surveillance is a strategy

for Gabe to retain anonymity while monitoring the rest of the city" (81). As the novel repeatedly

demonstrates, however, those who observe tend to make themselves objects of scrutiny. Their

tendency to surveil becomes a subject of observation. To take this into account when reading the

front cover, an alternative interpretation would be that the figure is gazing at those who will soon

observe him in this text. First and foremost, the person under the closest scrutiny and observation

is Gabriel English. The reader is privy to his most intimate and humiliating moments. Although

he organizes and describes these moments, each reader has the opportunity to be skeptical about

the ways in which this writer-character portrays himself. The gap between English's perceived

self and the self revealed through his actions is not only ironic, it encourages the reader to doubt

the claims that he makes through writing. His journal is one flawed individual's subjective and

occasionally humiliating account of a year in his life. Imagine that you are looking into a

window, and you see someone staring at you. The two of you are complicit in this gaze. The

difference is that the person looking out is gazing into a public space, whereas you are gazing

into a private world. As readers, we are gawking at an intimate window into English's life. The

cover photo is not only a clever way to remind readers of their observational role, but it is also an

opportunity for the individual behind the binoculars to look back and make readers self-

conscious about their voyeuristic desire to watch.

While these studies present arguments that I wish to use in some way, I also want to

modify their approaches. Surveillance has connotations that I want to avoid. The main one is that

surveillance in its contemporary formation tends to be the product of an organization, a

government, or a corporation. These groups of people are generally interested in security issues

rather than aesthetics. Although art can certainly be a tool of social coercion as Chafe,

Armstrong, and Thompson all show, to describe authors or writer-characters as a source of

surveillance is to attach unwarranted connotations that are mainly negative. True, surveillance

comes in many forms. A small community in which everyone watches everyone else could be

accused of performing an older type of self-surveillance that can be as constricting as CCTV.

However, I want to break away from Thompson and Armstrong's views on the dismal

potentialities of writing as resistance. To tweak this discussion slightly, I will consider how

English is a source of parodic surveillance. In contrast to previous criticism, there are other, more

powerful representations of literary art in *This All Happened*; story is not just a way to capture

life. Instead, English demonstrates that stories are their own living entity. The literary impression

parodies surveillance not just as a lived or a shared action that can be observed and categorized,

but as an experience that creates a sense of openness and is constantly subject to new

interpretations—an amorphous thing that can never be fully captured and sorted.

Sousveillance in *This All Happened*: What Actually Happened?

English does not presume that he can actually capture a moment through writing, even

though he reworks memories into prose. Although his gaze is occasionally cruel and dismissive,

English's ability to create a compelling metaphoric version of St. John's is important for its

polysemic qualities such as indeterminacy and irony. Both of these terms indicate that, no matter

what data might be available to the observer, something has been left unsaid; they complement

the aura of certainty that is created by surveillance data because they foster "restless

questioning" (Booth 478), and they encourage people to assume that there will always be more

that needs to be known about whatever or whomever is being observed. Rather than attempting

to simply challenge the gaze of surveillance, authors who have a strong command of language

can alter the way in which observational and descriptive practices are understood. The gaze of

the author figure might not prove intimidating or persuasive, but in the nuances of their

descriptive practices, authors have the power to alter perceptions and to create new realities.

If English were not marked as a literary artist, he would represent a panoptic figure,

meaning that he could see and not be seen; since people know he is an observer, however, they

return his gaze and attempt to use him to their own ends. Winter writes, "[Oliver] is telling me

this story because he knows I'm a writer. He is telling me this so I'll write it down. It's as though

he knows Maisie Pye is writing about him and he wants to have a piece of the action" (42).

Oliver wants to influence English's perception and frame domestic problems between him and

Maisie Pye from his point of view. As a writer-character, English becomes a potential conduit for

Oliver to air private grievances in a public forum. On a simpler level, Gabriel is not the only one

who writes and observes. Maisie Pye is a novelist, and Lydia has a journal in which she records

her own observations (Winter 89). Even more telling, English discusses how watching others can

result in being watched: "I've been told that I have a critical eye. Some people mistake my gaze

for judgement. When all I'm doing is looking into your eye" (Winter 23). Sometimes

sousveillance is confrontational and antagonistic, but it is also playful and convivial. For

example, Murphy gifts English a doll in his likeness, and Alex Fleming gives him a Christmas

present that encourages him to contemplate what it means to watch people: "The box has a glass

front that's been sandblasted except for an eye, which you can look through. At the back of the

box is another eye. It is a photograph of my eye" (Winter 269). In contrast to Miller's theory,

novelistic discourse lacks a panoptic structure if there is a writer-character who can be observed

and manipulated but also who is creative and experimental, who is in messy contact with other

human beings in their various complexities. As English narrates "the story of the good

self" (O'Rourke 2), readers are invited to sousveil his actions, both good and bad. In English's

St. John's there is no "neat distinction between watchers and watched" (Haggerty 29). However,

one of the most likely ways to make oneself a subject of observation is to watch others. In this

sense, observation itself takes on an ironic aspect.

Sousveillance provides a more accurate description of English's goals as an observer and

of the ways in which the relationship between watcher and watched is multilateral. The closest

equivalent to Mann's description of sousveillance in the world of writing is the journal form. The

narration is constantly at eye level, and the author of a journal attempts to record experience soon

after it happens. In the spectrum between objective and subjective, a personal recording device

rests in in the middle. It may not offer the same kind of interior experience as a journal, but it is a

recorder of daily life. The visual remains in the individual's point of view, and it allows the user

to edit material. Sousveillance and journal writing are not absolute parallels, but like Armstrong

and Thompson's use of surveillance this comparison functions metaphorically to elucidate my

reading of Winter's text and of English's observational position. English does not have a

videocamera, but as a literary artist, he is a known recorder of experience, and he is viewed as

having a critical eye. The people he knows tend to be aware of this detail and they occasionally

modify their behaviour in his presence. To an extent, my reading and Thompson's run parallel.

We both see English's methods of observation as dependent on place and personal interactions.

Thompson presents this tendency as a clinging to the past while I see his observational and

descriptive practices as a form of sousveillance. The gaze of the author or of the writer-character

may be problematic, but it remains at eye level, and it is multilateral. The critical discourse on

This All Happened tends to reduce or ignore the importance of the text's polysemic qualities. Irony is a form of sousveillance, by which the reader of English's journal can perceive flaws in the writer-character's perception. The openness created by the narrative voice and the structure of the text both challenge the certainty of those who observe and judge English. This revised metaphor of sousveillance rather than surveillance invites a second look at the potentialities of literary artists as observers and more importantly, as describers.

Neither of the discussions on surveillance in *This All Happened* fully appreciates the implications of English's ironic representation of Heart's Desire. Armstrong writes, "Gabriel, clearly, yearns for a form of community in which surveillance figures as concern and care. As he remarks of Josh and Toby, 'They are far more knowledgeable of the people they love than I am of my own' (16-17) [...] this kind of yearning for community, its intimacy and reciprocity, informs the novel's aesthetic stance, and can be read against the sinister and depersonalizing effects of (post)modern surveillance" (44). Likewise, Thompson uses this scene to highlight English's nostalgia for older forms of observation and of recording: "Gabe goes to great lengths to present himself in his diary entries as an 'ethical observer' interested in guarding traditional forms of social monitoring that exist in small communities" (83). English records the information on a laptop, which indicates that there is something left unsaid about his interactions with the community of Heart's Desire. Winter has constructed this moment in the text to encourage readers to see that something is not being said by the narrator: English is posturing; he values new technology as a means to observe and record information. Yearning for and guarding the old ways of watching are outward elements of the diary; the reliance—sometimes begrudging reliance—on new ways of watching is an irony constructed by Winter. Using a laptop to type up

one's nostalgia for a time less reliant on electronic devices signifies English as a figure of parodic surveillance. He desires to be counter to the intrusions of contemporary society, but he is inevitably implicated in that which he aims to resist. The second element to this scene that indicates irony involves the actual knowledge that these two boys possess: "I read what they told me yesterday and they crack up. Jamie Groves just west of us, Josh says, he paints the cars. And has a beautiful wife. Toby's grandmother died of a fluke. Renee Critch has a butt so big she walks through a door sideways" (Winter 18). English states that these two boys are deeply knowledgeable about the people they love, but when their information is revealed, it proves to be superficial and somewhat cruel. In contrast, English's journal entries are detailed and textured accounts. This ironic descriptions of the community and of the two young boys calls into question Thompson and Armstrong's assumption of English's nostalgia for traditional forms of observation. He certainly appreciates the community, and he loves interacting with people from it, but it is not a clear alternative to St. John's. It is a temporary refuge rather than a solution to dilemmas posed by the city and by surveillance. This irony indicates how this small community seems idyllic until one takes a closer look at the ways in which people actually observe and describe one another.

To further emphasize English's parodic relationship with surveillance, he relies on technological devices and on government supervision as a form of help. He and Murphy realize that someone is breaking into her house; CCTV cameras prove to be an annoyance to English and to Murphy, but they serve a purpose. Furthermore, the police officers who install them are portrayed sympathetically: "They are polite, ashamed if they have to do a little damage to the mouldings. The cameras are tiny, with high resolution. Apparently there are three, though as soon

as they are installed I cannot see them" (Winter 195). English's description of surveillance

devices is reminiscent of Haggerty's analysis of the older, unidirectional gaze of panoptic state

supervision; they are watched, but they cannot really watch back. While English expresses

annoyance about the cameras, he is subdued and his complaints are reasonable: "We eat with our

fingers. Lydia says we can shut off the video system while we're in the house. But even so I feel

monitored. There is one camera on the front door, one in the living room, and one in the

kitchen" (Winter 201). He is hypocritical since he monitors others in his journal, but he is not

throwing a tantrum. A minor annoyance is expressed in a private document. Furthermore, the

cameras ultimately allow the police to catch the person who has been breaking into Murphy's

house. This experience with state surveillance does not represent a post-panoptic scenario, nor

does it appear to be a particularly negative interaction. Claims that English wishes to supplant

newer forms of state supervision with traditional, communal observation are unsubstantiated by

the text. Surveillance and sousveillance coexist in *This All Happened*. Both ways of seeing are

neither good nor bad, but ambivalent forms of watching and being watched.

Characters in *This All Happened* express a range of emotions about watching and being

watched. Armstrong comments on the ambiguity of observational practices in his conclusion:

"the novel implicitly rejects the pervasive discourse of privacy, calling attention to the inscription

of class, indeed sensing the very threats to personhood posed by contemporary surveillance. At

the same time, the novel recognizes a deep human need for belonging, the desire for a benevolent

gaze, and thus a welcome of surveilling others" (51). For Armstrong, *This All Happened*

showcases both the dangers of surveilling and the exhibitionist desire to be watched. Although

English is hypocritical in his role as observer, he expresses a spectrum of responses about

observing and being observed. He is genuinely annoyed at the ways in which he is watched by others, but there are also moments where he enjoys being seen. Some observational and descriptive practices are more benevolent than others. For example, when Murphy makes a doll version of him, he is flattered and pleased. "I cry laughing," he writes (Winter 66). This static image of himself also allows English to evaluate the ways in which his personality has changed and developed: "it strikes me that this image is no longer who I am. Somehow, other emotions not my own have crept in. I'm no longer a romantic figure. I have grown wise" (Winter 66). Murphy's representation based on her observations of English's descriptions is not only flattering, it is impetus for self-analysis. To go unwatched, in contrast, is to be ignored. When Maisie Pye finds out that she is not a character in English's novel she is disappointed (Winter 30). Ideally, these various representations of observation encourage a sense of openness in the form of indeterminacy to surveilling and sousveilling others. Multiform examples of observation create a nuanced discussion by implying that each instance or moment requires its own analysis.

The style in which English chooses to describe his surroundings highlights the indeterminacy and the subjectivity of perception. Not only does he infuse the setting with metaphorical imagery, he states that writing is always a form of remembering. Descriptions of events and of place are often fused with a secondary image. For example, when Murphy flies into St. John's she describes the waves as looking "like a thousand white sandwiches at a funeral" (Winter 36). Similarly, when English watches a city tractor piling snow against his fence, he writes, "The pickets lean and splinter, buttons on a fat man's gut" (Winter 62). When people watch, they make associative leaps and visuals take on a metaphorical aspect. The view flying into St. John's has connotations of death and loss, whereas the snow clearing scene

implies a sense of excess. The descriptions of these scenes communicate that the observers have emotional and a subjective inner worlds. If these same moments were recorded via CCTV, they would lack this metaphorical aspect and this interiority. The literary language that English and certain characters use emphasizes the human-centeredness of parodic surveillance. What each person sees is radically subjective and influenced by their thoughts and feelings; one's inner world is powerful enough to transform waves into sandwiches or a fence into a fat man's gut. Winter's use of metaphor invites readers to think of observation and description not as a simple recording of events but as a transformative act. Thus, one should not be certain that what others write actually happened. Instead, such metaphorical language encourages a sense of openness.

Perception is not only subjective and full of unexpected associative leaps, but the immediate moment of seeing is specifically characterized as indeterminate. English writes, "When you describe an experience what you are recounting is your memory of the act, not the act itself. Experiencing a moment is an inarticulate act. There are no words. It is in the sensory world. To recall it and to put words to it is to illustrate how one remembers the past" (Winter 273). He stresses the fact that everything he writes is a subjective attempt to relate his memory of events, never the official story. The moment in which one experiences an event can never be fully or clearly enunciated. This disparity results in a gap between observation and description. Despite the title of the novel, this journal entry resists a claim for accuracy or truth. He may have observed events in one way, but he is explicit about the fact that everything he writes is a subjective description of his memories, not a direct or perfect account of a moment. Immediate perception is beyond language. Writing about those moments does not relate what actually happened, but creates its own experience and its own reality.

Observing people and writing about these observations in fiction is an indirect process. Even if English describes his own writing as gossip, he is not simply using his friends and family for fictional moments. English believes that attempting to hide who or what a literary artist is actually talking about is futile, and it ruins a good story. He offers Maisie Pye a parable about trying to conceal observations: "I'm telling her about the barber who noticed Midas had big ears [...] He digs a hole and whispers the gossip into the hole and buries it. But when the wind rustles through the grass, it is saying Midas has big ears. This is the story of all good fiction" (Winter 35). English uses this parable to explain why he believes there is no point in exerting great amounts of energy to conceal who he is talking about through his fiction. English assumes that all fiction is born out of lived experience, and to separate the lived life from the fictional life is not only dishonest, it produces bad writing. Despite the fact that English does not believe in concealing details, his real life friends and their fictional counterparts are not duplicates. The way in which real life filters into fiction is never a straightforward or a simple process. When English watches his friends and writes about them, he is not doing so exclusively to further his writing career or to gain control over them. Real life sneaks into fiction: "I should be writing the novel, but instead I concentrate on Lydia. Remembering how she smelled a pair of gloves and knew who owned them. How can I turn that into a historical moment? Moments never attenuate. Moments are compressed into the dissolve of real time. I will never forget how she looked when she smelled those gloves [...] I will have Rockwell Kent's wife have this ability. But Kathleen Kent is nothing like Lydia" (Winter 34). English's observations of his friends and his girlfriend are filtered into his writing, but he also watches them in order to cling to specific moments. He is sincerely and deeply in love with the people in his life. To assume that Lydia Murphy equals

Kathleen Kent is not only wrong, it reduces English's observational desires down to a cold and utilitarian impulse. To be fair, however, although the living person does not directly translate into the fictional person, real life details make it seem as though Winter is writing gossip. It seems as though the writer-character is talking about his friends and family even though he is only using their outlines to animate new people.

For English, writing about an object or a person can be transformative. Since creative uses of language can persuade perception, writing becomes more than observation; it becomes a way to structure reality. English writes, "I start by saying that this chair is a chair. And if you wrote your impressions of the chair, what you wrote would become the chair. The writing is not about the chair, it is the chair" (Winter 222). The initial moment of observation may be inarticulate, but language allows an observer to a make a new moment discernible. Word choices influence the details that one might see or not see. A description might not only include scratch marks or the year it was built, but also other meanings for the word "chair," such as the person in charge of a group or organization. Description imbues people, places and things with traits and characteristics. English writes, "[Maisie Pye is] making a novel about what's happening now. It's thinly veiled autobiography. Except she's pushing it. The Oliver character has an affair, and her friends, when they read it, think Oliver's cheating on her. He's not, she says. People believe if you write from a tone of honesty, conviction, and sincerity, if you capture that correctly, then readers will be convinced it all happened that way" (Winter 29). As the novel progresses Maisie Pye's fiction becomes reality when it turns out that Oliver is having an affair. This subplot to the text carries a darkly comedic message about making things up: language has the power to transform imagined events into reality; description is an active and a creative process. An author

or a writer-character might feel as though he or she has "captured" a moment, but stories come to life, and once they have been animated, they roam freely.

Surveillance can intimidate and stifle, but polysemic descriptive practices have a power and a force that are active and transformative. In 2013, Anansi republished *This All Happened* with new cover art and an introduction by Lisa Moore. Both inclusions highlight the power of this novel to create reality through the reading experience. While the previous text featured a picture that Thompson describes as "a play on Alex Colville's *To Prince Edward Island*" (81), this cover has an impressionistic painting of downtown St. John's done in a diptych, which looks similar to an opened book. The cover suggests that the interior of the text is also an impressionistic experience. An individual records his subjective observations of this landscape, and while it may seem as if it all really happened, the only true event that readers can be certain of is their interaction with the text. Similarly, Moore's Introduction focuses on the way in which powerful writing can take readers out of their lived experience and plant them into an imaginary world. She writes, "Here is what I crave in a novel: surety. An authority of voice that allows the reader that singular and intense pleasure: the suspension of disbelief" (Moore ix). In the place of real experience, Winter offers moments that, while they are imagined, are so powerfully written that they take on the aspect of truth. The novel is less about what did or did not happen, but the joy of being completely transposed into another world. Moore concludes her introduction on this point: "What this means is that if this has *not* really all happened, it will, and will again and again, for every reader" (x). Similar to the cover art, Moore's introduction indicates a specific reading of *This* in the novel's title. *This* refers to the fragile relationship between reader and text,

and the imaginative power that this interaction potentially holds to create an experience that is its own reality.

Before I conclude this section, I want to return to the scene at the Coleman's grocery store and to consider the the detail that English is able to focus on writing as a result of a government arts grant. It presents a potential flaw in my argument since it implicates him directly in state supervision. Chafe, Armstrong, and Thompson all tend to view English as a type of cultural official whose position as a writer-character reinforces stagnated class divisions. The most troubling scene occurs at Coleman's, when English observes people "paying with Government of Newfoundland blue cheques that require MCP and SIN and theyre worth $301.50 and theyre buying cases of Pepsi, Spaghettios, tins of vienna sausages, cold pre-fried barbecue wings, I can barely write this it's all so cliché" (Winter 117). Armstrong explains how Winter uses his writer-character to communicate the troubling gaze of the artist at the poor (47). English is uninterested in impoverished people due to their lack of imagination, and his lack of interest (Armstrong 47), for Chafe, is compounded by the hypocritical detail that the only reason English can distinguish himself from people on welfare is the fact that he has an arts grant (135). However, this scene should also be read within the broader context of the novel's cultural and economic contingencies. English lives and writes in what Herb Wyile describes as a region that is dependent on tourism and that tends to struggle economically (4). Furthermore, Thompson points out that "Gabe's hostility toward the tourists he sees [... is] part of a wider cultural and literary backlash toward the unequal relationship between residents and visitors created by the tourism industry in Atlantic Canada" (84). In the Acknowledgements section at the back of the book, Winter ironically refers to tourism: "Much of *This All Happened* was written and edited

during time funded by the Cabot 500 Year of the Arts program. May you all visit

Newfoundland" (Winter 287). Winter playfully casts his readers as literary tourists taking a break

from their everyday lives to watch this struggling artist and his quirky friends. Thus, this scene at

Coleman's grocery store should also be read as an invitation for tourists to glimpse a version of

Newfoundland that will never be mass produced by the tourism industry. In any case, despite the

fact that English is implicated in state supervision, his gaze is communicated through first

person, subjective narration. His observations can still be discussed as a form of sousveillance

since he writes from eye level, and perhaps more importantly, since his gaze can be scrutinized

by others. Readers and critics have the opportunity to critique the way he observes and to

consider how they have observed in similar situations. My point in this section has not been to

argue that English is an ideal writer-character who never participates in surveillance; my point

has been to argue that his actions are most accurately thought of as parodic surveillance, as

counter but also cooperative and even occasionally complicit.

English's descriptive practices and his stylistic choices highlight the subjectivity and the

indeterminacy of perception. No matter what data might be available to the observer, something

has been left unsaid. Where the gaze of surveillance technologies appears to be ubiquitous, irony

is a constant reminder that there is always something not-said and not-seen. English's

indeterminate descriptive practices highlight the fact that observing and describing are never

simple or direct. Creative uses of language have the power to transfigure an object or a person

into something or someone new. It is true that *This All Happened* exploits an autobiographical

allure (Armstrong 37), but not enough people have asked what *This* is in reference to. If *This*

stands for the experience of reading a novel and not for a series of actual events that happened in

St. John's, then what it means for English and for Winter to observe needs to be reconfigured. *This All Happened* is not going to save victims of state or corporate observation, but the concepts of irony, of indeterminacy and of sousveillance could add texture to the detached, placeless strategies employed by surveillance technologies. Even if English's aesthetic philosophy is about capturing honest moments or latently using an artistic gaze to gain control of his surroundings, Winter's is not. Winter creates a metaphoric world that feels as immediate and as conflicted as lived experience. Furthermore, English's behaviour invites readers to become participants in what Bakhtin would describe as "a zone of crude contact" (26). The distance of contemporary surveillance denies this contact, and that is a problem that needs to be addressed in a society that wants to be democratic. St. John's and its community of artists could be a model for how people might start to respond. Stranger things have happened.

Michael Winter's *The Big Why* and *The Architects Are Here:* "Wyoming" Through the Past

The discourse of *This All Happened* illustrates the power of the written word to alter reality. *The Big Why* and *The Architects Are Here* also highlight the power of description, particularly in the way that narrative can simultaneously resuscitate and alter the past. Wild details about the secret life of Newfoundland seaman Bob Bartlett highlight the openly fictional nature of Rockwell Kent's account. The use of historiographic metafiction challenges the authority of historical truth, but it also transforms Rockwell Kent from artist hero to flawed human being. Although the historical Kent was a well-known artist and adventurer, readers witness the writer-character Kent making mistakes and behaving foolishly from time to time. In *The Architects Are Here,* Winter returns to writing about the personal history of Gabriel English.

His textured descriptions make the immediacy of a moment palpable. An experience can be confusing and difficult to explain; after the moment has passed, however, hindsight provides the illusion of clarity. Complicating this process of accurately capturing a moment are the gaps between the living world, the writer-character's inner world, and the experiences that are actually communicable to an audience. In *The Architects Are Here,* Gabriel English's interior world can only be accessed through his "Wyoming," an imaginary place to which he escapes in order to make sense of reality. The style that an author or a writer-character uses to narrate inner worlds and to reanimate history has ethical implications. At its best, writing about the past in autobiographical or confessional modes can also be described as sousveillance. Winter places readers at the eye-level of first person narration, and through his descriptive practices he infuses the openness of the present into the static past.

Both English and Kent acknowledge the constructed nature of their texts, but while Kent paradoxically promotes concealment, English believes in the power of his "Wyoming" dream world. The "Wyoming" is an attempt to make sense of the present by sorting through the past, but it is also a coping mechanism, an attempt to reanimate the people and the things he misses. He describes the "Wyoming": "It is a world of the head, a land of web and light, imagined things. Occasionally I'd sort the chaos of life out loud, as I'm doing here. . . That's how it got called Wyoming—because I often began with a question, Why, and then an answer, Oh" (Winter 129). For English, there is a living self and an inner self. The inner self is not fully communicable, but it has bearing on the way in which a literary artist narrates. He writes, "Here I am ordering the notes this way to give them some cohesion and I've injected a narrative where no narrative exists, but I've imagined no emotion or detail. I've knitted them together using my

Wyoming, which is the dream life that cannot be mentioned in the born world" (Winter 129). By allowing his thoughts to play freely and unencumbered, he gradually structures lived experience into narrative. His "Wyoming" allows him to sift through his memories and make sense of what has happened. It is an active and a creative process, not a direct or an exact representation of the past. English's "Wyoming" can be related to Northrop Frye's definition of autobiography in *The Anatomy of Criticism*: "Most autobiographies are inspired by a creative, and therefore fictional impulse to select only those events and experiences in the writer's life that go to build up an integrated pattern" (307). This integrated pattern has the allure of cause and effect. However, the conspicuously constructed nature of the events indicates that causation is a fallacy. Thus, English's "Wyoming" is similar to Nussbaum's concept of fancy in that it endows "a perceived form with rich and complex significance; its generous construction of the seen; its preference for wonder over pat solutions; its playful and surprising movements, delightful for their own sake; its tenderness, its eroticism, its awe before the fact of human mortality" (43). English's inner world is a space where he can make associations between events and ideas and where he is not constrained by rigor, logic, or rationality. As the discourse of *This All Happened* demonstrates, the description of an event is always different from the moment, and the "Wyoming" builds these descriptions into integrated patterns that eventually create a coherent narrative of how the past led to the present. Even though his descriptive choices attempt to reproduce the immediacy of perception, English is open about the fact that his narrative stitches memories into a coherent whole. This openness about the constructed nature of the text serves as a constant reminder that he does not possess the singular, true account of the past.

Kent never uses the word "Wyoming" to describe his story, but he too sifts his past into a coherent narrative. It is tempting to describe *The Big Why* as autobiography written for a public audience, but it is not completely clear to whom Kent is writing. This lack of clarity about the audience is not a shortcoming of the text, but a purposeful melding of various genres by Winter to construct a historical novel. In *Anne of Tim Hortons: Globalization and the Reshaping of Atlantic Canadian Literature,* Herb Wyile describes *The Big Why* as a faux confessional: "at once more honest than the memoir written for public consumption [...] and still disingenuous, as Winter portrays Kent recognizing the limits of his integrity and yet not quite confronting the implications" (209). As the fictional Kent sifts through the past, Winter manipulates a variety of forms that the real life Kent used to narrate his own life. In the "Acknowledgments" section Winter writes, "Some of Rockwell Kent's books inspired this novel, including his autobiography, *It's Me, O Lord;* the travel book *N by E;* some collected essays on art and living, *Rockwellkentiana;* and his chapbook, *After Long Years.* Captain Robert A. Bartlett's autobiography, *The Log of Bob Bartlett,* was helpful too" (375). These texts are all public works that, according to the fictional Kent, do not reveal the full experience of an individual's life. He implies that public narratives are only the partial truth of an individual's life story. In a discussion of Siegfried Sassoon's diary, Kent explains, "it's [...] a public story [...] It's not his real, deep-down personal, gut-truth story" (Winter 368). Although Bartlett believes that to be one's truest self a person needs to explore his or her ethos without inhibition, Kent argues that restraint, at least in what one reveals about that exploration, is a desirable trait. He adds, "so much harm is done through confession and openness" (Winter 372). A public story like the ones Winter references in his "Acknowledgments" section might be widely shared and discussed, but

inner truths remain hidden. This decision to conceal creates indeterminacy about the truth of

autobiographical forms. Wyile argues, "Winter's faux confessional, then is a consciously

anachronistic and historiographic subversive strategy for evading the commodification of the

past and for dramatizing the struggle of the artist both to live and to create art" (215). Kent's

aesthetic philosophy paired with Winter's "Acknowledgements" section invites readers to

observe the constructed nature of autobiographies, memoirs, and confessionals.

Similar to the autobiographical form, the confessional mode adds a second layer of

observation and description to the text, which increases the potential of the narrative to create a

sense of openness. In *The Architects Are Here*, English moves beyond the journal format, but he

still comments on how it aids or limits observation. Nell Tarkington uses her diary to add

emotional detail to her memories. He writes, "She concentrated on the surface of things so she

could make it all a dramatic event in her diary" (Winter 24). These surfaces provide insight into a

person or a moment, but they do not relate the full experience of a life: "It was true that, under

focus, when the diaries were trying to note the precise nature of his performance, the

performance could not be crumbled into sentences. You had to be there, more than one person

has said. If you only knew him, and a wondrous smile came over the face" (Winter 26). Instead

of a description of charisma, English offers a claim for mystique and the cliché of the

indescribable. This dramatic texture that Tarkington adds to her own life through the diary is not

simply for the moment's sake; it is also an opportunity for her and for English to observe the

disparity between an event and its description. Language proves unsatisfying when used to

reproduce the past rather than to create new experiences out of the past. English finds

Tarkington's diary after she leaves him, and through his imagination, he is able to use her writing

to inject himself back into her world: "I'd grown sick of remembering all our events. Now I was imagining the ones she'd told me about or had written in her diary. And it worked. I often felt like I'd lived in New Mexico. In a way, part of me was Richard Text [a software engineer and a love interest of Nell]" (Winter 196). Oral and written accounts of the past allow English to reformulate experiences and to reanimate a person whom he fears is gone from his life. In *This All Happened,* readers do not relive English's experience, but instead create their own happening as they proceed through the text. Similarly in *The Architects Are Here,* although the surface level observations of a diary never fully capture a moment, they can be used to create new realities. The reading experience is more complicated in *The Architects Are Here* since English re-describes the descriptions in Tarkington's diary. His confessional simultaneously creates the allure of truth and authenticity while playfully highlighting the absence of both.

Similarly, Winter's creative reworking of the past in *The Big Why* is a strong example of an author's ability to create a sense of openness about historical truths. In "Historiographic Metafiction: Parody and the Intertextuality of History," Linda Hutcheon argues that postmodern texts typically feature a "self-conscious dimension of history" (Hutcheon 2). Historiographic metafiction is a political aesthetic in the sense that authors reconfigure the past and deny the official history; in its place they offer fictions as wild as Bob Bartlett's grasping a stranger's heart through the man's rectum. Hutcheon writes, "Historiographic metafiction works to situate itself within historical discourse without surrendering its autonomy as fiction" (Hutcheon 4). This aesthetic parodies serious and solemn accounts of the past as a narrative of heroes. History moves from epic to novel through these stylized reworkings of people and of events. Rockwell Kent begins *The Big Why* as a heroic artist figure, one who travels to foreign lands for the sake of

his calling. The day to day experience of his life, however, demystifies the apparent grandeur of his struggle as an artist. In representing Kent's character as fallible and foolish, Winter transforms him from type to individual and the historical account shifts from fact to story. In melding various forms, Winter's historical fiction is a destabilizer of truths and a reminder of the various things that could have happened—the things that were left unsaid in published autobiographies and historical accounts.

For English, immediate experience is resistant to the type of sense-making that people do when they remember or write about an event. He favours descriptions that reveal the indeterminacy of perception. For example, he describes a meal as "a platter of carved beef that looked like chocolate, a chocolate filled with pink rhubarb" (Winter 86). Another description of food occurs only pages later: "I felt my mouth crack in half, as if my skull had split open and I reeled back with the shock and my tongue collected a tooth, I spat out a tooth and it was black, the nub of a black tooth and of course I had mouth cancer, I was doomed [...] David held up my black tooth. An olive pit, he said" (Winter 89). This descriptive immediacy may seem unimportant when English discusses food, but since the novel memorializes a deceased friend, his aesthetic strategies take on greater significance. He writes, "David is gone now, and there's a temptation to eulogise him in some time-honoured way that would implicitly deny the intensity and texture of what we shared. I intend to avoid that. I want the immediacy of the quotidian, its take-no-prisoners feel and sharp whiff" (Winter 3). Memory and hindsight too often reorder the past into a clear and heroic narrative. However, English is unsatisfied with sense-making that obscures the immediacy of experience. Much like Winter in *The Big Why,* he desires to infuse the past with the present. It is seldom easy to comprehend what we see or who we are in the

confusion of an intense moment. In each one of Winter's first four novels, he reflects this truth

through his aesthetics. English does not believe that a literary artist should avoid narrating the

past, but he implies that some descriptive choices are more ethical and honest than others.

Just as descriptive choices have ethical implications, certain questions help people to

direct their processes of self-creation and to channel their desires. *The Big Why* is a novel of

questions, and characters direct their lives based on how they phrase these questions. What keeps

a person like Bob Bartlett from being his desired self? Is it the sense of being observed by others

or the fear of observing himself? After relating a homosexual encounter to Kent, the generally

reserved Bartlett tells him, "The question is not [...] were you loved. Or did you love. Or did you

allow love to move you, though that's a big one. Move you. The question, Rockwell, is did you

get to be who you are. And if not, then why. That, my friend, is the big why" (Winter 372).

Bartlett's question, and the way that he phrases it, is directly influenced by his place and his

sexuality. There are a variety of reasons that people might desire to conceal themselves.

Homosexuality, for example, was not accepted in British and North American culture at the time

in which this novel is set. Bartlett could not be open about his sexual orientation and so in

Brigus, Newfoundland where he is more closely observed, his desires are repressed. Courage, for

Bartlett, is the only way to overcome the sense of being judged: "Are you brave enough, he said,

to be yourself, to explore your deep self" (Winter 371). Surveillance and sousveillance can

prevent people from realizing their desires, but they can also be integral to the processes of self-

creation; they sometimes push people to ask themselves difficult questions about their identity

and their desires. Whether Winter is writing about the effect of descriptive choices or the

phrasing of one's questions about life, the nuances of language have powerful implications.

As a writer-character, English is aware of the persuasive power of style. The aesthetic choices that people make in narrating their own lives have ethical implications, but more importantly, these choices enhance or reduce their agency in their own life story. Scientists, engineers and technicians may know how to make things work, but the objects that they choose to create and build are inevitably influenced by metaphor:

> There's this theory about the butterfly wings, David said, waking up. Flap of a wing in Brazil causes a hurricane in Srebenica. It's wrong. We thought it was right for maybe fifteen years. Do little things and the big changes will come. We powered a lot of technology on that wrong thought.
>
> That's the power of a strong image, I said. It can overpower reason. (265)

Yet, even literary artists are subject to the power of descriptive practices. The full implications of an aesthetic choice or a narrative point of view are seldom clear or obvious. English's dependence on pathetic fallacy can prove to be a distraction from human relationships. He writes, "I tended to animate, and I realized that if we had a child, I would probably give up that tendency, I would devote the impulse to understanding another human being" (Winter 143). By the novel's end, English's girlfriend is pregnant, and he has his impetus to change. Prior to this point, however, English struggles with this desire to personify objects. The automobile, for example, is a troublesome machine when it is steered by the wrong hands or when it is imbued with human virtues. He describes this failing in Lars Pony, a father of one of his friends from Corner Brook: "A beauty, he said [about his car]. The only thing I got in this life that's been faithful [...] These men, thinking cars are faithful" (Winter 249). Furthermore, the impulse to understand is devoted to his deceased friend, Twombly. English claims, "This is a story about my

friend David Twombly and about the nature of our friendship" (Winter 3). He desires to find words that will help him recreate absent or deceased people through the power of story, to essentially bring them back to life. In this sense, the impulse to animate and the impulse to understand are unified in the writing process. However, both of these desires are ironically underwritten by the genre of the text. In the confessional or the autobiographical form, the narrator's first person account tends to funnel understanding to the self rather than to others. English realizes that personifying objects leads one to ignore human beings, and although he might eventually commit himself to a deep, selfless understanding of others, he does not fully devote this impulse to Twombly.

In *The Architects Are Here,* the confessional form prevents English from fully committing himself to understanding others. The structure of the novel necessitates that he must talk about himself more than his friends and family. The narrative is not about David Twombly, but their relationship with each other and Nell Tarkington. English still uses the journal form to reproduce moments out of the past with an allure of authenticity. However, since Tarkington's diary is transformed into sections of an autobiographical novel, he creates a second layer of description that overwrites the events. Ironically framing the apparent veracity of his descriptive practices, is English's discussion of how his "Wyoming" state openly weaves and meshes reality into narrative. In *The Big Why,* Kent's argument about discrepancies between public and private stories combined with Winter's weaving of various autobiographical texts creates a sense of indeterminacy about the way people narrate the past. Both texts feature narrators who reveal private details but simultaneously imply that there is no singular or accurate way to narrate a life. Truths are constructed, and although a powerful imagination might not reveal what actually

happened, it can demonstrate that plenty has been left unsaid. There are aesthetic choices that are more ethical than others, but the ethicality of each decision depends on the type of story being told. For example, Bartlett's improbable tale of grasping a man's heart through his rectum calls attention to the consistent melding of autobiographical forms with fiction. Wyile writes, "While readers may balk at the transformation of the hardy, salty skipper almost into a sensitive, new-age type of guy, that sense of anachronism is a central, conscious feature of *The Big Why*" (Wyile 213). Furthermore, since English desires to eulogize a deceased friend, he writes in a style that reflects the immediacy of experience rather than an idealization of the past. He implies that to properly portray the life of another human being, one needs to reflect the quotidian. In the place of certitude and simplicity, Winter insists on complexity and nuance, a type of literary sousveillance. He situates readers at eye-level, granting them the opportunity to observe the confusion and the texture of the past forcefully willed back to life, and in so doing, he transforms historiography into an active and a creative process.

Michael Winter's *The Death of Donna Whalen*: Sousveilling the State

Winter's aesthetic of openness takes on its most political aspect in *The Death of Donna Whalen* when he sousveils the criminal justice system in St. John's, Newfoundland. In doing so, he presents a set of ethical dilemmas in relation to authorship and the publishing system. Since the novel is based on a real event, he stands to gain from the misfortunes of others. To rationalize the benefits he will receive from publication, he validates his text through his position as a successful author and as a well-trained observer. As the author and compiler of *The Death of Donna Whalen,* Winter is outside the criminal justice system, but he is dependent on other

government and business structures such as his publishing house, bookstores and potentially the education system for people to read his work. If *The Death of Donna Whalen* will actually be a tool of parodic surveillance and a bridge into the life of a community rather than an interesting and entertaining experiment in form, the goals that Winter sets out for this book need to be evaluated alongside what the book actually does and how it might be read.

The fact that Winter is a successful author and an ethical observer is essential to the construction and the dissemination of *The Death of Donna Whalen*. He views the court case not with the supposed emotional detachment of a judge, but with a focus on communicating story. In this sense, his position as novelist grants him a special perspective on Sheldon Troke's guilty verdict. Through careful selection of the transcripts, he is able to communicate the core emotional truths that he believes should reach a wider audience. His descriptive practices and his structuring of multiple points of view allow Winter to create a sense of indeterminacy in response to the certainty of the criminal justice system. Winter implies that authors should observe abuses of state power and report them to a broader audience. In his article on *This All Happened*, Chris Armstrong describes his desire to find an example of an author or of a writer-character who might challenge state surveillance and who might be a proponent of social justice (48-49). The author figure at the beginning and the conclusion of *The Death of Donna Whalen* appears to meet some of Armstrong's criteria. To practice parodic surveillance, authors need to use their status and their positions as author figures, but they also need to remove themselves and their prejudices as much as possible from the text. A powerful publisher with a savvy advertising campaign can sell an author's persona, but the aesthetic gifts of an literary artist can transform perception.

In *Poetic Justice* Martha Nussbaum argues that novels should function as supplements to bureaucratic structures; books, she argues, can teach officials within these systems to be empathetic to the people with whom they interact (xv). In the introduction, I discussed how Charles Altieri in "Lyrical Ethics and Literary Experience" complains that Nussbaum's focus on empathy fails to account for the varied aesthetic power of books (41). His fear of distorted reasoning is justified, but Nussbaum desires to use only certain books in this way. Furthermore, the article of Maja Djikic, Keith Oatley and Mihnea C. Moldoveanu titled "Opening the Closed Mind: The Effect of Exposure to Literature on the Need for Closure," reinforces Nussbaum's argument for the bureaucratic uses of fiction. They write:

> An additional result suggested by this experiment is that it is the most frequent readers (of both nonfiction and fiction) who are likely to experience the most beneficial effects of exposure to literature. This is encouraging with regards to pedagogical interventions in professions such as law, medicine, and business, in which training demands extensive nonfiction reading, but at the same time requires people to become insightful about others and their perspectives. (Djikic, Oatley and Moldoveanu 153)

Winter's *The Death of Donna Whalen* is one Canadian novel that could be considered for these pedagogical interventions, since he desires to communicate how the criminal justice system affects the lives of a community. For these reasons, Nussbaum's theoretical goals align well with Winter's parodic surveillance.

Winter is not self-righteous in his claims for the social utility of this novel so much as cautious and even mildly embarrassed. When the ethos of a text might prove controversial, one rhetorical move is to explain its social relevance. In the foreword, he communicates how his

initial excitement about working on this novel transformed into a sense of unease. He writes, "I

was deep into the narrative and then, during times when I was not at work on the story, a cold

emotion ambushed me: I didn't like how I felt about what I was writing. The events were

disturbing, and I was using someone's tragedy for personal gain. There was a dead, innocent

woman at the centre" (vii). Intertwined with the pleasure of developing the narrative is the guilt

of transforming a murder into a commercial product and the unsaid but enticing possibility of

literary acclaim. To author this particular novel, he desires greater justification than his own

curiosity and excitement. He needs a strong rationale and a social function to support the book's

development and publication.

One of the central reasons that Winter needs to justify *The Death of Donna Whalen* is the

fact that it is based on real life. Counterintuitively, part of his rationale for using a true story is

the fact that it happened. The names have been changed and the court transcripts have been

whittled down from "ten thousand pages [... to] eighty thousand words" (Winter viii). But all of

the essential truths remain. In the transcripts, he sees an authenticity and an honesty in each voice

that he wants to remain intact. He writes, "I spoke pages of it out loud and decided that I could

not improve on the sheer naked truth of it. There is power in witness testimony, overheard

dialogue and private letters, and any intrusion on my part seemed to muddy that power" (Winter

viii). He intrudes, however, not only through selecting and focusing on certain events over

others: he creates alternative names for characters; the four sections all have titles to indicate the

organizing principle for the multiple voices; his foreword and epilogue frame everything in

between through a specific point of view. These intrusions allow Winter to create a blend of fact

and fiction that will grant a clearer expression of the truths he desires to communicate. If he had

imagined the incident, his novel would lack the force of authenticity. On the other hand, if he had

used the transcripts verbatim, the narrative would lack the style and the power offered by his

ability and position as a successful author.

Part of Winter's justification for using the event is the fact that it all happened, but this

detail also means that the transcripts from the actual court case are in the public domain. Anyone

who wants to learn about the shortcomings of officials in the criminal justice system can access

the transcripts to the original case or the Lamer Inquiry, which examined three wrongful

convictions in Newfoundland and Labrador. The transcripts and the inquiry, however, do not

have a powerful publishing and marketing system behind their dissemination. *The Death of*

Donna Whalen is more attractive than the original court document in its marketing, its

distribution, and its readability. Winter is aware of these distinctions and one of his goals is to

make the core truths from the original incident more accessible to a wider audience. He writes,

"there was something accumulating here, a wedge into the human condition that was truer and

more vivid than what I could fabricate, some modern story that, while it was in the public

domain, wasn't being read by the public" (Winter viii). To use the word "read" in another sense,

the real life individuals were never observed and considered in the thoughtful way that is

typically associated with a close reading. As this case exemplifies, knowledge of an individual

can predetermine judgment of his actions. Sheldon Troke gets a fresh start in *The Death of*

Donna Whalen, whereas the real life individual was condemned before his case began. The novel

is preferable to the transcripts for a variety of reasons. It provides a different type of reading

experience, an accessible and flexible forum for the criminal justice system to be surveilled and

for the individuals involved in this case to be heard once again. For these reasons, the novel

builds a metaphorical bridge (Williams 218) into a community troubled by a violent death while

simultaneously encouraging readers to observe the investigation and court case in a way that the

transcripts cannot.

Winter's gaze is directed at the misuses of power by authority figures. He is an outsider

to the bureaucracy and the day to day grind of the criminal justice system, but he also comes to

this narrative and these characters with a considerable amount of time to sift through the

transcripts, to examine them with hindsight and to write multiple drafts. From the perspective of

the officers involved, Troke fits the profile of the murderer perfectly; he has a criminal record

and he has already been abusive to the victim. Winter writes, "No one on the police team was

thinking of alternative scenarios. Instead they spent a lot of time forcing the contradictory

evidence to fit" (261). The police officers start with the conclusion to their narrative and attempt

to work their way to the beginning. Winter highlights minor and major errors of the police

investigation. Gary Bemister, a police officer working on the case, confesses a mistake in dealing

with the media: "Any time a search warrant is filed in the Provincial Court the media have access

to it and unless there's an order specifically sealing the warrant the media can go down and look

at it and report what the police put in the warrant and this is what happened here. Not having it

sealed, it was an oversight on Gary's part" (181). Readers have the opportunity to observe how

one officer mishandles information that should have remained private, and how this behaviour

influences the lives of a community. Officer Ches Hedderson's conversation with Pat Vivian, a

neighbour of Donna Whalen and a potential witness, during the investigation is a stronger

example of how one officer used witnesses to manipulate the truth:

Hope no one bothers me is all [says Vivian].

Would you feel more comfortable if you knew he was already charged with it?

[asks Hedderson]

I dont know.

Would that help your memory a little bit? (208)

The defense attorney explains, "Pat Vivian is gaining an awful lot of information somewhere along the way. The tapes show as to where it's coming from–directly from the police" (Winter 208). In turning his gaze to the abuse of power by authority figures, Winter shows how state surveillance can intimidate and coerce citizens into telling lies. In doing so, his text takes on a social function through parodic surveillance, and he reinforces the need for its wide publication.

The fact that Winter is a successful author is essential to the rationale he provides for *The Death of Donna Whalen.* He stands to gain from the publication, but his profits are justified by the social relevance of his text. His careful selection from the transcripts allows him to communicate the core truths that he believes need to reach a wider audience. In doing so, he models three selves for authors. Firstly, an author can be a bridge into the life of a community (Williams 218). Secondly, authors can be observers of state power. Thirdly, authors can be creators of openness about that power. I have to offer a few reservations about these three selves, even though they are extremely compelling. In Nussbaum's institutional framework, the novel teaches empathy, but without some kind of educational or institutional framework guiding the experience I find it difficult to imagine how readers of *The Death of Donna Whalen* are not, in some way, also tourists gawking at a murder and a false arrest. Even if the text has the potential for extremely relevant social uses, I am not sure it will be experienced as intellectual or emotional work. To return to Altieri's claims about the distracting aesthetic power of texts in

relation to my reading experience, I was far more interested in the section on the prison informant who gave false testimony, not because it provided insight into the failure of the criminal justice system, but because it was well written and intriguing. Even if this text were used in an institutional setting, I might only half focus on social justice or literary sousveillance and be completely captivated by the most arresting aesthetic moments. The rationale he provides is dependent on being able to actually take his theoretical framework and put it into practice. I wonder if this novel functions as a bridge into the life of this community or—to offer similar questions that can be found in the criticism of *This All Happened*—if the authorial presence at the beginning and the conclusion frames the narrative in a rhetoric of reading that funnels the multiplicity of voices to a limited way of seeing and imposes a type of artistic sousveillance onto the poor.

Paradoxically, however, my reading experience and the fact that I was captivated by Winter's writing might actually subvert the ethos of the criminal justice system, thus momentarily conflating aesthetics with politics. Earlier I pointed out that Nussbaum values the qualities of the novel that invite empathy, but she also develops the concept of "fancy," which encourages the free play of the imagination. Nussbaum argues that a court of law insists that jurors, lawyers and judges should not allow their emotions to guide their reasoning process, and although this might seem like a valid sentiment, it does not reflect the way that people live and think: "in the emotions, attachments to family and close friends seem all encompassing, blotting out the fair claims of the distant many. So, too, the reader of novels, taught to cherish particular characters rather than to think of the whole world, receives a moral formation subversive of justice" (Nussbaum 67). As we read Winter's account we experience the impossibility of pure

detachment from an event as intense and emotional as that recorded in *The Death of Donna Whalen.* We are swept up by the spectacle of the murder, and we are distracted by powerfully constructed characters, such as the prison informant. Winter's perspective on the events as a novelist necessarily disrupts the perception of the criminal justice system as an ordered and rational bureaucratic structure. He highlights the fact that experiencing a murder trial is an emotional and an intense series of moments that frustrate logic and reason.

Metaphorical Windows: Theorizing Parodic Surveillance

Including a writer-character in a novel fosters parodic surveillance and openness during the reading experience. This inclusion allows readers to observe a writer-character as they read, inviting them to interrupt the narrator and even possibly the author at the same time. Openness in the form of indeterminacy or fancy is invited by aesthetic elements of Winter's first four texts. *This All Happened* challenges easy distinctions or simple conflations between fiction and real life. Winter parodies the narrative of contemporary surveillance as an accurate and final recorder of truths; authors frequently describe their observations with texture, feeling, and idiosyncratic subjectivity. *The Big Why* creates uncertainty about the veracity of public, historical narratives. Winter's blending of various autobiographical forms and his use of historiographic metafiction infuses Kent's account of his time in Newfoundland with vivid, fictional details. Perception is indeterminate for Winter in *The Architects Are Here,* and any description that does not include the confusion of a lived moment is inaccurate. Finally, in *The Death of Donna Whalen,* Winter's position as a successful author allows him to situate himself as an ethically complex observer of St. John's criminal justice system. In each one of these texts, readers are encouraged to critique

authors, writing, ethos, technological innovations, and government observation with an open

mind. Openness is an ethical virtue that can be created by authors, and it has a range of benefits

for readers. Chief among these benefits is the actual state of having an open mind. People can

begin to think in new ways and allow experiences to affect their ethos once they shed the skin of

their convictions.

When we observe, our eyes project metaphors onto what we see. Winter's writer-

characters look through complicated windows, and if we could envision these metaphorical

windows, they might appear something like the cover image of the 2013 reprint of *This All

Happened*. A reader opens a book much as he or she would open a diptych and sees a number of

shapes—forms that gradually become discernible as people, places, or things. The longer and the

more probingly that person looks, the more colour he or she adds and the more real these shapes

become. Authors have a considerable amount of power in their descriptive practices: they

position the frame; they set the angle of the gaze; they choose the subject; they create the style in

which the subject will be painted. Strong writing absorbs readers, but authors are always

dependent on their readers to contribute shape and form—to take an impressionistic vision and

give it life in the imagination. The quality of their vision can either enhance or detract from this

exchange. The more complicated the vision of the author, the more texture and nuance readers

can add to their own metaphors about literary artists. In contrast, the more simplistic the vision,

the more likely readers are to either reject or be narrowed by the reading experience (Booth 203).

In this sense, we are always judging and sousveilling authors.

Stylistically, *The Death of Donna Whalen* is the quintessential model for literary

sousveillance. Winter's opening clearly states his intentions and his motivations as an author; he

is no unseen figure demarcating the normal and the deviant. He reveals his fears and vulnerabilities to his audience. Readers have the opportunity to sousveil Winter's rhetoric and to evaluate for themselves whether or not he realizes his idiosyncratic vision. His complex blend of third person with the speaking voices of his characters consistently keeps readers off-balance. The voice is always more than one person, forcing a constant shift from one personhood to the next. This indeterminacy of the self destabilizes a singular sense of one's being; one has to be multiple selves at the same time. Winter directs these stylistic choices and this complicated vision at a judicial system that relies on definitive judgement. Readers practice parodic surveillance of the author, the bureaucracy of the criminal justice system, and they see the emotional backdrop to the supposedly logical conclusion of a court verdict. Witnesses are coerced and intimidated by the sense of being watched by a system that attempts to view an event and an individual with detachment. Each individual's perception is composed of the metaphors that they use to make sense of the world (Booth 355), not a cool detached logic. These metaphors make detachment and certainty impossible; thus, to base a system of justice on detachment and certainty is decidedly unjust and illogical. *The Death of Donna Whalen* is a world that readers can enter, and their time inside this text offers a radical critique of the law, of punishment, and of surveillance.

Readers complicate their own metaphors by experiencing these novels by Michael Winter. In no way do these texts destroy the possibility of possessing convictions. Ideally, however, they should challenge simplistic understandings of deeply important social bureaucracies such as the legal system, and they should promote the type of "restless questioning" that invites people to complicate their ethos (Booth 478). The style of each text

encourages a type of parodic surveillance, if not of authors and writing, then of history, of perception, or of the legal system. To reiterate, this does not make Winter or any of his writer-characters heroic. They are not "unacknowledged legislators" (Shelly 159) or "the guiding light of the common life" (Williams 36). Sometimes they are counter to their society, but they are also cooperative; sometimes they are even complicit in unethical acts. They are human beings who describe their worlds in complex but flawed ways. These imperfections are an essential component to the humanness of their observations and their descriptions. There is a depth to Winter's novels and to his literary language, and it is this depth that is lacking in the gaze of surveillance technologies. Authors might want to take such points into consideration when they are considering how they should be.

Chapter Three: Cultivating a Complex Ethos Through Novels

       As I noted in the Introduction, this chapter is a departure from the previous two in that I deploy parody to critique and rework the imperative of restless questioners (myself included). The novels in this chapter are not necessarily any more parodic than those discussed in the first two chapters. However, they allow me to parody my earlier arguments, and they highlight alternative ways of describing authors. While *Mean Boy, This All Happened, The Shadow Boxer, The Architects Are Here,* and *How Should a Person Be?* all focus on the life of a writer-character, the narratives in this chapter push the world of literature to the periphery. The novels in the first chapter generally parody representations of literary artists as cultural heroes. However, Larry Campbell, Sheila, Sevinge Torrins, and Emile Dexter are all troubled and obsessed with their craft. Writing is of profound importance in their lives. With the exception of Dexter, these writer-characters tend to view people who are not artists as misguided or uninteresting. The writer-characters may not be cultural heroes in these texts*,* but they still acquire special knowledge about life through their writing that non-artists fail to see. There is not necessarily anything wrong with their valuation of literary art or their apparent special knowledge about life; if they did not value art and have informative experiences through their writing, then they might not actually write. Nevertheless, focusing a narrative on a writer-character limits the discourse of creative writing to the rhetoric of those with high estimations of its importance. The four novels in this chapter give voice to people who do not value literature to the same extent as the writer-characters in the first or the second chapters.

After critiquing the artist as hero, I argued that literary artists as represented in the first four novels by Michael Winter have complicated world views; this complex gaze asks readers to experience indeterminacy, fancy, and to be more openminded. Thus, even though authors are not cultural heroes, they do offer literary experiences that invite readers to look at life in new and exciting ways. In the four novels from this chapter, writer-characters still foster openness, but they also occasionally offer narrowing points of view as well. Ideally, these novels create a conversation with the first two chapters, one which shows that the ethos of literary artists is diverse and constantly changing. These four novels parody my previous arguments about literary artists and their various selves in the following ways:

1) They shift away from a writer-centric perspective. In these narratives, readers often enter an environment where the importance of writing is limited. I have discussed authors and writer-characters as literary artists, but some people choose to describe them as cultural producers. Such language emphasizes an author's and a writer-character's position within an economic system. In the first section, I will employ this language to discuss authors and writer-characters.

2) When these novels reveal the bureaucracy behind the world of writing, they show how writer-characters are not independent creative beings, but are often dependent on a publishing industry and government support. Thus, attention to neoliberal governments and the implementation of austerity budgets requires special attention.

3) I have discussed only white authors and writer-characters of European descent, but I have not explored how whiteness is a raced subjectivity. Race and culture, however, influence the way an individual thinks about literary artists. A novel that discusses the

experience of a Canadian writer-character of mixed race adds another perspective to this conversation.

4) For some of the characters in these novels, fiction does not necessarily create openness, but may in fact invite readers to be closed-minded. Their reading experience is important in creating a sense of indeterminacy about openness.

5) These texts highlight how desiring to be an author is situational or cultural. Attempting to be a literary artist creates desires and influences behaviour.

Each of these novels parodies the writer-centric perspective of the *Künstlerroman* genre. Russell Smith's *Muriella Pent* and Edward Riche's *Easy to Like* both narrate how the economy and the arts are interconnected. Riche presents the narrative of a screenwriter, Elliot Jonson, who quits writing once he is in a managerial role at the CBC. To avoid a financial crisis, he slashes the budget and insists on immediate economic success from his programs. Smith offers the inverse story of Marcus Royston, a famous poet, who is fired from his government position, but reinvigorates his writing career. In Lawrence Hill's *Any Known Blood,* his writer-character, Langston Cane V, researches his family history and ponders the complexities of his mixed racial heritage. The importance of creative writing is dwarfed by the struggle for civil rights in North America and the rhetorical power of religion. *The Antagonist,* by Lynn Coady, is narrated by Gordon Rankin Jr., or Rank, who has read a novel written by a friend and found a character who resembles himself. Coady's narrator details one experience of what it feels like to be written about by a trusted confidant. In discussing literary artists from a perspective that is atypical of the *Künstlerroman* genre, these texts create a sense of openness about authors and writing in

Canada. They highlight the contested nature of discussions about literary artists, and they invite readers to think about how literary art affects others.

In what follows, I create openness about my own argument. I have characterized more than one writer-character as shrewdly using his or her position as a literary artist; Larry Campbell, Sevigne Torrins, Sheila, and Christopher Wheem are all examples in fiction of how writer-characters behave in such a way. Fredric Jameson argues in *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* that modernists revered the great work, the misunderstood genius, and the artist as cultural hero; postmodern theorists tend to see such authors as shrewd rhetoricians: "the once-famous names [are] no longer [understood] as characters larger than life or great souls of one kind or another, but rather [...] as careers, that is to say as objective situations in which an ambitious young artist around the turn of the century could see the objective possibility of turning himself into the 'greatest painter' (or poet or novelist or composer) 'of the age'" (306). Jameson's description anticipates the way Rank sees his novelist ex-friend, Adam Grix, at the beginning of *The Antagonist.* As the narrative progresses, however, it becomes evident that the word "shrewd" is inaccurate. Rank observes that he often finds himself lost in his own creative experience, making up details amidst the fun of writing a story, and he becomes more open-minded about literary artists as a result. *Any Known Blood* creates uncertainty about viewing literature as a purely artistic task. Cane V is repeatedly told to stop thinking of creative writing as a grand pursuit and to consider the entrepreneurial potential of his craft. Smith's writer-character, Royston, on the other hand, mocks Canadian literary artists for being business-oriented and distracted from their art. One of Smith's central targets throughout *Muriella Pent* is bureaucrats who fail to appreciate art on its own terms. In *Easy to Like,*

however, the same writer-character who complains about managers and bureaucrats becomes aloof and uninspired in a managerial role. All four of these novels should foster parody of the novels from the first two chapters, and they should encourage a "restless questioning" about the ethos of authors (Booth 478).

Openness and parody highlight that there is not a single ethos among authors. This study argues that certain authors share a set of similar questions about the ethics of their task, but that their answers to these questions are varied and sometimes disparate. The third chapter of this dissertation strives, similar to the European and the Anglo-American ethicists, to resist a totalizing discourse. When novels are shown to have various, occasionally conflicting representations of writer-characters, these differences demonstrate that group personality and shared temperament are simply convenient phrases for talking about creative writing. Instead of a single persona such as the ambivalent urban hipster, readers have a variety of selves and others that they encounter. What it means to be a literary artist will always be contested and subject to change. This openness to imagine various selves is a gift.

Edward Riche's *Easy to Like* and Russell Smith's *Muriella Pent*: How Should Authors Be a Part of the Economy?

A room of one's own, pen and paper, a laptop, coffee and tea, heat and light, food--these things require money. The way authors use such things, however, is informed by their culture. For example, should a pen be used to write a poem or to pick a lock? To answer this question, one would need to consider how artistic production is rewarded or discouraged within the contingencies of a specific time and place. Public funding to the arts contributes to the well-

being of cultural producers, and it implies the value that their society places on their work. In cultures of robust government subsidy, authors have the support they need, but these funds are sometimes misplaced and misdirected. In cultures of austerity, arts budgets are slashed, leaving cultural producers to fend for themselves. This contrast is part of a larger economic and political debate over the benefits and pitfalls of the neoliberal model of governance as opposed to the social investment model. In *Anne of Tim Hortons: Globalization and the Reshaping of Atlantic-Canadian Literature,* Herb Wyile describes the neoliberal order as "the need to be globally competitive [which] has become the new mantra [...] and around it has developed a new commitment to austerity, productivity, economic fitness" (14). In this section, my focus is narrowed to how two funding regimes, that of austerity and that of robust public subsidy, affect the lives of cultural producers. Russell Smith's *Muriella Pent* and Edward Riche's *Easy to Like* feature representations of writer-characters living in cultures of austerity or of generous public spending. In *Muriella Pent,* Smith satirizes the inability of bureaucratic structures, clubs, and groups to help literary artists flourish even when they have money. Smith's novel implies that public subsidies support artists, but if this support is channelled to political or social ends, then these subsidies are ultimately misplaced. Marcus Royston, a Caribbean poet brought to Canada through arts funding, believes that people in these structures have little to no interest in art, but are actually concerned with capital and politics. Riche's *Easy to Like* places a high-minded, hypercritical screenwriter, Elliot Jonson, in a number of situations in which he must compromise what is left of his aesthetic beliefs, and he eventually becomes a budget slashing bureaucrat for the CBC. Riche's novel characterizes austerity as a gradual descent into gross simplification of both art and audience. These two novels invite discussion of how money or a lack of money

affects the lives of cultural producers, and they encourage continued exploration of how cultural

and creative funding should be implemented in Canada.

Funding to the arts in Canada undergoes a substantial shift from the time in which

Muriella Pent is set to the time in which *Easy to Like* is set. In *Reading Beyond the Book: The*

Social Practices of Contemporary Literature, Danielle Fuller and DeNel Rehberg Sedo write,

"the history of public funding for arts and culture in both Canada and the UK demonstrates [...]

robust ideological commitment to the notion of culture as a public good, at least, until the

mid-1990s. By that juncture, the impact of neoliberal economics, free trade legislation (of the

North American Free Trade agreement in Canada), the transnational power of multinational

media conglomerations and a discursive emphasis within government departments on market

values influenced a paradigm shift in cultural policy making" (Godard; McGuigan 129-155;

Fuller and Sedo 131). In *Muriella Pent,* culture is still deemed a public good, whereas in *Easy to*

Like, the paradigm shift that Fuller and Sedo highlight has taken effect. Austerity cultures reduce

artistic production to their immediate economic value, and clearly the slashing of budgets that

might contribute to artistic production is a worst-case scenario for cultural producers. Literary

artists are not positioned to thrive in these types of culture because their work generally offers

indirect social or economic contributions that might not be discernible until long after

publication. Subsidies, however, are not clearly or simply beneficial to artists. As Wyile points

out*,* the alternative, which tends to be a social investment model, "largely retains neo-liberalism's

market-oriented and instrumentalist approach" (Dobrowlksy 12; Wyile 15). For example,

funding to the arts has been justified through the potential of cultural producers to contribute to a

so-called creative economy; in *Literature and the Creative Economy,* Sarah Brouillette details

how government support to the arts in the United Kingdom "was the means by which a more

systemic program privileging private-sector modalities and economic ends was made relevant to

culture and the arts in the UK. It was the way government set about transforming its relationship

to the arts into one determined by the ostensibly inevitable necessity of securing future economic

development" (29). Thus, although austerity budgets are an easy target, Brouillette details how

certain formulations of public funding are insidious. These two novels invite a comparison of

options that are available to artists in both types of culture. Despite the fact that public funding is

not clearly or simply good for artists, it still provides support; the austerity mindset, on the other

hand, cuts funding and leaves artists to fend for themselves.

Questions arise from *Easy to Like* and from *Muriella Pent* about the place of authors in

societies of robust government support for the arts and in societies of extreme pragmatism. In

"Austerity for Whom?," Stephen McBride and Heather Whiteside open their argument with a

definition from the Merriam Webster dictionary: "Austerity meaning 'the quality or state of

being austere' and 'enforced or extreme economy'" (43), and they explain that the word

"austerity" was popularized in its present connotation "In the aftermath of the the deep financial

and economic crisis that began in 2007, [when] most governments and international

organizations started to emphasise that the bailouts and financial stimulus that they had enacted

as a response to the prospect of financial and economic meltdown would now have to be paid

for" (43). Literary artists are not positioned to thrive in these types of cultures for two reasons: it

is difficult to explain their direct social function, and art seems to be an extravagance when

politicians warn of job losses and of social assistance reductions. People who live below a certain

income bracket have needed to be frugal, but not by their own choosing or necessarily due to

their own shortcomings. The sense of having to sacrifice one's own livelihood to help the

affluent is understandably frustrating. As a result, the foggy rhetoric of austerity cultures has

become the subject of fierce criticism. In "Fuck Austerity," Mervyn Nicholson writes,

"'Austerity' means 'cuts.' Cut pensions, cut wages, cut health care, cut education, cut jobs, cut/

privatize public services. Cut democracy. Via Orwellian magic, austerity no longer harms people

('cuts')—'austerity' is virtuous, essential, beneficial. Thus emerges the 'austerity narrative':

working people have been indulged, permitted to have pensions, medical care, education,

causing nations to live beyond their means—now they must be 'bailed out'" (26). The most

frightening element of austerity cultures is this hypocrisy; the rich get richer; the powerful

become more powerful; and they claim they are saving society from economic catastrophe

(Nicholson 27). Those who rely on social assistance and those who cannot explain their direct

role in the economy are at the greatest risk for finding themselves on the wrong end of budget

cuts. The importance of literary artists begins to fade when the immediate threat of joblessness

and home foreclosure looms in the near future. Clearly there is a difference between cultural

producers and individuals who might lose their pensions; these types of distinction frame

discussions of artists in austerity cultures; their situation is clearly not as dire as others, and they

—alongside those who support the arts—might even appear "to be out of touch, irrelevant,

perhaps elitist" (Ventrella 70).

Discussions of art, austerity, and public funding are intertwined with what Jody Berland

typifies as a sense of exasperation. In "The Politics of the Exasperated: Arts and Culture in

Canada" she writes:

Canadians are repeatedly implicated in the incomplete politics of identity between

nationhood, culture, and justice. Thus we are compelled to insist, yet again, that

government has a responsibility to its artists and cultural institutions, even as we

continue to call attention to the Enlightenment's failure to emancipate its diverse

subjects and the nation state's failure to protect its poor and homeless people or worry

about how far aesthetic impulses have succumbed to the combined pressures of

Hollywood, the free market, and rampant professionalism. (26-27)

This sense of exasperation is a steady reminder that a certain contentiousness about public

funding for the arts is never going to disappear. Fuller and Sedo articulate why this tension is a

distinctly Canadian issue: "state-funded institutions such as the Canadian Broadcasting

Corporation operate within an explicitly nationalist mandate to 'connect' Canadians and to

'enlighten' them about each other [...] these protectionist maneuvers exist in ideological tension

with reductions to arts funding via arms-length national agencies such as the Canada Council,

and cuts to the arts at the provincial level" (132). Canadians require this assistance in order to

cultivate a sense of themselves, but as Berland points out, these aesthetic impulses which are

supposed to connect and enlighten Canadians are heavily influenced by American TV and film

(26-27). For example, a show such as *The Republic of Doyle* is set in Newfoundland and features

many Newfoundland actors; however, it is modelled after popular shows about American

detectives and private investigators; Allan Hawco, the show's creator and star, has talked about

the influence of *The Rockford Files* in an interview with *Maclean's* (Weinman). Critics might

question how an American aesthetic peopled with Canadian actors connects and enlightens the

country; others might fire back that one distinctly Canadian trait of *The Republic of Doyle* is the

way in which Hawco reformulates an American aesthetic. There are few easy answers. Austerity

cultures are clearly and obviously problematic, but cultures of robust public funding present their

own dilemmas as well.

Artists can contribute to this discussion by cultivating diverse and complex

understandings of artistic production. At varying points in each novel, Jonson and Royston's

conceptions of artistic production fit nicely into what Brouillette typifies as the creative economy

discourse in that both writer-characters posit the importance of autonomy. Her criticism stems, in

part, from Richard Florida's *The Rise of the Creative Class.* Brouillette critiques this quotation

from Florida's text: "Artists, musicians, professors and scientists have always set their own

hours, dressed in relaxed and casual clothes and worked in stimulating environments. They could

never be forced to work, yet they were never truly at work [...] We trade job security for

autonomy" (Florida 12-13). Brouillette's criticisms emphasize how Florida's description of

creative people reduces them to a functional part of the economy, and it does so to their

detriment. She writes:

> Hence, creative-economy discourse is friendly to private enterprise and wary of public
>
> subsidy, and friendly to a flexibly self-sufficient and self-managing workforce and
>
> hostile to collective politics and workers' interdependence. It construes the cultural
>
> sector as something of legitimate concern to government and as something it
>
> understands and has a handle on, while providing its politicians with a platform for
>
> promotion of commercially driven initiatives and values. (29)

Such attempts to typify a wide spectrum of people are reductive and totalizing. Nevertheless,

Jonson and Royston in their conceptions of artistic production as autonomous act both fit into the

class that Florida describes. While Riche's novel and protagonist are more obviously connected

to the creative economy and Brouillette's criticisms, Royston's aesthetic stance, which is a type

of Romantic individualism, would make him one of Florida's ideal subjects.[33] Thus, these two

characters even in their rebellious, resistant moments would be harnessed by this creative

economy.

Royston understands artistic production as an isolated, hedonistic task that allows him to

escape society. Scorning political or social uses of art, he believes in an uncompromising

aestheticism. In his home country of St. Andrew's, a fictional island, Royston was tasked to write

poetry which articulates a vision of his country. However, the type of poetic imagery that

interests him would hardly align with a political party's desire for a national literature. Royston

would be more likely to write a Caribbean *Les Fleurs du Mal* than any kind of national anthem.

For Royston, art is not necessarily political or social; he resists placing a use value on aesthetic

experience. He says, "'It [art] is not about providing a positive influence, or solving the problems

of poverty. It's about all the dark things [...] that motivate us'" (Smith 164). The forcefulness of

his aesthetic philosophy challenges what appears to be an entrenched and simplistic conception

among certain characters of writing as a political tool. Royston points to what he perceives as the

disconnect between the interpersonal nature of politics and the fact that reading and writing often

requires isolation in order to concentrate. In his idea of artistic production, there is a divide

between literature and the concept of community: "'I have a hard time seeing a library as a

centre of community. The library, for me, was a place of solitude and quiet [...] There were

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[33] Brouillette connects Florida's characterization of creative people to a Romantic archetype. As I quoted earlier in the introduction, "it reimagines the original genius of Romantic ideology as one who has found the ideal commercial outlet for a given innovation" (23).

places that I could get to in my reading which I wanted to visit, which I thought I would never

visit. There were people, in my reading, more sophisticated than those around me. The library to

me was an escape from my community'" (Smith 183). For Royston, one needs to be alone to

produce art. He points out a fundamental hypocrisy of reading literature for its potential to create

social justice or to influence community values; opening a book means turning away from

immediate experience, ignoring friends and family, and entering into a world created by an

author. Those who narrow this experience to its potential for social justice and community

integration are trying to transform art into a use value. This use is far more admirable than the

development of capital, but it still distorts art for Royston.

Jonson, like Royston, idealizes an autonomous, hedonistic understanding of art, but he

works in a culture that has already incorporated and commodified the so-called creative class.

Jonson is fascinated by storytelling, but he feels defeated by the bureaucracy and the arbitrary

nature of management in Hollywood. There was a time in his life when he was a true believer in

the power of language and the pleasure of story: "He was hypnotized by the primitive magic of

storytelling. He was transported by the well-spun yarn, the telling details and then the detours

and feints and mostly the lies, the anticipation as the teller took a sip of rum and a drag off a fag

and considered, reconsidered, where next would turn the truth" (Riche 109). Initially, Jonson

values the power of narrative to transport people. His understanding of the storyteller as an

autonomous masculine figure who does not waste time on ornate language or frivolous details is

reminiscent of Ernest Hemingway. His ideal of the literary artist as someone who decides the

twists and turns, however, conflicts with the demands of the entertainment business, and he never

gets to enact his values. The key concern for film companies is profit and so formulas are

necessary: "The strictures of pictures, the heroic leads, the love interests, the reliance on gun violence to up the dramatic stakes, the damned 'inciting incidents,' the three or four or nine [...] none of it had anything to do, as far as Elliot was concerned, with telling stories with moving pictures" (Riche 33). Jonson never gets to be his ideal of the autonomous, hedonistic storyteller because the lead characters have to fit a particular mould, and the plots have to unfold in a specific way. A system of profitable clichés replaces the creative process. Seeing the arbitrary nature of success in the entertainment business, he attempts to resist it by championing aesthetics. However, although Jonson appears to enact an ethos of aesthetic resistance, it is difficult to see past the cliché of his situation. In a review of *Easy to Like,* I point out that the first half of the novel is not exactly unique: "The story of the burnt-out sophisticated screenwriter struggling in the tasteless, amoral world of producers and agents has been told countless times in film. Examples include *Adaptation, Permanent Midnight, Barton Fink,* and most recently Woody Allen's *Midnight in Paris"* (Halford 289). The proliferation of this type of film suggests that Jonson's oppositional stance has been incorporated into the structure of the Hollywood system. He is a commodified element of the status quo, not a radical opposing the system in a meaningful way. What appears as resistance is observed by people in the movie industry and turned into films about frustrated screenwriters. Just as Royston leaves for Canada, so too does Jonson. Although they travel to the same country, they do so at different times, and while Jonson arrives to an austerity culture, Royston travels to a Canada that attempts to fund its cultural producers in such a way that Smith treats it as a subject of satire.

The film industry is frustrating for Jonson in its obsession with profit, but an overemphasis on social justice can also distort art. If Smith's novel were set during a period of

austerity, Royston's quasi-Romantic idea of artistic production would be incorporated into

Florida's creative class. However, during the time of the cultural and political contingencies in

which Smith's novel is set, his apolitical, autonomous stance challenges other characters.

Muriella Pent, Smith's titular wealthy widow, quickly learns that the literature committee she

joins is less about literature or art and more about issues that people on the committee deem

important. Smith writes, "There was, she had to concede, so much she still had to learn. They

[people on the committee] had every right to condescend to her, as they knew so much more

about the Issues than she did. She was still learning what the Issues were. And she was

determined not to make a fool of herself again" (Smith 39). The literature committee aims to use

art as a tool of social justice, but as Pent's reaction illustrates, they expect conformity rather than

discourse. They agree that aesthetics are defined by culture, not by objective standards; this

subjectivity means that individuals with cultural capital or expensive educations have greater

power in defining the quality of a work. However, the committee fails to see the same potential

for manipulation and control when it comes to social justice. In many ways, the literature

committee represents Charles Altieri's worst fears in "Lyrical Ethics and Literary Experience"

when he argues that a focus on politics detracts from the power of aesthetics, and he warns that

such a focus can result in a deluded and hypocritical self-righteousness (41). In one of the text's

more pointed satirical moments, the committee no longer wants to receive writing samples in

their application forms. Royston, who is selected by them as part of their Developing Regions

Exchange[34] program, mocks his own application questions, and he flatly tells Pent that the

committee has nothing to do with literature: "'If you love art, you shouldn't be on that

committee'" (227). Although the committee has good intentions, they are distracted by their

overemphasis on social justice and their failure to develop any criteria, even if they are openly

subjective, for aesthetics. Their discussions of who should receive funding are focused almost

exclusively on "issues" deemed important by committee members. For example, deliberations of

whether or not to accept Royston's application take a positive turn when they find out that St.

Andrews had been struck by a hurricane:

> "We used to look down on St. Andrew's. It was said there was nothing
>
> there to be proud of."
>
> "Why not?"
>
> "I suppose they had no tourism industry. They had that terrible hurricane
>
> two years ago."
>
> "Oh that was *there*."
>
> "Was there quite a lot of destruction?" This was Iris Warshavsky, suddenly
>
> interested.

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[34] The Developing Regions Exchange Program is municipally funded: "The city [of Toronto] donated some money for a Developing Regions Exchange Program, which would enable a foreign writer to visit and be a public writer-in-residence for a period of six months. The writer would be one who could contribute to an understanding of cultural diversity, and so would be from a Developing Region" (Smith 85). Furthermore, this funding source is contentious: "The mayor had even said on a panel discussion on the rock-video television channel that he thought the various arts organizations were a divisive influence on the community, although he had not explained why before repeating that the arts were clearly a provincial funding responsibility, if not a federal one, and that most residents of the city were hard-working taxpayers who did not feel they were represented by this type of minority-interest group anyway" (Smith 86-87).

"Oh yes," said Jasminka [the chair of the committee], "and there wasn't a

lot there to start with."

"So I suppose," said Deepak slowly, "that he does have a lot of familiarity

with issues, with serious issues."

"Oh, yes," said Jasminka grimly, "he certainly meets that criterion. If that

is the purpose of this—"

"I suppose he will have a lot to teach people," said Iris Warshavsky.

"People here." (Smith 110-111)

Royston's success as a well-respected, anthologized poet is actually detrimental to his chances:

"It sounds as if he's a little overqualified," said Deepak.

"Overqualified?" said Brian.

"I mean in the literary sense. You know, these are all British publishers, all

British awards. I mean we might have a problem of perceived elitism here." (112)

Although austerity cultures are worse, bureaucrats who have funding, in Smith's satire,

consistently fail to appreciate the complexities and nuances of art; instead, social justice issues

distract governments and committees from the varied experiences that literature offers. In the

world of the novel, Royston's hedonistic, autonomous stance on art tends to counteract and

balance the stances of other characters.

Although Royston's idea of artistic production works to contrast the prevalent opinions of

the literature committee, in the austerity culture of *Easy to Like,* Jonson—once his thinking shifts

from an emphasis on aesthetics to neoliberal economics—tends to remove people who think

differently than him. Midway through *Easy to Like,* Jonson frees himself from the confines of the

film industry, but he ends up in a position that is even more artistically compromising: a bureaucrat for the CBC. While he works in Hollywood, he wants to enact an ethos that will result in aesthetically challenging and uncompromising movies, but he lives as an underling to powerful arbiters of his taste. Riche places his screenwriter in a position of authority for the CBC, and Jonson becomes one of the people he used to despise. Riche writes, "This was the first time Elliot had been in the position of making that call. His part back in Hollywood had always been that of an unconditional advocate, a zealot for the cause of the story he thought should be told—the one he had written. Over the next few days and nights he would, instead, judge the appeals" (188). In the position of independent, literary artist, Jonson can focus purely on the quality of a story. He can expound on the importance of aesthetics, and he can frown at people who are concerned about ratings or box-office appeal. Once he shifts into a managerial position, however, he has an array of new considerations that he needs to take into account. Intoxicated by his newfound power, he all too readily adapts to thinking about art as a business: "Finally he was the ultra-audience, sprawled on some elevated couch, like a Roman emperor, in judgement. As an executive, it would be he who assigned blame, even if the mistakes were his own" (Riche 206). Riche's characterization of Jonson highlights the gap between how people operate when they are at the bottom of a system and how they operate when they are in charge. Jonson's ethos does not simply change the moment that he is placed in the seat of judgement; he appears to adopt inverse values, save for the fact that he still values autonomy from others.

Royston also changes as his narrative progresses, but he does so in a way that is far more beneficial to his writing and to others. His story fits nicely into a *Künstlerroman* arc of the young writer-character who travels away from home and finds success as a literary artist. At the time of

his most famous publication, *The Rapture,* his government is interested in moving past a history

of colonialism and in identifying a local culture. As Michael Morris, a state bureaucrat, tells him,

"'Marcus, your role was an important one in the Freedom-party years. At a time when

independence from everyone, in every regard, was, was more, was more how shall I say,

emotionally important, to all of us, than economically productive. That's all well and good, we

needed a vision at that time, we needed an artistic image, we all benefited from that'" (Smith 18).

When the government of St. Andrew's is interested in national identity, his role is to create art

about the nation so that its citizens could think about their time and place. However, after he

returns to St. Andrew's from the United Kingdom, he abruptly stops publishing. He spends most

of his time drinking heavily and thinking of foreign places. For Royston, writing poetry is a slow

deliberate process that is born of an idiosyncratic strong image. Smith writes, "Only the last two

lines were today's work, and they were distinctly inferior. The a-b-b-a business was proving

impossible to maintain. And the rhythm was all goofy. But he could picture the city [...] what he

was more interested in, he had to admit, was those walls: how massive they must have been!

Dusty, pocked with battle" (Smith 45-46). As he writes, he imagines he is elsewhere, away from

the loneliness and the sense of failure that he feels in St. Andrew's. This failure results in part

from the lack of interest and understanding that other people have in his poetry. Morris, who

worked in both governments, recalls that Royston's poetry was a "public relations

success" (Smith 22). He adds, "I'm sure it did something for the tourism" (Smith 22). Although

Morris knows that Royston's poetry was well-received, he is concentrated exclusively on the

cultural producer's use value. The era of identity politics in St. Andrew's is not presented as an

idyllic counterpoint to the austerity culture that follows. Royston never felt at home in St.

Andrew's, and he was never interested in becoming a national symbol. He feels as though his education and his cosmopolitan tastes make him a quasi-European outsider. He tells Morris, "'We no longer need poets of the colonial era representing our [...] whatever I represent'" (Smith 19). His position within the government during a period of public subsidy would have proved alienating since Royston does not believe that a poet is supposed to articulate a community or do anything of a political nature. For Royston, government involvement in art distorts and detracts from a literary artist's craft. Far from being energized by his role during the Freedom-party years in which arts funding was abundant, Royston leaves his position uninspired and exhausted.

Although Royston is an internationally known literary artist, his accomplishments are easily dismissed for their lack of direct public utility by his own government, once it shifts to an austerity regime. Royston's unemployment, however, frees him from a position that never appealed to his sensibilities, and it leads him to new challenges that push him further as a poet. Thus, this movement to austerity cannot be viewed as purely detrimental. After he leaves for Canada, he shifts to an autobiographical style. Even in the solitude of composing a poem or a story, he is intellectually engaged with his locale. Prior to his transition to this autobiographical style, his understanding of poetry and poets contributes to his sense of loneliness and isolation. He writes:

> I have tried to live among my own people for the last twenty years and was beginning to feel, to understand, how I could come to say that and mean it, my own people. And now I feel the same old sense of difference, the same irritation at the provincialism of thought, of aesthetic, of politic, the rut of defeat we live in, the same sense that I have never been truly a part of my own island. I know that this sounds nineteenth century,

like the melancholy of some coddled German poet, and I do not mean to sound self-

aggrandizing and melodramatic when I say that there is perhaps no place where I will

ever feel I am truly at home. (121)

Royston's shift away from this transcendental homelessness occurs after he has travelled to

Canada and back. He stops waiting to feel at home and instead chooses to will a complicated

sense of place onto St. Andrew's. In the poem that closes the novel, Royston writes:

I am come home, now, and will not leave again.

I am happy to wrestle this beach into symbols,

these scratches. I could not describe it

so easily then. (348)

His ethos shifts slightly from a purely autonomous understanding of artistic production to one

that embraces his island home. Aesthetically, this transition is reflected when he stops writing

mythical poetry set in foreign lands, and he begins writing autobiographical poetry set in St.

Andrew's and in Canada. It takes time and effort for Royston to change. If there is something to

observe and highlight about Royston in this discourse of funding, austerity, and the creative

economy, it is this long-term, indirect influence that funding or a lack of funding has on the

poet's career. He receives money to live in Canada, and his time there changes both him and the

people with whom he interacts but not in simple or clearcut ways. If there is funding to the arts,

it needs to allow for this lack of obvious, direct utility.

Characters in these two novels consistently narrow the spectrum of artistic experiences

when they attempt to get concrete, immediate results from writing. As Jonson's tastes and values

change, his focus on production shifts from creating TV for the highest common denominator to

the lowest. At the beginning of his tenure with the CBC, Jonson is warned against trying to produce high art for a general public. An old friend, Gunnar Olafsson, who once worked for the CBC tells Jonson, "You know, there is a gaggle of comfy liberals [...] who like to imagine that this is a sophisticated, postmodern, secular humanist society [...] that whole fucking system that was designed to bring all that art and culture to the masses, to subsidize it so that any Canadian could have [...] well [...] they didn't want it. Even for free" (Riche 76-77). As indicated by his use of the word "masses," Olafsson's understanding of Canadian audiences is simplistic. Raymond Williams argues in *Culture & Society* that "The masses are always the others, whom we don't know, and can't know [...] To the other people, we also are masses. Masses are other people" (289). Initially, Jonson attempts to avoid this homogenizing, depersonalizing, and dismissive way of thinking about people. To help him envision his audience and avoid simplifying them, he creates a group of imaginary office workers: "Elliot was going to be each and every one of them. He was going to inhabit the skins he'd drawn. What did they watch? What would they watch that they would talk about the next day at work?" (Riche 191). Rather than think of his audience as a mass, he attempts to personify various groups of potential viewers. Over time, however, he becomes less interested in all the people at his imaginary office, and he focusses on getting the attention of just one of his characters, Alice, the obese receptionist. He says, "'Alice gets perfectly comfortable on the couch, and to forget it all, to forget the passive abuse she suffers at the office, the emptiness of her life at home, to forget that she is overweight and unloved, she watches television [...] Television is her bestest friend'" (Riche 285-286). Jonson produces his shows for what he perceives is the easiest target to meet his ratings objective. His construction of Alice as a representative figure for the CBC's

audience does not simply reduce Canadian viewers to one type; it is a hilariously insulting and reductive personification of the so-called TV-watching masses.

In contrast to Riche, Smith is not focussed on the aesthetics of one writer-character but on a group of people who have different interests in writing. Aside from Royston, Brian Sillwell is reminiscent of deeply serious young writer-characters typical of the Künstlerroman genre, such as Lynn Coady's Larry Campbell in *Mean Boy* and Steven Heighton's Sevigne Torrins in *The Shadow Boxer*. Sillwell works on a novel, but he is vague about its content and its construction. His friend views his desire to write a novel as a cliché: "'Don't tell me. You're writing some [...] Some work of literature [...] Oh, don't. Please [...] it's been nice, but I think I have to scream now" (Smith 52). Sillwell's dreams are not unique or overly important in the scope of *Muriella Pent*. He is an average young man, transitioning into adulthood and trying to make sense of his place in the world. He is, as his friend says, somewhat of a cliché, but he gets to develop his identity from a number of different choices that that are available to him, and he gets to interact with Royston as a result of the cultural exchange. Like Sillwell, Pent is also working on a novel, one about Canadian immigrants, but she stops during the first chapter to make a note: "*Lupus committee 7 pm" (Smith 58). Rather than a cultural or an aesthetic pursuit, her writing helps pass time between her various committee meetings. After her note, she lists ideas for other novels:

-massacre of Iroquois by smallpox

-Riel Rebellion

-Dieppe raid

-Vimy Ridge (maybe parallels between?)

-Canadian participation in bombing of Hamburg and Dresden

          -computer crime using Internet (59)

Pent dabbles in writing and is curious about art, but she is not as profoundly interested in literature as Royston. Her list sounds as though it were developed by a publishing house interested in bestselling CanLit. Nevertheless, although she may not have the most sophisticated understanding of poetry or of novels, they serve a variety of rewarding purposes in her life. Finally, Julia Sternberg uses the poetic descriptions in her diary to impress people in conversation: "Julia wanted Mrs. Pent to find this glamorous [that she lives by a factory that is being dismantled], for some reason. Perhaps because she herself did. And perhaps because she had been writing all this in her diary and was proud of what she had written" (Smith 68). Like other characters in *Muriella Pent,* Sternberg writes to poeticize her surroundings, and she attempts to deal with pain through her writing. She says, "I'm trying to write something about the breakup. I guess. I don't know what it's about. It was Pascal, actually, who encouraged me to write. He got me writing something everyday. But it ends up being a diary. So I try to write about the neighbourhood" (Smith 72). This group of writer-characters and the choices that are available to them present a mixed representation of literary artists and of the writing world. In contrast to Florida's creative class, these are people who rely on one another in varying degrees; they might seek autonomy at times, but they need to interact with each other in order to change. These differences highlight the fact that a singular definition of "art," "artist," and "writer" will never satisfactorily describe the various interests that people have in literature. Smith's characters see different types of writing as valuable, and they all have a distinct writing ethos. As opposed to Florida's reductive definition of creative people, a diverse group of writer-characters increases the variety of definitions that might influence public funding to the arts.

Although there are numerous, competing definitions for the words "art," "artist," and

"writer," the ways in which powerful individuals interpret them have a direct economic effect on

authors and on the type of writing that reaches an audience; Brouillette soundly argues this point

in relation to how the Labour Party in the UK supported cultural producers: "certain forms of arts

provision and funding were nonetheless privileged by New Labour, and certain images of

cultural producers were more common than others" (29). Thus, even though there may be a

multiplicity of choices and opportunities for creative people, certain choices are more likely to be

rewarded with money. For example, members of the literature committee control who gets

funding to produce art; similarly, residents of Pent's neighbourhood believe that a different type

of artist—"a real one"—should get funding rather than a poet such as Royston. At the residents

association meeting, Gaye Northwood, one of Pent's neighbours, says, "'if we get involved [...]

[we can] ensure that the next artist-in-residence is someone a little bit more—'" (Smith 297). She

is cut off by Ralph Poziarski, another neighbour, who says "'A little bit more of an artist [...]

More real art, you mean, more genuine art and a little less video and photography and

whatnot'" (Smith 297). They believe the money should go exclusively to Canadian cultural

producers. If their definition of "artist" is accepted, then there will be no cultural exchange or

dialogue as the literature committee originally intended. To be fair, although the word "artist" is

used to exclude other people, characters also impose exclusionary definitions of "art" and "artist"

on to themselves. The narrator writes of Sternberg, "What she had wanted to say to him was that

she had also known, from doing that thing [a threesome] with him and Muriella, and just from

hanging out with him all the time too, that she didn't want to be an artist" (Smith 279). In

assuming that Royston's sexual adventures and binge drinking are inextricable from his artistic

production, she fails to disentangle the so-called "artistic temperament" from the creation of art.

However, her skill and creativity with language as indicated by her diary entries suggests that she

should think of herself as talented and artistic; she could still be a literary artist without being an

autonomous hedonist. If decision makers impose narrow definitions of authorship—even in

times of robust funding—on to funding initiatives, then those who do not easily fit into these

definitions will lose out.

   This power to impose definitions onto others is intoxicating for Jonson. Since he fits in

nicely among Florida's creative class, his narrative can be read as a warning about such people in

positions of power. *Easy to Like* is a satirical novel, and with any powerful satirical expression,

there is truth in its humour. When Jonson is in an upper management position, it is not obvious

whether he makes his own choices or if he operates at the behest of his bureaucracy.

Paradoxically, he seems to do both; in choosing to create art for the lowest common

denominator, he finally attains the autonomy that he has desired all along. This reading of

Jonson's character appears to contradict his values as a screenwriter. How could the individual

who desired to create art of the highest aesthetic quality be the same person who produces TV

shows for "Alice"? The trajectory of Jonson's character suggests that although he valued art and

storytelling while he was a screenwriter, he prized the sensations and the status that could be

derived from being an arbiter of taste. As a manager of cultural producers, he does not champion

aesthetic quality when he has the opportunity; intoxicated by the power of his position over

others, he champions himself. While Jonson is a literary artist, his aesthetic sensibilities give him

the opportunity to feel superior in a community that commodifies him. While he is a manager,

producing TV shows gives him the opportunity to literally be superior. Thus, although Jonson

has changed drastically by the conclusion of *Easy to Like,* in actuality, he also gets to the core of

what he wants: to impose his will on to the world. The essence of that will and the values that

inform it are not as important as the fact that he finally gets to be the arbiter. He gains the

autonomy that he searches for in Hollywood, but to attain it, he forfeits his aestheticism.

     Easy to Like presents a character who thrives as an administrator in an austerity culture,

but he quits writing. Marcus Royston*,* on the other hand, is removed from his government

position when St. Andrew's begins to tighten its budget, but he is reinvigorated as a literary artist

after he receives public funding to be part of a cultural exchange. Literary artists occasionally tell

themselves grandiose tales about their craft, that they are the arbiters of taste or "the

unacknowledged legislators of the world" (Shelley 159). These arguments are admirable, sincere

and true for some authors and writer-characters, but for others, they are empty rhetoric. Jonson is

disillusioned with the film industry at the beginning of *Easy to Like*, but he still clings to the

possibility that high art, skilled storytelling, and refined taste are three worthwhile ideals to

champion. Once he finds himself in a senior management position at the CBC, however, his

philosophy quickly changes. As a manager, he convinces himself that he needs to direct his TV

programming at lazy, dependent viewers. Characters in both of these novels do not willfully or

deliberately change the meaning of "art," "writer," or "artist" to suit their interests. Nevertheless,

these definitions, whether they are used by a government, a literature committee, or an individual

such as Royston, tend to reflect economic, political, or bodily desires. The government of St.

Andrew's, whether its policies are focussed on the economy or on the culture of the island, is not

truly interested in aesthetics. Similarly, the literature committee concentrates on social justice to

the detriment of literature. Although Royston has a strong and persuasive voice throughout

Muriella Pent, it would be naive to assume that his understanding of "art" and "artist" is not also rooted in his own desires and urges to inhabit a particular lifestyle. His character is reshaped during his time in Canada, however, and he endeavours to write about his home. The inverse shift for Jonson, from literary artist to bureaucrat, appears to be a drastic change in his philosophy. Riche's construction of Jonson implies that people, authors and bureaucrats included, are profoundly influenced by their environment. Thus, the circumstances that public policy creates need to be closely scrutinized and consistently modified.

For those who are interested in supporting cultural producers, it makes sense to consider alternate models to what is already available. Smith implies near the end of *Muriella Pent* that one promising form of support is public funding combined with private patronage. This private patronage needs to come from people who have complex, open-minded definitions of "art" and "artist." Pent turns her mansion into a mini-bohemia, complete with naked dancers roaming the hallways. Her patronage to the cultural producers who do not receive funding can be viewed as supplementing the gaps of the literature committee. These two texts highlight that funding or a lack of funding influences the development of a literary artist's potential. Austerity cultures threaten the production of complex art; however, funding is not simply or absolutely beneficial. Words such as "art," "artist," and "writer" have multiform definitions, a fact which allows for a fluid understanding of authorship. However, the multiplicity of these definitions, also allows powerful individuals greater opportunity to insist that their definition is the correct one. The film industry is frustrating and alienating for Jonson; producers seem to think of screenwriters as plot and dialogue technicians whose only purpose is to rearrange a system of profitable clichés. The literature committee in *Muriella Pent* is so focused on social justice that they ignore aesthetics.

They fail to think of literary artists as people who actually create art. Austerity cultures, on the other hand, do not just marginalize authors; they remove them from their structures, and they suggest that such activities are irrelevant, even insensitive when others might be losing their homes or their pensions (Ventrella 70). Although literary artists are pushed to the periphery in austerity cultures, public funding tends to favour specific types of cultural producers over others. As Brouillette argues, "New blueprints for creative-economy development, backed and disseminated by think tanks, government officials, and academics, have a direct and observable impact on how the future will unfold. It matters then that new vocabulary of creativity frames relations between corporations, government, and citizens in a way that achieves specific political mandates" (27). Funding regimes clearly affect the lives and the artistic production of cultural producers. Austerity cultures do not make it impossible to create art, but they do make life more difficult for literary artists. Art can be both profitable and political. During periods of robust funding to the arts, however, the emphasis of support can be misdirected to social justice or to economic gain. Smith's novel invites readers to appreciate a productive tension between politics, ethics, economics, and aesthetics. These tensions need to be kept in a fine balance during periods of robust public subsidy. In contrast, Riche's novel implies that in cultures of austerity, a concern for immediate economic productivity topples considerations of aesthetics, politics, and ethics. Authors need certain things, such as pen and paper, to undertake the writing process, and some of these things require money. However, the way they put such things into motion is influenced by their culture. In *Muriella Pent,* it makes sense to use a pen to write a poem, but in *Easy to Like,* it might be smarter to take that pen and start picking locks.

Lawrence Hill's *Any Known Blood:* How Should a Black and White Author Be?

Wayne Booth and Marshall Gregory argue that ethics is—among other things—about the choices that people make, but Homi K. Bhaba points out that ethics should also be about the ways in which choices are limited for some and not for others (182). This reading of *Any Known Blood* will parody assumptions inherent to Anglo-American framework of ethical criticism as exemplified by Booth and Gregory. Booth, for example, argues that even though desires inform personhood, that people have the potential to form second order desires, essentially meaning that they can train themselves to want new desires (271). However, although people can train themselves to seek alternative selves, as *Any Known Blood* demonstrates, race, gender, nationality, sexuality, culture, class, and income are all extremely powerful influences on ethos. Lawrence Hill's protagonist, Langston Cane V, is both black and white or neither, depending on who is looking at his skin. At no point do I want to suggest in this essay that whiteness is not a raced subjectivity; it is, and in chapter one, I endeavour to demonstrate how whiteness and European culture affect white authors. Nevertheless, Cane V's mixed racial heritage creates a charged reading of how race and culture affect authorship. Cane V's story does not add texture to this argument simply because of his skin colour, however. Unlike the writer-characters in the majority of these novels, Cane V is not part of an artist circle, and he does not worry about competitors. Instead, he is surrounded by people who do not value his writing or his research. Several people highlight the selfishness of his creative pursuits. His friends and family tend to see literary art as a hobby rather than a deeply significant lifelong craft. He is often challenged as to why he would bother to waste his time writing. Repeatedly, he is told: get a job; find a partner; start a family. As a parodic-narrative to *Künstlerroman* involving the youthful exuberance of

young artists such as Campbell and Torrins, Cane V is old enough to view himself as a failure.

He still clings to his dream, however, in moments of trouble, and although the people in his life

might think his time could be better spent doing something more practical, Cane V's scribbling

serves a variety of purposes. Secular literature and creative writing take the place of religion in

his spiritual life, and they inform his sense of self. Knowing one's character, however, is

markedly different when one is a visible minority than when one is a white Canadian of

European descent.

If ethical criticism is an analysis of the choices that people make, then ethical critics need

to emphasize the ways in which the field of possibilities is significantly limited for some and not

others. Being of African descent in America before the abolition of slavery is perhaps one of the

most infamous historical examples of having one's choices severely reduced. A more

contemporary and subtler racial issue in Canada involves the way in which historians have not

always recognized black Canadians in national history. In "Ain't No Border Wide Enough:

Writing Black Canada in Lawrence Hill's *Any Known Blood"* Jennifer Harris writes, "[the novel]

addresses the complexity of the life of one man, his family history, and the way in which the

nation has historically attempted to erase or contain black presences" (369). History, both

national and familial, provides a way of cultivating one's identity. A strong sense of self can

sometimes be the best resistance to the stereotypes imposed on people who are viewed as other.

An excluded group of people needs to highlight the ways in which they have always been present

in national and regional discourses, and their fellow Canadians need to contribute to this

conversation. Otherwise, the excluded groups risk never becoming a part of the official story that

is Canada.[35] Black Canadians who look to national histories for a sense of identity will find only absences. This exclusion from the official history of Canada, combined with the fact that visible minorities often have to combat stereotypes, makes the processes of self-creation particularly complex for Langston Cane V. For Lawrence Hill and his protagonist, racial and cultural differences result in an intricate and complex development of personal ethos, which acknowledges historical and contemporary realities, but is not subject to either.

Cane V's mixed race presents an added layer of complexity in relation to identity, community, language, and self-perception. To be blunt, Cane V does not have the luxury of thinking about himself simply as a literary artist as many of the white males do in this study; similar to how Sheila thinks of herself as a female literary artist, he thinks of himself as a black literary artist or as a literary artist of mixed race. This focus can be empowering in a culture that embraces diversity, or stifling in a culture that ignores or subjugates minorities. One of Hill's strengths as an author of both fiction and non-fiction is his complex navigation of questions about race and culture in Canada. In *Black Berry, Sweet Juice* Hill asks, "How do you navigate the waters of identity with one black and one white parent? How have other Canadians who share the same mixed race background managed it? What does it mean to be black and white in Canada?" (7). Being of mixed race, Cane V asks himself these same questions, but he is not quite as articulate or as successful as the author who created him. Cane V's in-betweenness can be burdensome and confusing, but it is also an opportunity to challenge people's stereotypes. He writes, "I have the rare distinction—a distinction that weighs like a wet life jacket, but that I sometimes float to great advantage—of not appearing to belong to any particular race, but of

[35] To be fair, not all groups want to become a part of the official story.

seeming like a contender for many" (Hill 1). Cane V's opening line highlights the fluidity of

race. He can convince people that he is Algerian or Sikh whenever he wants to be political or

subversive. In certain situations, however, he fears that his mixed race inhibits him from truly

belonging to any group. Cane V writes, "I was glad that my hair was longer than usual, and

combed out into an afro, because I didn't want to be seen as a white visitor. I wanted my race

clearly marked" (Hill 119). He needs to be accepted and validated as black by the African

communities in America and Canada. However, although his ethos and his self-worth are

informed by these communities, he does not feel that he has to conform to a singular idea of

blackness in order to belong. For example, Hill highlights distinctions between African-

Canadians and African-Americans. Derek, an African-American who is obsessed with race, tells

Cane V, "'Interesting is a white word, man. Interesting isn't a word for people of colour. It's a

word for politicians, man. But I'll cut you some slack, coming from Canada and all. Black

people use that word up there?'" (Hill 243). Interestingly, Cane V does not reply with his own

list of black Canadian words and black American words. Unlike Derek, he has not felt the need

to conform to a specific speech pattern or slang. In this sense, a fluid identity allows Cane V to

resist Derek's static representation of race. Despite Cane V's dynamic understanding of racial

identity, his thought is channelled to questions of race in a way that white, male Canadian

authors do not experience even though they should. Although he might inhabit the same social

space as other characters in this study, Cane V exists in a distinct culture, and his literary ethos is

influenced by his skin colour and his heritage.

　　Any Known Blood is distinct from the other novels in this study, but not simply in the

protagonist's concentration on race. In this novel, writing is not a great task with heroic

undertones; the creation of literary art is relegated to those who have nothing better to do. In the majority of these novels, the writer-characters are fully immersed in writing and obsessed with creating art. The people against whom they measure their self-worth have similar goals and valuations of authorship. Cane V, on the other hand, has his desires and aspirations measured against a father who fought for civil rights and a Cameroonian friend who is stranded in North America because of a power struggle in his home country. In this novel, not only is writing decidedly unheroic, it is generally viewed as a frivolous distraction. Aberdeen Williams, a family friend, tells Cane V: "'Your family has had some born achievers, son, but you don't have to do what they did. I know you're interested in who your people were [...] Go write. Go do the one thing that all the achievers in your family were too busy and too important to do'" (12). Literary art is not a great task to be completed by a lone, misunderstood cultural hero, but a calling for those who lack more direct ways of taking part in society. As Nussbaum argues in *Poetic Justice,* novels about black North Americans such as Richard Wright's *Native Son* can communicate experiences that might otherwise be ignored (7), but the fight for civil rights and the struggle to maintain equality are more obviously heroic than fiction writing.

In his construction of Cane V's lineage, Hill asks readers to consider authors, writer-characters, and novels in a broad historical context. Authors tend to be on the periphery of historical moments. They record events, and they help shape the ways in which these events are perceived, but they do not physically bring about major historical change. As Aberdeen states, Cane V is descended from a long line of people who have performed great deeds. Cane V listens to someone tell his father, "'Your name still surfaces all the time around here. The Cane report on blacks in the media; the Cane report on police and racial minorities. The organizations you

founded over the years'" (Hill 23). Although Cane V has an impressive lineage, he persistently

adds details and dialogue that highlights the human qualities of these revered people. He says of

Langston Cane I that he "claimed to have taken part in the raid—to a degree. Harper's Ferry hero

this man was not" (Hill 426). As Cane V becomes more and more fascinated by his ancestor, his

Aunt Mill is quick to warn him about Cane I: "'Don't make a hero out of him [...] He lived in

hard times, but he was a regular man" (Hill 497). The word "hero" has connotations that obscure

the less flattering qualities of great men and women. Rather than being perfect human beings,

these people were able to achieve in spite of their flaws. As Harris writes:

> Hill disrupts conventional notions of heroism by creating a character like Langston Cane
>
> the first, whose participation in the raid on Harper's Ferry is not rooted in idealism or a
>
> commitment to social justice. This disruption, particularly in relation to the African
>
> American tradition of transforming exceptional or influential community members or
>
> both into super-signifiers of a given time or movement, works to question the ways in
>
> which African American history and myth-making are productions. (371)

Hill presents a holistic critique of heroism while still developing a writer-character who can be

read as a human but heroic figure. Cane V is not working in the same field as the people who are

perceived as heroes in their community, such as civil rights workers. Nevertheless, he still

performs deeds that are perceived as heroic, and his persistent desire to be known as a literary

artist is admirable. In *Any Known Blood,* literary artists might shape history and influence the

way people perceive the past, but they are not at its centre.

Although Hill's novel asks readers to think about writing pragmatically, Cane V still

serves a valuable purpose in his society through art. When he is fired from his position as a

government speechwriter, he is told, "'This is a sign. Don't just find another job as a hack. Change your life. Somewhere out there in the real world, you'll find a use for your prodigious writing talents'" (Hill 19). Compared to his ancestors', Cane V feels as though he lacks talent and ability, but what he is in actual need of is a forum to direct his skills. His love of reading, writing, and thinking is consistent with his ancestors' interest in the written word. Two of the other Langston Canes, however, had a more practical outlet for their reading, writing and thinking through religion. Cane III is as excited about his calling as Cane V: "He spent an extra moment in the study. It seemed like a good place to do work. Reading. Writing. Thinking. This would be a house where great work could be done" (Hill 292). The distinction between Cane III the preacher and Cane V the writer-character is that Cane III has a forum to espouse his beliefs directly whereas Cane V does not. I have examined the development of ethos through novels, but many people in *Any Known Blood* cultivate their character through religion. Hill repeatedly shows characters seeking self-knowledge and solace through church. Cane V listens to a preacher: "'But who are you, really? We don't know the answer, friends, until a Divine Moment comes along and our Maker throws a few cards on the table. How will you behave, when the ante is raised? Where will your true character lie?'" (Hill 233). Atheists and agnostics cannot find their answers to these questions through organized religion. They need new forums such as novels and family histories. In this sense, for individuals like Cane V, secular reading and writing serve an elemental purpose in cultivating his ethos and in fulfilling a powerful desire for non-religious spirituality.

  In *Any Known Blood*, Hill illustrates how the functionality of writing and reading is contingent on the historical and national moment. While literature supplants religion for Cane V,

reading and writing have practical functions for his ancestor Cane I, who writes, "In the near

dark, I learned to read. I read the Bible, cover to cover. I read it all, and I must say, I didn't

believe a word of it. That didn't matter. I was reading. Ruth began stealing books, whatever

books she could get her hands on, from the master's house" (Hill 437). Not only does he use the

Bible to become literate, he builds upon these newfound skills to help him escape from bondage:

"I wrote myself a new pass in the moonlight. This one was from a fictional master, who was

sending me ahead to run an errand for him" (Hill 440). Cane I uses his imagination to cultivate a

convincing lie in order to make his way out of America. Once he has made it to Canada, his

literacy skills allow him to inform people about his rat-catching abilities, to "write a little sheet

of information and start selling it for a dollar to my rat-troubled customers" (Hill 464). Cane I's

conception of writing and reading is practical and functional, not the source of grandiose dreams

of cultural significance. In contrast to how reading and writing help Cane I escape into Canada,

Hill illustrates how language can be used to oppress Canadian people in the present. As a

speechwriter, Cane V is often stuck repeating the rhetoric of his political superiors:

> I imagined having to craft a minister's speech about how eliminating human rights
>
> legislation would contribute to Ontario's positive business climate. But I knew the
>
> minister's spin doctors wouldn't allow the term 'human rights legislation' in the speech.
>
> They would insist that all speeches refer to the old legislation as 'the job quota law.' I
>
> have written a lot of trash on the job. But I didn't think I could write that speech. (14)

Cane V is able to use his writing skills to reveal the vested interests of those who are in power,

and he is subsequently fired. The most clearly marked difference between Cane V and his

ancestor is that Cane V understands creative writing as a journey and as a pursuit rather than as a

tool that he can use to acquire money or to escape bondage. Cane I wants to learn how to write, but Cane V wants to be a literary artist.

The language that Cane V uses to discuss his desire to write gives it the aura of a mystical calling. He often refers to his dreams of being a literary artist, but he has little understanding as to where these dreams originated. In contrast, Hill explains quite clearly in *Black Berry, Sweet Juice* his motivations in becoming an author:

> All of these television programs involved black actors or black themes. When I watched
>
> these shows, I felt alive. I felt that there were people in the world who were speaking to
>
> me. And as I didn't get very many real people speaking to me that way in Don Mills, I
>
> had to find other ways to connect with them. So I started reading [...] Without knowing
>
> exactly what I was doing, I was forming my own sense of blackness and my own
>
> connection to the black diaspora by reaching into literature. Soon, this exploration
>
> blossomed into creative writing of my own. (60-61)

In contrast to several of the writer-characters in this study, Hill does not seek autonomy through his literary pursuits. He seeks a link to the past, and he desires to cultivate other voices into a complex personhood. Cane V typically refers to his dreams and desires, but he does not pinpoint any origin, rationale or incentive behind his urges. When he leaves his job as a speechwriter, he says, "I took down my Fowler's *Modern English Usage*—which was left over from the time I dreamed of becoming a writer" (Hill 20). Although he describes the dream as having passed, it returns to him at convenient moments, such as after he loses his job and wants to avoid his overbearing father: "I felt a cloud lift out of my head and unveil my own desire. It was time to move south and start to write" (Hill 56). Although Cane V's writing dream is a convenient

excuse to avoid unpleasant experiences, he also sincerely enjoys literature. He alters his plans so that he will be able to have a few hours in which to read and write: "I got out of church as quickly as I could without offending Mill. I planned to climb back into bed, flip through the Sunday *Sun*, sleep an hour, and then keep writing [...] I would write until five-fifteen, shower and change, and skedaddle over to Mill's for supper" (Hill 234). Most tellingly, he believes strongly enough in writing to seriously alter his life, even potentially risking it by living in countries that are more dangerous than middle-class Canada. As a young man, he goes to a rural village in Mali and lives in a hut: "I had been wanting for a long time to go there to research a novel" (Hill 196). In this example, a younger Cane V and Torrins from *The Shadow Boxer* have certain similarities. Unlike Cane I, they both understand writing not simply as a physical and intellectual act, but as something that if done frequently and well enough, can become a source of their identity; they can be known as literary artists. While Cane I uses writing to escape harm and to increase his income, Torrins and Cane V both place themselves in physical danger through writing, and they both lessen their earnings so that they can fulfill their dreams of being literary artists. Torrins travels to a remote island where he can be completely alone and lead a supposedly more authentic life. Similarly, Cane V leaves Canada for Africa so that he can understand something of his ancestral past and to research a novel. Both journeys are counterintuitive forms of luxury travel pursued by curious Canadians. Writing might be important, and it might even be a calling, but its significance needs to be kept in perspective by comparing it with broader life experiences. *Any Known Blood* is one of the few novels in this study that achieves this goal.

Cane V is repeatedly reminded by his friends and family to avoid taking himself and his writing too seriously. Most of the people in his life are bewildered by the fact that he is interested

in reading, writing, and thinking. They believe it keeps him from leading what they deem to be a

normal life. His Aunt Mill asks him, "'Why don't you just get on with having a job and starting a

family and forget all that stuff?'" (Hill 132). Unlike Cane V, she sees little point in the

information that he values and even less in the way that he intends to put it to use. She continues

her line of questioning: "'What's the point of filling most of a book with your

imagination?'" (Hill 133). Cane V does not have an explanation for his desires, but instead falls

back on a generalized concept of authorship. He says, "'That's what writers do. That's what I

want to do'" (Hill 133). Aside from fear of failure, he never really offers a satisfying answer as to

what motivates him to finish this project. His father asks him directly, "'What are you doing in

Baltimore? What are you really trying to accomplish?'" (Hill 378). The best answer he can offer

is, "'I'm trying to write our family story. It's turning into a novel. It's hard for me to admit that

I'm trying to write one, because I've failed at everything I've taken on, and I couldn't bear to fail

at this, too'" (Hill 378). The importance of his task is self-evident; knowledge of one's past

informs one's sense of identity. Furthermore, Cane V's ancestors have been players in major

events of North American history. The sensational aspects, such as Cane I's connection to the

raid on Harper's Ferry, would enhance the possibility of monetary value once he completes the

text for publication. Cane V never clearly enunciates these points to the characters who

consistently question his purpose as a literary artist. It takes a writer-character whose ethos has

been cultivated in a different culture to truly challenge Cane V to think of the entrepreneurial

side of his literary dreams.

  Yoyo, an illegal Cameroonian immigrant and journalist, challenges Cane V's impractical

understanding of writing as a quasi-mystical calling. Although Cane V has been writing for

years, he has given little thought to the practical or entrepreneurial aspects of literary art. Yoyo,

on the other hand, thinks about writing in terms of how he can turn his talents into money:

> Yoyo had to diversify. He would write. Langston Cane was up writing every night and
>
> every morning in his kitchen, and he wasn't even a writer. He even admitted it. Had
>
> never published anything. Had never been paid for his writing, except for a few
>
> speeches that an educated twelve-year-old could have written. Yet, nevertheless, he said
>
> he was writing [...] But Yoyo had to be focused. He couldn't afford to waste time on
>
> hand-wringing, anxiety-laden memoirs that might never be finished or published. No.
>
> He had to do something marketable. (257)

Yoyo does not subscribe to the same mythology of literary artists as Cane V, and he is far more

dismissive of its cultural significance. This lack of reverence allows him to be far less inhibited

than Cane V in terms of what he chooses to write. For Yoyo, writing is not real work but an easy

and enjoyable task that allows him to earn money: "It was exhilarating to think that he could

make three hundred dollars just by sitting at a table and writing. Yes, Yoyo would start to write.

He would take on the major issues of the day [...] The first one popped out in two hours" (Hill

257). The idea of turning one's writing into cash is not a revolutionary idea, and Yoyo writes

newspaper editorials, which are not generally considered literary art. His outlook is refreshing,

however, compared to the intense seriousness of characters such as Torrins and Arsenault. Most

writer-characters want some kind of monetary reward for their efforts, but they are not

particularly good at figuring out ways of achieving this goal. Yoyo explains exactly how Cane V

might begin to think more practically about writing:

"You should have been sending it out in pieces for publication in magazines and

newspapers. You have to learn to start making money, my friend. You need a little more

of the African entrepreneur in you. Wake up, Langston. You have friends, right? You

have contacts [...] I say, wake up, my friend, and make some money, and write another

one. It's easy, writing, isn't it? Cleaning houses, that is hard work." (499)

For Yoyo, dreams are important, but these dreams need to be turned into tangible rewards. He

believes that those who choose to write need to think of themselves and their task pragmatically,

and they need to allow the entrepreneurial spirit to enter into their understandings of art. Yoyo's

position as a cultural outsider grants him this perspective to enunciate what so many characters

in this novel attempt to tell Cane V: there are practical aspects to achieving one's goals; talent is

important, but so is pragmatism; think about the variety of experiences that can be enjoyed rather

than obsessing over a childhood dream of being a literary artist.

Yoyo's reading of Cane V's life manifests the ways in which this novel parodies earlier

texts in this dissertation. The fact that Cane V is of mixed race adds texture to the available

representations of literary artists. His in-betweenness makes it more difficult for him to have a

stable sense of his identity until he delves into his family history and begins to learn about the

complexities and the nuances of his ancestors' lives. Although his blackness and his whiteness

allow him to inhabit many selves, he needs an anchor. In *Black Berry, Sweet Juice,* Hill expounds

on the importance of having a sense of one's core self: "Like any reader of this book, I have

many different sides. They all fit together into the configuration of who I am. It is possible, and

indeed desirable, to welcome and nurture every aspect of my identity, and the diverse

relationships that come to me as a result of living a full life [...] I felt profoundly calmer about

who I was" (75). Cane V's journey follows a similar trajectory. Although he has many sides, he also has core values that he relies on when he feels that an identity is being imposed on him. Humanizing his ancestors helps him view his own life and his passion for writing with a sense of honesty and pragmatism. The Anglo-American delineation of ethical criticism does not always account for the power of race, age, or cultural identity over ethos. Readers cannot inhabit a variety of selves if some of them are offensive to their core values. *Any Known Blood* parodies the earlier *Künstlerroman* in this study by following a writer-character of mixed race who has already tried and failed to become a cultural hero. The processes of self-creation are often funnelled through race, age, nationality, and gender—concepts which have proved to be deeply powerful and far more influential than the novel. The power of literary art, particularly in longer narratives, lies in its ability to take these concepts and to create a sense of openness in how the reader had previously understood one or more of them. Hill achieves this goal by dissolving simple binaries between black and white. The work of changing a culture is inevitably influenced by literary art, but there is no denying the direct roles of civil rights activists such as Cane IV or Hill's own father. The contrast in this dissertation between characters who fought for civil liberties, such as Cane IV, with writer-characters who are supposed cultural heroes, such as Emile Dexter, should humble authors who dream of becoming cultural heroes solely through their writing. Finally, this section works as a parodic reading of the previous chapters in highlighting how white authors tend not to outwardly consider their whiteness as a raced subjectivity; such considerations could be a rich avenue of exploration for Canadian literary artists and critics.

Interrupting Lynn Coady's *Mean Boy* With *The Antagonist*: How Should a Reader Be?

Lynn Coady's *The Antagonist* parodies her earlier novel *Mean Boy* by shifting the emphasis of her narrator's ethos from one that strives for autonomy to one that embodies responsibility, not a simple duty to others, but a complicated and contentious embrace of what it means to live and think alongside other people. Two of Coady's writer-characters, Larry Campbell in *Mean Boy* and Gordon Rankin Jr., or Rank, in *The Antagonist,* demonstrate a tension between an ethos of autonomy and of responsibility as their narrations reach a point of closure. This ethos is discernible through the narrators' writing choices and through their modes or genres of expression. Both novels possess elements of the *Künstlerroman,* or the artist novel, but where Campbell's growth is channeled by the poetic form of the ghazal, Rank's growth is aided through a string of emails. To typify the search for autonomy, I will use Richard Rorty's description of the ironist in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* as one who "is looking for [...] a redescription of [... a personal] canon which will cause it to lose the power it has over him" (97). Such authors push back against the weight of social norms, and they desire to create themselves in a way that feels new. To contrast the search for autonomy, I will use Judith Butler's development of the term "responsibility" in *Giving an Account of Oneself* as being "in our skins, given over, in each other's hands, at each other's mercy" (101). For Butler, "This is a situation we do not choose. It forms the horizon of choice, and it grounds our responsibility" (Butler 101). While Campbell pushes away from other writer-characters, Rank confronts and learns to forgive his writer-character friend. Ultimately, Campbell probably needs to cultivate this autonomy while he is younger; however, in doing so, he enacts a metaphorical violence onto others, and Rank exemplifies the alienated, angered subject that results.

The construction and development of *The Antagonist* are informed by *Mean Boy*; these two texts are in a kind of literary conversation. In *Mean Boy,* Coady writes what could be considered a fairly typical *Künstlerroman*, but in *The Antagonist,* she writes from the perspective of a peripheral character in someone else's *Künstlerroman.* Charles Slaughter, a violent jock, spouts right-wing commentary throughout *Mean Boy*. He and Rank are different from one another in a variety of ways, but they share enough similarities to warrant comparison. To an extent *The Antagonist* can be read as Slaughter's response to Campbell after he finishes reading *Mean Boy*. Although Slaughter is an entertaining and compelling minor character in *Mean Boy,* he also borders on cliché. In contrast, Rank is a complex and multidimensional narrator. An ethical issue that arose after publication concerned Coady's use of biographical detail; the life of the deceased poet John Thompson informs the character of the fictional poet-professor Jim Arsenault. Thompson was an English-born poet and professor who died prematurely but managed to leave his mark on the Canadian literary scene. Coady relates an incident that occurred at Mount Allison University: "There were people [at the reading] who still remembered him [Thompson] and revered him very much and a couple of them kind of jumped up during the Q&A period [...] and gave me hell for using his life" (Ahearn 4). She justifies the use of Thompson's life by arguing that fiction is always a blend of lived and imaginary experience: "What I found interesting about it was that people didn't seem to know what made them angry, or that the character had so much in common with John Thompson but that the character, at the same time, wasn't like John Thompson [...] And that's kind of what fiction is" (Ahearn 7-8). My reading experience reinforces Coady's rationale. I had no knowledge of John Thompson or his poetry other than his epigraph at the beginning of the novel until I began researching *Mean Boy*.

Rather than influencing me to think about Thompson in a negative way, Coady introduced me to

his life and work. I cannot deny that when I think of Thompson I also think of Arsenault, but I

am aware that Arsenault is only Coady's partial interpretation of Thompson. My initial reading

of *Mean Boy* reflects Winter's caveat at the beginning of *This All Happened*: "Any resemblance

to people living or dead is intentional and encouraged. Fictional characters and experience come

to life when we compare them with the people and the places we know. New experience is

always a comparison to the known" (xii). Coady's novel made me think about my own

experience at university and my own interactions with professors and authors whom I admired.

Mean Boy taught me to be skeptical of aesthetic and academic authorities; it did not make me

believe that John Thompson was manipulative, arrogant, or self-absorbed. After reading how

Mean Boy is interconnected with the life of John Thompson, I read *The Antagonist,* and the

combination of these texts taught me to think about the inevitably limited perspective that all

people have when they narrate their own lives; this act entails writing about people who are

peripheral to one's experience; occasionally authors reveal their ignorance of and indifference to

those who might care deeply for them.

For both Campbell and Rank, change is aided through writing. However, the modes they

use and the way in which they describe their writing implies that Campbell views himself as a

recorder of profound realizations, whereas Rank is an active creator of knowledge. Campbell

pushes for autonomy through the poetic form of the ghazal, and Rank seeks responsibility though

his use of emails. Once Campbell escapes the shadow of Arsenault, he writes that "it's as if a

dammed-up part of my brain has broken through. I write sixteen ghazals in the course of one

marathon afternoon" (Coady 309). The ghazal is introduced to Campbell by Arsenault, and this

may hint that what Campbell describes is a partial autonomy mixed with a begrudging responsibility, and to explain this point, it might prove helpful to briefly discuss Arthur Rimbaud and his "derangement of the senses." In *Altered Reading: Levinas and Literature,* Jill Robbins writes that Rimbaud's understanding of the poet is as a "receptacle rather than an initiator, an instrument rather than an intention, in Rimbaud's phrase 'like the wood which finds itself a violin'" (123). Similarly, Campbell views writing as a type of release or a recording as opposed to a creative, knowledge making process. He describes the dammed up part of his brain as though the ghazals are a liquid waiting to be poured out. Like Rimbaud, he is a recorder rather than an initiator. In this sense, his search for autonomy might also be described as a failed attempt to resist responsibility to others.

This binary between the initiator and the recorder is not strict—to be fair, Rank describes writing as "dreamy fun" (Coady 58)—but the key distinction is that Campbell's transitory growth through the ghazal seems to rely on a release and a recording of experience, whereas Rank comes to view writing as the creation of new experience. The e-confessional, whether Adam Grix, the writer-character who penned the novel that enrages Rank, actually reads these emails or not, is an embrace of responsibility and of attachments, whereas the ghazal is a push for autonomy. This embrace of responsibility through writing, however, takes considerable time and effort on Rank's part. He must overcome a host of assumptions about authorship before he can forgive Grix. Through the writing process, Rank begins to understand how literary artists blur fact and fiction, and he realizes that one can easily lose oneself in the "dreamy fun" (Coady 58) of finding the perfect words to describe someone or something. Despite this realization, Rank experiences anxiety and frustration about being observed and judged. He writes his own version

of their past, assuming that he will sousveil his novelist judge, Grix, in a similar manner. His anxiety and frustration about Grix, however, are partially influenced by his perception of literary artists as being insightful and intelligent. He reads Grix's novel narcissistically and he overemphasizes his friend's literary celebrity, even going so far as to draw comparisons between authors and Greek gods. Although Rank eventually understands Grix's motivations, he still maintains that his friend's stylistic choices are offensive in their indifference to their time together.

Similar to Thompson's friends at the Q&A for Coady's reading, Rank feels violated. Grix has used private details that Rank shared with his friend in a particularly vulnerable time. When Rank first reads Grix's novel, he believes he has been unfairly characterized. In many ways, Grix's work of fiction is like the panopticon, in which the author figure observes, but the reader cannot return the gaze of judgement. As in the discussion of *This All Happened,* observation of others results in being observed. Rank finds a way of looking back at the author figure and sousveilling Grix by writing his own version of their past. Rank feels that Grix has committed something akin to espionage, that the novelist has been a type of spy who posed as a friend only to observe and record private information that could be used at a later date. The way in which this information is delivered makes Rank feel that Grix has unfairly acted as a judge over Rank's life. His fears and vulnerabilities have been revealed in a public document; complicating his sense of humiliation is Grix's unwillingness to share his own fears and vulnerabilities. Rank writes, "You kept your own counsel most of the time. You never turned to me in the midst one of our drunk-stoned hazes to implore: Help me, man! I'm all fucked up!" (Coady 4). Grix's apparently withholding nature suggests to Rank that Grix observed people for personal gain, that

he has taken Rank's confessions and used them to develop a minor character. To achieve a petty and childish revenge, Rank reveals one of Grix's admissions—that he was afraid of getting fat—to an imaginary audience: "And look at you, now, say it together everybody: chubby; pompous" (Coady 6). Despite the absurdity of this initial interaction and the vagueness of Rank's "everybody," his response reveals one way in which biographical detail can be cruel. Biographical information, particularly about the author's friends and family, can publicize private shame. Whether the audience knows or connects the real-life person to the character in the novel is not necessarily the issue. These private details inside the novel function like the panopticon for Rank. He feels as though he is under observation, but cannot return the gaze until he begins to write back.

Judgement in novels tends to be far less direct than judgement in conversation, and Rank finds this element of fiction to be particularly frustrating. Grix uses a character who is like Rank but not an exact duplicate. In this way, Grix avoids a direct confrontation with Rank: "If you said something [...] to my face, you know, like one man would to another—then I could say to you [...] that's a whole buttload of assumptions you just made" (Coady 11-12). The apparent critique of Rank's personality and behaviour is not directly of Rank, but of someone who is recognizably like him and who has a similar past. Rank's only chance of actually communicating with the novelist about his representation of the Rank-like character is to write to Grix online. The published novel is a closed form compared to a conversation or a thread of e-mails. Rank writes, "what you've done is a lot more complicated than simply giving utterance" (Coady 11). Thus, the novel in its indirect connection to real life contributes to what Rank would describe as Grix's trespassing. Furthermore, Grix's observations have more cultural capital in a novel than they

would in an e-mail or a conversation. Grix's representation of the Rank-like character exists in a

world of idiosyncratic metaphors. Rank has no chance to respond until he begins writing emails

to Grix. This lack of rhetorical power proves infuriating and bewildering for Rank, particularly

since he perceives Grix as an all-powerful literary artist.

Rank's initial anger at Grix is influenced by his preconceptions about authors, writing,

and books. He needs to find a way to interrupt the artist as hero motif on his own terms. Part of

the reason that he feels so powerless upon his first reading of Grix's novel is that he has an

unrealistic perception of Grix's fame and success. He writes, "I don't know why but for months

after I first read the thing I felt as if you were the most famous man on the planet [...] it seemed

to me like you had taken over the world" (Coady 294). Rank perceives Grix, an average novelist,

as though he were a wildly successful and famous literary artist. He expects to see Grix "hitting

the talk show circuit, yukking it up with Oprah" (Coady 294). This inflated expectation for the

success of a first novel highlights Rank's misconception of the power that literary artists possess.

Despite the fact that Grix's novel may have been read by only a handful of people, Rank feels

that an old friend has become an overnight celebrity and that he is using that celebrity unjustly.

However, far from having taken over the world, Grix's novel is largely ignored and treated with

indifference. Beforehand, he assumes that literary artists are legitimate judges of moral and

ethical standards, not imaginative people who exist on a cultural fringe. His guilt and his desire

to escape the past create a heightened sense of anxiety about being observed. Novelists, for

Rank, are perceptive and articulate judges of character. As a result, Grix's novel is a source of

intimidation and humiliation. He writes, "This is where I, the all-powerful author, get to explore

my exciting new character [...] what kind of narrator would I be if I didn't ruthlessly delve into

what makes good old Adam tick, warts and all" (Coady 121). The choice of the phrase "all-powerful" situates the author as a God in the world he creates, and Rank's revenge involves attempting to subject Grix to the same powerlessness of feeling trapped in someone else's language. Rank's narration is emotional and personal, whereas Grix—from what can be extrapolated—is detached. Grix's judgements pose as objective observation for Rank as he reads, whereas Rank's writing is in the first-person, and he occasional makes mistakes in the text. Thus, Grix's style combined with Rank's perception of a literary artist's power in society heightens Rank's anxiety and humiliation about being observed.

In Grix's defense, literary arrtists do not need personal information about their readers to make them feel they are being observed and judged. As a young man, Rank punches the town troublemaker, Mick Croft, and gives him incapacitating brain damage. Before the punch, Croft quotes a line from T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." When Rank stumbles across this poem in the library, he assumes it is an otherworldly intervention. He writes, "So there they were glaring up from the page, Croft's famous last words, emanating wave after wave of uncanny terror at me. Not to mention the creepshow pertinence of the lines that followed, as if someone—some malignant entity—had affixed a psychic spigot directly into my past and let it drip, one word at a time, into the book" (Coady 107). Rank imbues T.S. Eliot's language with private significance. He reads the poem in such a way that it makes him feel intensely self-conscious and judged by an unseen force. One of the great strengths of fiction and poetry, as Winter states in his caveat to *This All Happened,* is that literature allows readers to evaluate their own lives (xii). It helps them to understand themselves better through associations to characters

and events. Judgement in literature comes in a variety of forms, and it is not exclusively intentional or malicious.

Before Rank reads the mediocre reviews of Grix's novel, he experiences what it means to write, and he realizes that writing is largely an indeterminate and intuitive process. As Rank begins to experience the processes of writing, he understands that Grix could not have been in complete control over everything that he wrote. Rank admits, "I kind of imagined you sitting around rubbing your hands together and cackling to yourself as you plotted out your miserable theft [...] The interesting thing about the whole process is that I find myself realizing what I think about everything at the exact moment I'm typing it out. Then I sit back and read it over and go: Huh" (Coady 35). Understanding the development of a novel as an indeterminate, exploratory process helps Rank to be more accepting of Grix. Rather than seeing his novelist friend as a genius who chose to represent the Rank-like character as a cliché, Rank understands that it is easy to lose oneself in the writing process. Rank experiences the gap between theoretical goals and the difficulty of achieving them. As he progresses through his epistolary confessional, he realizes that the "weird, dreamy fun" of writing occasionally diverts him from his original goal of showing Grix where his novel had lied or misrepresented the past (Coady 58). He writes, "To take your bullshit version of me, flush it like the steaming turd of half-truths and oversights it was, and replace it with the glorious, terrible, complex, astonishing truth of Reality [...] But recently I've been getting lost in it [...] I spent about a half-hour trying to figure out the best way to describe your Adam's apple, how it seemed to glow, enormous in the shadows" (Coady 208). Rank's noble purpose begins with an attempt to accurately describe reality, but he has to rely on descriptive practices that highlight the subjectivity of his experience. Tinkering with sentences

becomes an obsession, and he realizes that his perception of reality is created by language. This subjectivity temporarily transforms his narration into a site of play: "You let it distract you from your noble purpose. Suddenly people in the story are doing and saying things you never meant for them to do or say—and you're letting it happen, because it's fun" (Coady 209). This prolonged experience of composing the e-confessional informs Rank of the writing process; he does not simply forgive Grix; he becomes more aware of the the choices that Grix made and did not make that contributed to the offence.

Rank's anger at Grix is born out of more than narcissism and a sense of betrayal. He feels that Grix attempts to claim ownership over his past and that he has done so through stylistic and descriptive choices. Before Rank comes to see the past as a landscape, he writes, "it's my story and it exists and has existed in a very specific way, despite what you have done. It is a thing that hangs in the air around me at all times" (Coady 8). By challenging the certainty with which Rank understood himself and his past, Grix does Rank a favour. He helps Rank view himself and his life with a greater sense of openness in the form of indeterminacy. This unintentional benefit does not negate the fact, however, that Grix wrote Rank as a cliché. Rank writes, "The biggest pisser? The fact that the cliché of me was all you really took, you boiled an entire life, an entire human being into his most basic, boneheaded elements" (Coady 9). Important moments in Rank's life are reduced to background information for a minor character in Grix's novel. The insult of cliché is that it indicates an indifference to thoughts and feelings of another human being. Grix's descriptive choices hurt Rank because he thought they had shared meaningful experiences. The willingness to see someone as a cliché implies a lack of affection and an inattentiveness to the qualities that make a person unique. Rank is humiliated by the fact that

although he believed that he and Grix shared important memories, Grix refers to Rank

offhandedly. Rank writes, "And it was hard enough when I discovered you shared it [their past],

when I found it immortalized in your book—immortalized but in such a freakily offhand sort of

way. Somehow enshrined and chucked aside all at once" (Coady 131). Rank is grateful that he

was included, but he also feels dismissed. He had expected Grix to remember their time together

as complex and textured. To be fair, despite the fact that Rank is deeply offended by the way he

is treated in Grix's novel, he still describes himself and other people as clichés. Nevertheless, one

of the nuances that Rank wants Grix to be aware of is that Rank's behaviour as a stereotypical

jock was occasionally self-conscious and performative: "I think I felt the weight of those million

universes, those billion clichés [...] You: geek; me: jock" (Coady 55). Rank does not want to be

easily defined as a simple copy of a type. He chooses to fight the weight of cliché by consciously

accepting his role as a jock. Grix's descriptive choices fail to represent that complexity, and Rank

is left reading a novel that simplifies their experience as friends.

Rank gradually understands that each person's history is a competing discourse, and

fiction is a tool that can alter how the past is understood. Despite his realization that writing is an

indeterminate process, he remains offended that Grix attempted to impose his will onto their

past. He writes, "I used to see my past as a book [...] But now I'm starting to see it as something

more like a frontier—a landscape I have spent my life cultivating, fortifying [...] But the

landscape is alive [... it] consists of multiple things, multiple wills that shift and change and

occasionally assert themselves in force" (Coady 235). Once a text is out in the world it can enter

this landscape of competing discourses. For Rank, Grix's descriptive choices possess a detached,

judgemental violence. He complains of "the half-assed way you told my story. Your approach,

I'm noticing as I go over your book for the fourth time, was practically not to tell it at all [...] to preserve the twenty-year-old me in my misery like a bug someone had closed the pages on" (Coady 293). Grix's representation of Rank's twenty-year-old self is a type of descriptive violence, because Rank feels his past has been defined and trapped in someone else's book. He writes, "What you've killed is yours forever—a trophy picked off from the landscape and hung up on your wall" (Coady 235). The only way that Rank can escape from this metaphorical death is to create on his own terms, to reanimate that version of himself as a fragile and vulnerable young man. In doing so, he occasionally attempts to destroy Grix's past self in a similar way, but he also grants his friend more centrality and depth in this parodic-narrative. This consistent attempt to communicate and to change distinguishes Rank's e-confessional as an embrace of responsibility to a person who he feels has betrayed his trust.

One of the major distinctions between Rank and Campbell is the direction of their energies near the end of their accounts, which can both be read—at the very least—as a stilted growth. Campbell strives and fails to break away from the attachments that formed him, whereas Rank stubbornly tries to express himself and to live with his attachments. This might be most clearly expressed in lines near the close of each narrative. Campbell writes, "I stood there so long that the red of the kitchen had started to mellow and shift. . . and finally sat back down in the chair [...] It was bad enough to be leaving a fire unattended while people slept. I tried not to think of what my father would say" (Coady 382). He does not realize the autonomy that he seeks, but expresses an ethos of begrudging responsibility. Coady shows the young poet caught awkwardly between these two impulses, not embracing responsibility but not able to free himself either. On the other hand, Rank narrates the damage that this search for autonomy can inflict, and he

identifies his own metaphorical violence as a storyteller. He writes, "Whatever I did to you [...] I struck a match, I flicked a switch), I'm sorry. And thank you for not putting it in your book. And fuck you for not putting it in your book. Your friend, Gordon Rankin" (Coady 337). Rank wants to live with a sense of responsibility and friendship to other people despite the contentiousness he feels. Although I am arguing that *The Antagonist* is a rewriting of this transitional growth, it might also sound as though I am arguing that *The Antagonist* is a type of ethical prescription to the shortcomings of *Mean Boy*, but I think these two texts are best thought of simply as interconnected expressions of writing, both of which grant these idiosyncratic narrators different opportunities for growth. After all, if the desperate poem at the conclusion of *Mean Boy* is

Arsenault's, then this interruption of the narrator already exists.[36] In any case, both narrators'

growth can be typified as an initial push for autonomy that leads to responsibility in some form.

Campbell needs to make his heroes a little more human in order to gain agency in his own life,

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[36] The poem that concludes *Mean Boy* reads:

       I came here looking for you man
your wernet hereI hung around &ate
some peanut butter an& like allllll
your
       chips

        Rueiwoqpowierj jioseidrju
a;lskdfjsldkowseirun v

ilike your typewriter.

%##%.&$+..#$Y.*******!%.********!2
1%%#.&&&&&&&?
        Thts me fuckin cursing
man!!!!!.##$1234454556667888090--0101010101
%.!*$(%($*$.&%)!$(**%.#_(%.*&.#)^

      things are soooooooooo fucked
rightnow im deqad man. Ii hiding
fromit
howdo youmake tyhe quotatin marks
klike rory
       ???,.,"""ask 4 roryasswipe"!!!!

"I" am "drunk" write "now"
       gooooooOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOooooooooobye

             "."

hry man look im writiig you a
pome

      this is a peom ffor
wheneveryou get
      home.   (384-385)

whereas Rank is able to forgive a friend while still remembering the metaphorical trespassing that took place.

The apparent style of Grix's novel and his stolen details disturb Rank, but Rank's misunderstanding of Grix as an all-seeing and all-powerful novelist exacerbates the pain and the anxiety he feels. It is not until Rank begins to write that he understands Grix as a novelist. The "dreamy fun" (Coady 58) of threading sentences, Rank realizes, is a distraction from his or her noble purpose. Grix becomes less of an all-powerful judge and more of an artist at play, albeit self-involved and unknowingly cruel. He cannot forgive Grix for his betrayal and for his indifference, but he does, at the very least, understand the impulse and the joy of writing. Rank demonstrates that fiction can affect readers in unexpected and powerful ways. Ultimately, Rank is better for having read Grix's representation of their past even though it causes him intense inner turmoil. However, sometimes the way that a reader chooses to understand literary artists can be as cruel as the way in which an author chooses to write. The power that authors have might be ambiguous and unwieldy, but it exists. Readers, in turn, have their own will in the interpretive process. They project their metaphors into the novel, and this interaction is where the power of story lies (Booth 364). Rank's narrative elucidates how writing gives people a sense of agency and control in their lives. How should a reader be? A reader should be writing.

Parodies of Parodies: Fostering a Multidirectional Gaze

These four novels implicitly parody assumptions that permeate the texts in chapters one and two. In the first chapter, four contemporary Canadian novels that presented variations on an artist as hero motif were identified. The novels in the first chapter interrupt representations of the

artist as a cultural hero with varying levels of success. However, *Hope in the Desperate Hour Mean Boy, The Shadow Boxer,* and *How Should a Person Be?* still place authors, writer-characters and writing at the centre of their discourse. The narratives in this chapter situate the cultural significance of authors and writer-characters within a broader context, such as the fight for black Canadians to be recognized in our national history. In the second chapter, I argued that authors and writer-characters tend to have a complicated gaze, one that encourages readers to see with a greater sense of indeterminacy and fancy. However, in cultures of austerity, literary artists might be perceived as "out of touch, irrelevant, perhaps even elitist" (Ventrella 70). Furthermore, these last four narratives demonstrate that some writer-characters have narrow points of view and limited beliefs about the potentialities of their own art. They do not necessarily observe their surroundings any more astutely than people who do not write. In parodying arguments from the previous two chapters, these narratives add new layers and texture to an already complex and multifaceted discourse. Simply put, they offer more ways to think about authors and writer-characters.

In *The Antagonist,* Rank begins his confessional believing that literary artists are incredibly perceptive and powerful. Once he experiences what it means to go through the writing process, however, he understands that stories often have a life of their own and that one can easily become lost in the fun of being creative. Furthermore, he initially assumes that his friend, Grix, is a powerful celebrity simply because he is a published novelist. He discovers, however, that Grix's novel is relegated to the bargain bin of a Coles bookstore. The most painful element of Grix's novel for Rank is the fact that the details taken from his life are tangential to the narrative, which makes Rank assume that Grix is indifferent to the time they shared. For Rank,

Grix's choice to include details from his life is an act akin to trespassing. Once Rank has written roughly half of his own story, however, he begins to view writing a novel as a dream that a literary artist slowly falls into. Some authors and writer-characters get lost in the joy of threading sentences, and they might not completely realize they have used details from friends' lives until afterwards. For Rank, this realization helps him to understand that literary artists are not cultural heroes; they are people who are obsessed with their craft.

When Rank reads his friend's novel, however, he does not immediately become more openminded and thoughtful about their shared past. He only thinks of how the book affects his life. Rank's obsession with how his friend's novel relates to himself calls to mind Michael Winter's playful caveat at the beginning of *This All Happened,* particularly when he writes, "Fictional characters and experience come to life when we compare them with the people and the places we know" (xii). On a theoretical level, Winter is absolutely correct. I have learned a great deal about my own time and place through comparisons between my experience and experiences in novels. However, Rank's obsession with the similarities between himself and one of Grix's characters inhibits him from reading what Grix has actually written:

> And then the slow, cold recognition started to take over and I couldn't really concentrate after that. I started reading specifically for the recognition—I remember sitting rigid at the kitchen table holding the book up in front of my face, the most unrelaxed book-reading posture you can imagine. I started blasting though paragraphs and pages until I got to something I recognized and I would feel my heart thumping in my face as my outrage reignited. (Coady 270)

Rather than treating the book as an aesthetic experience that invites him to feel empathy or alterity, Rank obsesses over how the book represents his life. As a result, he feels unfairly observed and scrutinized by Grix. Reading does not make him more open-minded about his past or about his ethos; it makes him feel as though he has been betrayed.

In *Any Known Blood*, Cane V is heroic but not because he writes. More than once, he places himself in danger to help others. He is descended from a line of Langston Canes who have experienced hardship and struggle for a common good. However, Hill resists representing any of these individuals simply as heroes. Although these men may have performed great deeds, they were flawed and human. Cane V lacks the purpose and the direction that his ancestors possessed. Two of his ancestors became involved in their communities through religion. They were able to directly address the ethos of their congregation members through their preaching. Cane V's father was involved in the civil rights movement and assisted a number of black Canadians. He has this same impulse as his ancestors to help his community, but he attempts to do so through writing. Although he views writing as a calling and as a deeply important task, people in his immediate surroundings do not share his valuation of literature. In fact, many of his friends and family are bewildered by his interest in writing. The immediate and obvious importance of the civil rights movement and religion contrasts with the indirect and the subtle power of literature. Cane V's friend Yoyo encourages him to stop writing simply for the sake of writing and to start thinking of practical applications for his language skills. In *Any Known Blood,* writing begins as a deeply important and quasi-sacred activity and shifts to a pragmatic way of participating in a world of ideas.

Even if fiction invites openness in readers, people such as Rank or Langston Cane IV are intimidated by the potential certainty it can create about the past. One assumption about historiographical metafiction is that it destabilizes the certainty of official history (Hutcheon 2). An author achieves this goal by including wildly fictional moments in a historical figure's life story, such as Bob Bartlett's homosexual encounter in *The Big Why* (Wyile 215). *Any Known Blood* offers a slightly different take on the influence of fiction on history. Cane V does not simply challenge the official history of North America, he wants to replace it with a fuller, more textured understanding of the past. From his father's perspective, this rewriting of history is threatening, because he fears that Cane V will distort what happened. In this sense, narrating the past does not always offer to destabilize the certainty with which people see history; it offers a new certainty. Just as Rank feels that Grix has changed the past, Cane IV worries that his son will inaccurately represent personal history and that people will believe what his son writes. Historiographic metafiction sometimes appears as a new historical truth even if it is openly constructed as a creative document. Fiction forms its own reality, as I argued of *This All Happened*, but this reality is symbiotic with the living world. This symbiosis would ideally create open-mindedness about the constructed and multifaceted nature of truth. However, as Rank and Cane IV's characters demonstrate, the types of truth that literature creates occasionally possess an aura of certainty that clouds the fictional elements of a written document.

Writing creates openness, but it is also a way of imposing one's will onto the world. If authors can get people to agree with their metaphors, then they have the power of influence. Smith's *Muriella Pent* satirizes the attempts of people working in bureaucratic structures to use literature as a political or an economic tool. Words such as "art," "artist," "writer," and "culture"

are contested. Often, the way an individual defines these words reflects an unspoken political or

bodily desire. For the narrator, the contested nature of these words allows people working within

bureaucracies or literature committees to impose their private interests onto literary artists by

selecting who gets funding and who does not. The actual processes of reading and writing are

important to only a select group of people in *Muriella Pent.* The chosen few who understand the

importance of aesthetics, however, also define "art," "artist," "writer," and "culture" according to

their own interests. Thus, alongside satirizing bureaucrats and literature committees, Smith also

critiques literary artists be they business minded or aesthetically inclined. Paradoxically, "art,"

"artist," and "culture" are contested terms, but the majority of the characters understand them

with a sense of certainty. They do not see a multiplicity of definitions but simply assume that

everyone else is operating on false definitions. As a result, poorly structured bureaucracies are a

dangerous threat to the world of art in *Muriella Pent.*

The most dangerous bureaucracies for authors and writer-characters are ones that impose

a culture of austerity. Jonson, for example, is supposed to be the saviour of the CBC, but he

becomes increasingly closed-minded about what his organization should be, and he stifles the

creation of art. The literature committee in *Muriella Pent* might limit writing to its potential to

achieve social justice, but austerity fails to account for non-monetary rewards of art. The only

acceptable way of being is one that produces capital in a relatively short amount of time. Literary

artists are not really part of the program in these types of governments; as Jameson writes in

Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism, the great authors and painters appear

to be relics (306). There is, however, a fuller representation of the lives of literary artists, one that

is surely less cynical about their ethos. Authors create a host of experiences that can radically

alter the way that people see the world, but they are not simply artist heroes or shrewd rhetoricians. Austerity regimes cannot account for this type of nuance, and until they can, authors should parody such governments.

Parody and openness foster a complex ethos. Readers might not realize they have been viewing the world from only one perspective until a parodic-narrative allows them to conceptualize authors and writer-characters from a multidirectional gaze. Although Michael Winter's writer-characters see their worlds with complexity and nuance, writer-characters in these four narratives often have narrow points of view. Both Rank and Cane IV fear the potential certainty that people might experience while reading a literary account of the past. Although *Hope in the Desperate Hour, Mean Boy, The Shadow Boxer,* and *How Should a Person Be?* all interrupt the artist as hero motif with varying levels of success, they still place writer-characters at the centre of their worlds. In the section on *Muriella Pent* and *Easy to Like,* I considered how literary artists are affected by government funding regimes. The aesthetics of writing are only one element of broader political, ethical, and economic contingencies. Parody fosters the multidirectional gaze of sousveillance. If theorists are going to observe this community from a more radical vantage point, however, one cannot help but wonder if this work needs to be done in a non-textual mode. Can a legitimate parodic-narrative of literary artists exist inside a novel, or do all of these texts implicitly assign a high valuation to fiction simply by being literary?

Conclusion: How Should an Author Be?

This study began as an attempt to define a common role for authors in Canadian society. In attempting to define a common role, however, I reduced and simplified the diverse characteristics of literary artists. To develop a more complex and nuanced worldview, I researched ethical criticism, and I was able to formulate a critical strategy that focuses on perpetual self-critique and on arguing for the fullest possible representations of other human beings. Instead of a role, I offer an ethics that embraces the various idiosyncrasies of authors and their writing processes without ignoring the profound importance of other people. This thesis embodies values and characteristics of a self who is perpetually uncertain and open minded but is able to cultivate beliefs and to take action nevertheless. How should an author be? There should be many answers to such a question, and these answers should be grounded in the contingencies of time and place.

Rather than attempting to define Canadian authors narrowly, this thesis has argued for what they should aspire to be. Studies of creative people such as Maurice Beebe's *Ivory Towers and Sacred Founts: The Artist as Hero in Fiction from Goethe to Joyce* and Richard Florida's *The Rise of the Creative Class* have homogenized diverse groups of individuals. To distinguish this study from such simplifying accounts, the concept of ethos has been used to discuss authors and writer-characters. There is an ethos of a text and an ethos of a reader. Both are defined by habitual choices: through specific aesthetic moves, a literary text invites readers to make choices as they read, and readers choose how to respond to such invitations (Gregory 293). There are similarities among literary artists such as the artist as hero motif that Emile Dexter, Larry

Campbell, Sevigne Torrins, and Sheila all wrestle with in the first chapter. Authors should resist

this desire to be profoundly significant to their culture, but they should also be cognizant that

literature—as George Elliot Clarke points out—invites thoughtful communities to take part in

intense and extensive conversation (43). Instead of artist heroes, authors should aspire to be

restless questioners. Restless questioners are authors who are comfortable living in a state of

uncertainty; they seek new selves for readers and authors to encounter or to inhabit. Sometimes

their ethos has commonalities with other authors, but there are always also a host of differences.

When readers encounter various texts about writer-characters, this experience invites them to

enter a conversation about literary artists and to observe the subtle differences among these

commonalities.

Ideally, the experiences of literature invite readers to be more thoughtful and considerate

of such subtleties. One of the strongest ways that literature can affect a reader's ethos is through

a sense of openness, which is a superordinate for various forms of not-knowingness and

uncertainty. Authors create moments of openness through language choices that reflect their

complicated point of view. A powerful novelist such as Winter achieves this goal through

specific aesthetic choices in each one of his first four novels. The inclusion of a writer-character

in a text invites readers to observe and interrupt literary artists. By interrupt, I essentially mean

"to locate a point of otherness" (Critchley 26). This opportunity to sousveil a writer-character

encourages a participatory and critical reading experience. Authors cannot make people believe

anything with complete certainty. They can, however, challenge stereotypes, and they can

encourage readers to question deeply held beliefs. It would be impossible, however, to

experience various selves, others, and communities unless readers and authors have open minds.

Openness invites readers to rewire their brains so they can encounter diverse characters as they turn the pages of a book.

The way in which I have discussed openness risks sounding contradictorily certain and determinate. To avoid a hypocritical dogmatism about openness, I found narratives that would parody my readings of the novels from the first two chapters. I implement Linda Hutcheon's concept of parody "as repetition with critical distance that allows ironic signaling of difference at the very heart of similarity" (185). Parody has the potential to make readers uncertain or openminded about any subject, including uncertainty and open-mindedness. In this study, parodies are not simply refutations of other texts or ideas; they add texture, nuance, and complexity. They turn a monologue about a subject into a dialogue. I sought texts that would invite parodic points of view about authors and writer-characters from the first two chapters. Until that point, my focus largely ignored how broader social issues such as austerity or racial identity affect the world of authors. My initial description focused on ethos and on choices; however, such an approach does not account for how some have less opportunity to choose and to cultivate their ethos. Furthermore, I demonstrated that reading can result in closed-mindedness. Literary artists do not open the past for Rankin; instead, as with Prufrock's butterfly, they pin it to a wall. It is only once he begins to write back that he starts to feel some agency in his life story. These parodic readings complicate my discussion and add extra layers to the question, "How should an author be?"

Novelists answer this question by developing scenarios that allow them to respond within a specific context and with a distinct set of characters. Essayists have a more difficult task when it comes to resisting homogenizing descriptions. As can be seen in the work of Beebe or of

Florida, synthesizing too often leads to oversimplifying. However, there have been historical

moments when authors have felt it essential to argue for a common role. Albert Camus, for

example, lived through political upheaval in colonial Algeria and WWII France. He believed that

artists had unique talents and a special forum to give voice to the victims of tumultuous times.

The contingencies of his generation led him to pose what he believed was a pressing question for

authors. In "The Artist and His Time," Camus writes, "In most cases the artist is ashamed of

himself and his privileges, if he has any. He must first of all answer the question he has put to

himself: is art a deceptive luxury?" (252). For Camus, all types of people, rich and poor, make

use of the written word, but not everyone has the same opportunity or skill to express himself or

herself. Art need not be a luxury if literary artists "speak up, insofar as we can, for those who

cannot do so" (Camus 267). This personal aesthetic need not be viewed as dogma, but as a vision

that helped Camus focus his creative energy. Many literary artists have nagging questions, and

they do not need to resolve them for everyone who writes. They need to resolve these questions

for themselves and only for the time being.

    Winter has not yet offered a longer argumentative essay on how an author should be, but

at the beginning of *This All Happened* and *The Death of Donna Whalen,* he provides short

rationales to explain the choices that he made during their development. Unlike Camus's claims,

which are presented as theories for a generation to put into practice, Winter's rationales are

designed for the specific experiences in his texts. He invites readers to compare his values as an

author with the ethos of his text. The opening to *The Death of Donna Whalen,* for example,

explains the contingencies that led him to construct the novel as it was published. As opposed to

Camus's appeal to the contingencies of a generation, the specificity of Winter's rationale better

demonstrates how each novel an author attempts to bring to life has its own contingencies and idiosyncrasies. Some novels enable an author to give voice to the voiceless; others encourage readers to think about the ways in which people observe one another. Each new text is an opportunity to explore, to take risks, and to be, among other things, a restless questioner.

How should an author be? My answer is that authors need to ask this question throughout their lives, and they should welcome different answers each time they ask. This dissertation has concentrated on parodying contemporary surveillance. When readers observe behaviour in novelistic worlds, they are invited to be immediate and conflicted participants in a "zone of crude contact" (Bakhtin 26). Critiquing the way that governments and corporations observe and describe is a secondary function of creative writing. Primarily, authors create literary fiction; they should strive to foster openness, and they should allow pressing issues in the world to inform their writing, but it is only as skilled literary artists working at the height of their craft do they engage with the thoughtful communities that Clarke discusses. Specific qualities in each one of these novels pulls readers into aesthetic spaces: Richards's finely crafted plot carries his story along effortlessly; Coady charts Campbell's artistic development in a compelling and believable way; Heighton's poetic language offers aesthetic joy; Heti's ironic tone consistently leaves a reader off-balance; Winter's descriptive practices reflect the confusion and the immediacy of a lived moment; the change that Elliot Jonson undergoes as he becomes entrenched in a bureaucratic structure is hilarious; the failure of bureaucracies to appreciate art in a reasonable way is an equally humorous element of *Muriella Pent;* Hill's complex representations of race and heroism are eye-opening; and Rankin is a forceful representation of a reader who feels confused and humiliated by a friend's novel. These qualities are often engrossing and even

mesmerizing; they bring reader's into the life of a novel. Literature might be a turning away from one's immediate surroundings, but powerful art and powerful metaphors wake people up to their own lives and to the lives of others.

I have spent time and energy considering how an author should be—not to mention, I have been allotted money and access to libraries. I am in a privileged position to say something definitive about authors in Canada. Thus, I feel obliged to offer broader claims about literary artists despite my preference for Winter's focus on the contingencies of each text as opposed to Camus's appeal to the contingencies of his generation. One of the consistent tensions in this study has been between autonomy and responsibility. In this study, autonomy through writing is the attempt to free oneself of literary influence (Rorty 97), whereas responsibility is the embrace of such influence, the acceptance that we are "in each other's hands, at each other's mercy" (Butler 101). Although some level of autonomy is desirable in the sense that restless questioner should not simply copy other literary artists, ultimately, autonomy through language is illusory; it tends to frustrate authors, and it leaves the subjects of their work feeling alienated. Responsibility, in contrast, as embodied by Coady's development of Rank, invites readers to consider the lives of others, those who might live on the periphery of their day-to-day thought processes. Instead of reading profound works composed by isolated geniuses, responsibility bounds us to other people in their various complexities. As Camus writes, authors should "speak up" for others (Camus 267), and they should listen as well. On the other hand, authors also need to speak up for themselves, and they need to practice self-critique, or they risk taking their own work too seriously. Even though they are not cultural heroes, they can cultivate a sense of openness, and they can parody dominant modes of thought.

An impasse that ethical criticism has wrestled with is a fear that ethics is actually a way of imposing one's idiosyncratic values onto others. Critics such as Booth, Nussbaum, Levinas, and Derrida offer responses to this fear through various forms of openness, such as alterity, uncertainty, restless questioning, and fancy. More recently, Serpell has argued that this emphasis on not-knowingness has created a new impasse, and she argues that the way to move beyond it is for ethical critics to focus on how specific aesthetic strategies create uncertainty. However, fiction does not solely produce openminded readers; it closes people's minds to certain possibilities as well. An ethical criticism that practices parody and self-parody might further contribute to moving beyond an overemphasis on openness, and it might, in a non-totalitarian way, allow for determinate statements to be made about authors and literature. Simply put, there must be more than uncertainty. Observing the various invitations and interruptions of texts should cultivate a complex ethos for a reader who desires to ask, How should an author be?

Despite these broader claims, there is no singular role and no group personality that all literary artists embody. Nevertheless, my answer for the time being is that Canadian authors should be perpetually restless about their own art. This ideal of the restless questioner is influenced by ethical criticism on both the Anglo-American and the European side; it has been developed not only in response to the artist as hero motif but also as a reaction to surveillance. Literary sousveillance is no social panacea, but it makes sense to consider the potential of creative writing to invite and to interrupt various modes of thought. Ethos, openness, and parody necessitate that restless questioners be comfortable living in a state of uncertainty, but they push forward all the same. There is no conclusion to this seeking for how an author should be. There is only more searching, more artists, more art—endless possibilities and alternative selves. The

impediment to this ideal, however, is people and institutions who think about other human beings as types, or who determine value based on direct contributions to the economy. These impositions on ethos are frustrating and intimidating. A conversation on authors feels like an absurd response, and it may prove to be. Nevertheless, I feel obligated to interrupt simplifying descriptions of literary artists, to demonstrate their various potentialities without reducing them to a singular role, and to show that authors can be responsible to others but still insist on the central importance of their craft. In doing so, I hope to have opened this discourse to an alternative way of discussing authors, writer-characters, and literature.

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