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Approaches to Origins and Originality in Postmodern Fiction: Julian Barnes' *England, England*, Peter Ackroyd's *Chatterton* and Peter Carey's *My Life as a Fake*

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The simulacrum is never what hides the truth –
It is truth that hides the fact that there is none.
The simulacrum is true.
Ecclesiastes

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1 INTRODUCTION

Questions regarding conceptions of originality have always occupied great minds. From Plato to Baudrillard or Deleuze, philosophers have engaged in exploring the ontological sphere of originality in the first place and from there set out to investigate into related but traditionally antagonistic notions such as the copy, the fake or the simulacrum.

The present analysis departs from various basic understandings of originality, which cannot necessarily be ascribed to specific philosophic traditions, but rather derive from the term's etymological basis itself, i.e. the latin noun *origo* denoting origin, beginning or source. However, recurrent will be a triple focus in relation to specifically postmodern approaches to origins and originality. One approach will concentrate on epistemological questions, another will deal with sociocultural aspects while a third approach will aim at an aesthetic discussion of the central themes.

On the social level more than on the artistic, the quest for origins can be labelled as an anthropological constant. Questions such as 'where do we/I come from', i.e. the pursuit of clearly definable roots, delineates an integral part of both collective as well as individual identity. Yet, the need for origins in art**,** in terms of creative originality, is a concept, which gained importance only relatively recently, in the Romantic period. Thus, with regard to the history of art, originality as an aesthetic prerequisite for artistic processes is not one of the concepts looking back on a long tradition. In fact, the contrary is the case: throughout centuries the Aristotelian teachings of imitation constituted the standard of artistic production.

The relative authority the concept of origin and artistic originality assumes today in a conventional humanistic interpretation derives from the idea of the beginning, of purity and of authenticity attributed to the original. The original comes first and everything else can only be secondary - within a temporal frame as well as in terms of value. The myth of the origin as a state of absolute truth and purity is one of the dominant orthodoxies of enlightened epistemology. Implicitly, the original conveys the message of being as close as it gets to reality. Thus, in humanity's preoccupation with coherence, in its obsession with reality and in its hunt for 'the real thing', a privileged position is offered to the assumed original and its creator, as it is, for instance, the authority of the author in the literary field.

Originality in the sense of creativity, the faculty of bringing into the world what has not existed before, is estimated highly in an information culture which increasingly sees itself confronted with the difficulty to distinguish between the supposedly true and false, original and fake or reality and simulation. Nevertheless, another interpretation, which has had to come a long way to deserve the attribute 'common' and probably the one to suit contemporary experience of reality best, is the conception of originality in terms of unusual approaches to things which already exist. Hence, it can be argued that an unorthodox choice of combinations, the exhibition of unexpected relations, but simultaneously also the deconstruction of supposed entities, represent the project of originality in the postmodern era.

Postmodern approaches to originality rely on deconstructionist analyses of traditional dichotomies and logocentric 'universals' introduced by poststructuralism. The perception of the world as structured by the principle of binary oppositions such as good versus evil, reality versus fantasy, truth versus lie, relative versus absolute and also genuine versus fake cannot straightforwardly be rejected, as it offers a broad frame within which to organise meaning. However, the problem

arising from this understanding originates in the interpretation of dichotomies as “mutually exclusive: *x* and *not-x*” (Ruthven, 64). Contemporary theory cannot work with assumptions based on the principle of either-or (cf. Ruthven, 66) anymore. Instead, “[t]he analytic ideal of mutual exclusivity degenerates in practice into interdependency, and notoriously in the distinction between ‘self’ and ‘other’, where each is so implicated in the other as to be compromised by it” (Ruthven, 64). Jacques Derrida and later also Gilles Deleuze, both influential French philosophers, are only two of the names to be mentioned, when it comes to the deconstruction of given ‘essentials’.

Deleuze’s specific relevance for this paper can be justified by his theory of differentiation (cf. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*), which does no longer rely on binary oppositions, i.e. ‘either-this-or-that’, irrefutably caught in a dialectics of negation. Rather, he concentrates on the potential of inclusion, i.e. ‘this-and-that’. Differentiation by means of inclusion has brought into play a new dimension of negotiating difference. Deleuze, arguing plurality and a positive interpretation of simulacrum, copy, and related concepts as emancipated from the original and thus entities in their own right, does not only in this respect collide with Jean Baudrillard’s more popular but also more criticised theory of the simulacrum.

Hard to position – if at all, then on the margins of postmodernism – French sociologist and cultural critic Jean Baudrillard denies contemporary experience any access to originality in terms of real experience. His highly controversial theory about simulation and simulacra (cf. Baudrillard, *Simulacra*) claims that in our age of information and mass media the principle of reality has been eroded and that we are only able to perceive the world mediated through simulacra of the real.

Following Baudrillard, which means in conflict with postmodern theory and Deleuze, however, a positive revaluation of the fake or simulacrum can hardly be possible, due to the fact that along his line of

argumentation the simulacrum does not imply a potential enrichment of culture but rather the danger of culture being absorbed by it, leaving nothing but the simulacrum itself. In this context it seems legitimate to appropriate Pearson's words: while Deleuze has been named "*the difference engineer"* (Pearson, *Deleuze and Philosophy*), Baudrillard's label could only be *the indifference engineer.*

The simulacrum and its complex relationship to original, truth, reality and – not to forget – art proves to be a pivotal characteristic of postmodern experience. Thus, three postmodern novels, each of them written within the last three decades, have offered themselves for an analysis of both explicit and implicit thematisations of the simulacrum. On the 1998 Booker Prize shortlist, Julian Barnes' novel *England, England* sets into the centre of its satirical narration the enterprise of creating an alternative and condensed version of England on the Isle of Wight. It is media mogul Sir Pitman's successful venture to create the simulacrum of England, an unfaithful copy that is finally preferred to the original. Barnes especially plays with the exhibition of memory both private and public as mere constructs. The ironic deconstruction of history, the laying bare of threads that bring about the creation of national identity and the quest for a possible authentic personal identity within the all-devouring simulacrum of England, England are only some of the focal aspects of Barnes' turn-of-the-millennium text.

Chatterton, written by Peter Ackroyd in 1987, was also shortlisted for the Booker Prize. In this historiographic metafictional novel Peter Ackroyd investigates into life and death of the historical Thomas Chatterton, the 18th century forger of the supposedly medieval *Rowley Poems*. Ackroyd intertwines three different narrative strands each to be located in a different era, 18th, 19th and 20th century, respectively. The deconstruction of a linear conception of historical development is only one of numerous characteristics shared between *England, England* and *Chatterton. Chatterton*, however, chooses a more technical approach to tackle the idea of simulacra or the construction of originality. By setting

the scene in the sphere of art, and more precisely in that of art production, Ackroyd directly approaches the big issue of the relation between art and reality and focuses on sensitive questions concerning the value of the original and the possibility of ever regaining something real. *Chatterton* offers a postmodern revaluation of stigmatised forms of artistic production such as forgery and plagiarism.

The motif of literary forgery links Ackroyd's *Chatterton* with the third text analysed, i.e. Peter Carey's novel *My Life as a Fake*, published in 2002. Also pertaining to the genre of historiographic metafiction, *My Life as a Fake* departs from a historical scandal, which perturbed the Australian literary system in the middle of the 20th century, known as the 'Ern Malley Hoax'. Carey shapes the fictional forger Chubb and his created-poet-come-to-life McCorkle and interweaves Chubb's fate with the historic records. The simulacrum of McCorkle and his extraordinary poetry do not only state the question of how reality and art relate, but also – and more prominently – it centres on the dialectics of relative dependence and independence which governs the interaction between the supposed original Chubb and his simulacrum Mc Corkle.

The conscious conception of the simulacrum as a means of experimenting with social and cultural phenomena provides the common ground for the analysis of the three novels. Their affinity to or ironisation of postmodern theory, their tackling of contemporary problems of representation and the always topical thematisation of the connection between art and reality form core aspects of this study.

2

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS ON POSTMODERN CONCEPTIONS OF ORIGINALITY

2.1) DEFINING A POSTMODERN FRAME

Quite casually, David Bate sums up: “What went out of the window with postmodernism was the idea of originality” (Bate). Of course, this catchy statement demands concretisation. In her important study *The Poetics of Postmodernism* Linda Hutcheon offers a wide frame for approaching postmodern thought. She argues that postmodernism is characterised best by its intrinsic qualities of paradox and contradiction. “[P]ostmodernism is a contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts the very concepts it challenges” (Hutcheon, *Poetics*, 3). Thus, it cannot be substantiated that postmodernism completely rejects originality as such. Instead, it focuses on a redefinition of the concept to make it fit contemporary cultural experience.

A redefinition of originality in a postmodern sense corresponds to a deconstruction of the logocentric universals enlightened epistemology is based on, that is truth, transparency and also origin. As Jacques Derrida and other representatives of poststructuralist theory suggest, Western rational thought intrinsically relies on hierarchic dichotomous structures that depart from the assumption of a metaphysical unity between the word, i.e. *logos*, and its stable and transcendental meaning. Deconstructionism, then, provides postmodern theory with the tools to enrich the all-embracing unity of humanistic knowledge with a potentially emancipatory concept of plural meaning.

The *grand narratives* of enlightenment thought, which rest on stability and coherence, have lost their value or, at least, their applicability. This crisis was first certified by Jean-François Lyotard, one of the eminent figures of postmodernism, in *The Postmodern Condition* (1979). Not as linear, causal, and objective does the world present itself but rather as provisional, fragmented and subjective (cf. Mayer, 543, Reese-Schäfer, 410-411). As a consequence, postmodern theory and art are challenged to develop new forms of representation in order to reflect this crisis.

Already a decade prior to Lyotard, the deconstruction of traditional conceptions of originality was thematised by Roland Barthes in his influential essay *Death of the Author* (1968). Barthes rejects the ideas of authority and originality conventionally attributed to the author as creator of a unique piece of art and, thus, argues for a shift of power from author to recipient. Authorship, in fact, is not a quality carrying the weight of originality, as author and text are only to be regarded as what Barthes called “echo chamber” (Barthes) of already existing texts. The importance of the author recedes analogously to the fading value of the original.

> We know now that a text consists not of a line of words, releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning (the ‘message’ of the Author-God), but of a multi-dimensional space in which are married and contested several writings, none of which is original: the text is a tissue of citations, resulting from the thousand sources of culture. (Barthes)

Apart from Barthes, also Gerard Genette and Julia Kristeva have worked on theories dedicated to the inevitable interdependence of all texts, i.e. intertextuality, which has come to be one of the key concepts in postmodern thought. Kristeva’s understanding of intertextuality comprehends the text as a “mosaïque de citations” (Kristeva, 85). There is nothing new in the traditional sense. However, thanks to deconstruction, new dimensions for innovative combinations have proved themselves productive. In *Literature of Exhaustion* (1977) John Barth

claims that it has become impossible to create new, that is original literature as "literature has used up all its possibilities" (Stark, 9). Consequently, instead of resigning, artists should appropriate existing elements by recycling them in order to display the ludic function of postmodernist literature (cf. Barth, 70-83). The value traditionally ascribed to originality has shifted to different modes of expression or literary composition, which results in a strong focus on reference, pastiche, quotation, parody etc. "In essence then 'postmodernism' was the name given to these phenomena of 'new' representations coming into existence by more or less explicit reference to other representations, not to any first order or reality" (Bate).

These new representations question "*any* totalizing or homogenizing system" (Hutcheon, *Poetics*, 11). Their power resides in "provisionality and heterogeneity [which] contaminate any neat attempts at unifying coherence (formal or thematic)" (Hutcheon, *Poetics*, 11). This provisionality also challenges conventional conceptions of history and historical facts and, hence, to a certain extent, they can be set in relation to postmodernism's fascination with history. Postmodern accounts of history do not believe in unified, teleological representations, but rather, grasp history or the past as accessible through text only. In this sense, if history is perceived as a textual construct, it shares a common basis with fiction, that is, the narrative element. This connection and the consequent appropriation of historiographic metafiction as a means for representing postmodern experience is analysed lucidly by Hutcheon (cf. Hutcheon, *Poetics*).

According to Hutcheon, postmodernism's radical questioning of enlightened epistemology cannot be accounted for as a "new paradigm […]. It has not replaced liberal humanism, even if it has seriously challenged it" (Hutcheon, *Poetics*, 4). As radical as subversive forms of the postmodern may be, liberal humanism cannot be discarded completely, because it involuntarily provides the premise, the platform

for postmodern ideas to develop, that is postmodern thought intrinsically depends on the very framework it seeks to subvert.

If one takes into account that Western enlightened thought is based on dichotomies, i.e. on the strict delineation of concepts and their assumed opposites, it can be argued that one of these central dichotomies is formed by the supposedly antagonistic pair of *origo* and *telos*. Whereas the idea of the origin points backwards to a presumed prime moment of absolute purity, *telos* is directed towards the future and relies on the ideas of progress, purpose and final goal. Both these concepts are contested in postmodern ways of thinking. While the concept of origin is deconstructed as being inaccessible, the belief in a progressive development of, for instance, history, is equally questioned as one of enlightenment's logocentric axioms.

The above considerations all pertain to what Amy J. Elias delineates as *epistemological postmodernism*. In the introduction to her study *Sublime Desire* (2001) she draws attention to the fact that postmodernism resists almost any attempts at categorisation. Any undertaking in defining the postmodern has to remain rather abstract and open as, for instance, Hutcheon's focus on paradox and contradiction displays. Nevertheless, by naming three different, yet interdependent and at times also contradictory spheres of postmodernism, Elias provides a workable frame for postmodern phenomena. The first and already mentioned is *epistemological postmodernism* essentially linked to Western history of ideas and philosophy. Elias calls this discussion "epistemological", as "it deals mainly with questions about how late-twentieth century [Western] people […] cognitively apprehend their societies and their relation to the past and how they define the possibilities of future knowledge" (Elias, *Desire*, xxi).

The second sphere is labelled *sociocultural postmodernism* and refers to what Elias calls "an increased aesthetization of everyday life" (Elias, *Desire*, xxiii) based on the grounds that "postmodernism is a post-

1945 social and economic phenomenon of capitalist First World nations" (Elias, *Desire*, xxiii). In this respect, Elias suggests, today's media and information culture plays a crucial role. It becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish between reality and the medial staging of reality. How various cultural critics perceive this *sociocultural* sphere of postmodernism and in how far it is thematised in postmodern fiction is an essential aspect of this analysis.

The third sphere Elias conceptualises is an *aesthetic* discussion of postmodernism in terms of a "new […] creative sensibility" which is "intimately tied to sociocultural postmodernism" (Elias, *Desire*, xxv). Simultaneously, it becomes relevant with regard to postmodern philosophy and, thus, can be regarded as a debate which arises at the intersection of *epistemological* and *sociocultural postmodernism*. This intersection has become especially relevant in relation to pop-culture. As regards the field of literary production, it is characterised by a strong tendency "toward self-reflexivity and irony" (Elias, *Desire*, xxvi), toward a critical reworking of history, toward experimenting with literary genres, etc. (cf. Elias, *Desire*, xxvi-xxvii).

At times contradicting each other, at times supplementing each other and at other times examined independently from each other, the different spheres of postmodernist experience are a recurrent theme in the attempt to investigate into different postmodern conceptions of origins and originality.

2.2) Postmodern Conceptions of History

2.2.1) Mediated Histories

One of the basic assumptions with regard to postmodern understandings of history is the postulate that the past and historical representations are not as straightforwardly approachable as conventional historical criticism suggests. Thus, postmodern criticism asks: How do we gain access to the past? Why are historical facts embraced by an aura of unquestionable truth, or who is in charge of positioning and selecting events which are to become historical facts? Simultaneously, these questions are also applicable to origins and originality. How are these concepts mediated and why are they so powerful?

One rather simplistic modus operandi in attempting to tackle these issues is to draw attention to the fatal equation of 'fact' with 'truth' and 'authenticity' in our culture. This frequent equation overlooks that in etymological terms the noun 'fact' derives from the Latin verb 'facere' defined as 'to make', 'to construct'. 'Fact', therefore, has little in common with 'truth' as a metaphysical entity. However, while contemporary Western culture – as postmodern as some of its aspects may be – is surrounded by facts, depends on facts and is committed to explain the world in terms of facts, postmodern theory has put a strong focus on the constructedness of the world. Nothing exists that is inherently true, original or eternal.

In postmodern literary practice historiographic metafiction – the very term was coined by Linda Hutcheon – serves as a method to approach the past not in terms of irrefutable facts but as a past which is as textual as everything else. Therefore, this past communicated to us as history does not occupy a privileged position. Contrary to conventional perceptions, it is not an objective, untroubled or sovereign entity, but a

subjective, highly biased narrative construct. As poststructuralist theorists like Jacques Derrida or Michel Foucault stressed, our entire perceived reality is created within linguistic structures. Only through language, i.e. text and narrative, are we able to make sense of the world.

> In most of the critical work on postmodernism, it is narrative – be it in literature, history or theory – that has usually been the major focus of attention. Historiographic metafiction incorporates all three of these domains: that is, its theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs is made the grounds for its rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past. (Hutcheon, *Poetics*, 5)

Following Hutcheon's lucid argumentation, it is thanks to postmodern approaches to the past and to literary production, that "both history and fiction are [perceived as] discourses […] by which we make sense of the past" (Hutcheon, *Poetics*, 89). In relation to reworking traditional conceptions of history Hutcheon argues that historiographic metafiction helps to do away with evaluative attributes such as true and false as "there are only *truths* in the plural, and never one *Truth*, and there is rarely falseness per se, just others' truths" (Hutcheon, *Poetics*, 109).

History is constructed and so is the concept of origin as well as the idea of originality. The origin is irretrievable, because it is constituted from text and each text – from a postmodern perspective – is a product of interrelations with other texts. There is no possibility of ever gaining access to a moment of uncontested primacy. Consequently, primacy is also one of the targets postmodern analysis seeks to deconstruct. With regard to origin and originality, this insight suggests that a linear approach aiming at tracing back step by step the hints, which would finally lead to the one single authoritative moment from which everything else results, is not productive but frustrating. Instead of searching the one prime moment or the one authoritative mind with regard to artistic originality, it is more rewarding to investigate into the plurality of meaning, the plurality and ambiguity of sources and their interaction.

> The interaction of the historiographic and the metafictional foregrounds the rejection of the claims of both 'authentic' representation and 'inauthentic' copy alike, and the very meaning of historical referentiality. Postmodern fiction suggests that to re-write or to re-present the past in fiction and in history is, in both cases, to open it up to the present, to prevent it from being conclusive and teleological. (Hutcheon, *Poetics*, 110)

Historiographic metafiction, then, plays with and subverts the conventional notion of art as mimesis, that is, the text as mirror and imitation of a possible reality, via implicit or explicit comments on its own constructed character. The metafictional aspect demands awareness from both writer and reader. While Robert Scholes points out that "[m]etafiction assimilates all the perspectives of criticism into the fictional process itself" (Scholes, 106), Patricia Waugh highlights that simultaneously metafictional practice disorientates the reader to a certain extent, "by frustrating his or her conventional expectations of meaning and closure" (Waugh, 22). This disorientation leads to a new consciousness with regard to the process of literary production on the part of the reader. Metafiction, hence, serves as a means to thematise "the ways in which narrative codes artificially construct apparently real and imaginary worlds in the terms of particular ideologies while presenting these as transparently natural and eternal" (Waugh, 22).

Apart from the self-reflexive metafictional aspect prevalent in much of postmodern fiction, the historiographic aspect emphasises contemporary fascination with the past. Yet, as Umberto Eco mentioned, this orientation towards the past should not be characterised by innocence or naivety, instead, the past has to be reworked ironically. "[T]he past – since it may not be destroyed, for its destruction results in silence – must be revisited ironically" (Eco qtd. in Rosso, 2). The loss of innocence in relation to historical representation is a focal point of both postmodern theory and literary practice and calls attention to a

> […] set of challenged cultural and social assumptions: our beliefs in origins and ends, unity, and totalization, logic and reason, consciousness and human nature, progress and fate, representation

> and truth, not to mention the notions of causality and temporal homogeneity, linearity, and continuity. (Hutcheon, *Poetics*, 87)

For Hutcheon as for Eco, the crucial point is that the past is revisited critically, not in terms of a nostalgic orientation backwards (cf. Hutcheon, *Poetics*, 4). While theorists like Eco or Hutcheon focus on the potential of postmodern irony in returning to the past, Frederic Jameson, for instance, adopts a far more pessimistic stance. He perceives the concepts of the past and history as generally threatened, if not "effaced altogether, leaving us with nothing but texts" (Jameson, 18). These texts, however, following Hutcheon's line of argumentation, should not be chained with the attribute 'nothing but', as they are the only means for approaching the past. The past is not at all 'effaced altogether'. Its existence is not doubted. However, the only way to experience it, to gain access to it, is via the text, which in turn is a construct. History results from a choice of past events over other past events and this choice demands human agency. "We cannot know the past except through its texts, its documents, its evidence, even its eye-witness accounts are *texts"* (Hutcheon, *Poetics*, 16). Thus, in a postmodern understanding, the textual element in both history and fiction provides the common ground for a critical reworking of the past.

Historiographic metafiction as a postmodern means of literary expression provokes in two ways. On the one hand, it disposes of a teleological understanding of history as it presents "history as an 'open work'", while on the other hand, it "spatialize[s] history (Elias, *Spatial History*, 108). According to Elias, cultural development is no longer indebted to a metanarrative understanding of history. Furthermore, she states that postmodern fiction is not satisfied with substantiating the claims that history is textually constructed, but goes beyond that stage. It investigates into how this textualisation works. "By doing so, postmodernist historical novels explore the literary problem of how to represent time and space" (Elias, *Spatial History*, 109).

While Elias welcomes the ‘spatialization of history’ as an instrument to challenge the standard historical account, for Jameson, the loss of belief in a teleological development of history characteristic of the postmodern era turns out to be highly problematic. “Time, temporality and the syntagmatic [become awkward] in a culture dominated by space and spatial logic” (Jameson, 25). Thus, all that is left, for him, is “nothing but heaps of fragments” (Jameson, 25). Jameson does not perceive of postmodernism’s rejection of conventional conceptions of history as a conscious choice. Rather, he detects a gradual “loss of capacity […] to organize past and present into a coherent experience” (Jameson, 25).

Alluding to Jean Baudrillard’s theory of simulation and simulacra, Jameson locates “a new spatial logic of the simulacrum”, whose dominance impedes any direct access to history, which, according to Jameson, was directly approachable before the advent of postmodernism.

> Cultural production is […] driven back inside a mental space which is no longer that of the old monadic subject but rather that of some degraded collective ‘objective’ spirit’: it can no longer gaze directly at some putative real world, at some reconstruction of a past history which was once itself a present, rather, as in Plato’s cave, it must trace our mental images of that past upon its confining walls. If there is any realism left there, it is a ‘realism’ that is meant to derive from the shock of grasping that confinement and of slowly becoming aware of a new and original historical situation in which we are condemned to seek history by way of our own pop images and simulacra of that history, which itself remains forever out of reach. (Jameson, 25)

Experience is no longer possible in a progressive sense. Instead, contemporary culture is dominated by a medley of simultaneous scenes. Diachrony is replaced by a random and aleatory synchrony. While for Jameson the past is irretrievably lost, the present can only be experienced in the plural: ‘presents’. Anca Ignat underlines that Jameson, thus, diagnoses a general schizophrenia for contemporary culture. Living the simultaneity of different scenes at once has replaced our traditional perception of sequential history. Space has replaced time,

but this shift of focus leaves us struggling with the concurrence of manifold and fluctuating realities (cf. Ignat). According to Hutcheon, Jameson

> […] appears to mistake a challenge to the 'master' status of narrative history for a denial of history itself. Despite its detractors, the postmodern is not ahistorical or dehistoricized, though it does question our (perhaps unacknowledged) assumptions about what constitutes historical knowledge. Neither is it nostalgic or antiquarian in its critical revisiting of history. (Hutcheon qtd. in Ignat)

Postmodern writers have taken up the fascination with the past and explore how it can be revisited in a self-reflexive way on the aesthetic level and how far literary representation can digress from traditional concepts of mimesis. Corresponding to postmodern epistemology, they challenge linear narrative and a teleological perception of history in

> […] an attempt to deconstruct and recompose the rigidly historical narrative, to break out from the temporal prisonhouse of language and the similarly carceral historicism of conventional critical theory to make room for the insights of an interpretative human geography, a spatial hermeneutic. (Soja, 1-2)

Experimenting with a spatial understanding of lived reality, Peter Ackroyd interweaves three different historical settings in his historiographic metafictional novel *Chatterton,* and thereby suggests that perceived reality does not necessarily have to follow a temporal frame but can also be lived by shared experiences across centuries. As if to provide a theoretical premise for Ackroyd's enterprise, Elias puts forward that postmodern fiction does not reject the temporal axe in general, but once more challenges conventional understandings of linear temporal progress.

> Postmodernist historical novelists recognize, of course, that events happen sequentially in time, at least in the dimensions of everyday human perception. However, […] postmodernists balk at accepting this linear quality of time as anything but the unfolding of the immediate present, undiluted and unstructured by any totalizing interpretation. They refuse to equate the sequential 'linearity' of

> immediate experience with the teleological progressiveness of a totalizing historical view – an equation that has all too frequently been made by historians, writers, and politicians in the past. (Elias, *Spatial History*, 111-112)

The role of the historian as fiction maker has been analysed by Hayden White, who argues that the practice of turning the past into history is in fact a "poetic process" (White qtd. in Lee, 34). As past events do not have a voice of their own, they need an agent to organise and select them into a "discursive whole" (Hutcheon, *Politics*, 58), be it in historical or fictional narrative. History does not lie naturally or transparently in front of us. Rather, it can be argued that history, basically, runs through the same processes as narrative composition examined by Wolfgang Iser in his theory of fiction.

The composition of fiction, Iser explains, covers three different stages: *Selektion, Kombination* and *Selbstanzeige* (cf. Iser). A postmodern understanding of history, then, can link Hayden's poetic quality of history with Iser's theory and thereby apply Iser's stages to past events. Out of the pool of past events, are selected only few, which then are combined into a coherent meaningful historical narrative. The third stage, however, turns out to be of a more complex nature. While Iser states that literary texts implicitly or explicitly thematise their own artificiality, i.e. their own state of being constructed, historical texts aim at exactly the opposite: they are presented as natural and true. Literary texts can draw attention to their artificiality by, for instance, para- or metatextual devices. They do not claim to present the world as it is. Even the most realist literary tradition is satisfied with the mere mirroring of a possible reality. Quite contrary, a traditional conception of history requests to be acknowledged as the one and only direct and objective access to the past. It aims at disguising the processes of selection and combination at work, and consequently also refrains from statements of *Selbstanzeige*.

Postmodernism, however, dismantles this conception of history as a privileged discourse, by showing how strongly narrativisation is at work

in history-*making.* "The process of making stories out of chronicles, of constructing plots out of sequences" (Hutcheon, *Politics,* 66) is highlighted. It draws attention to the fact that selection and combination take place in history as well as in fiction. Furthermore, it breaks with the claim of being objective and universally applicable. History can no longer regard itself as a *grand narrative*, instead, in terms of a postmodern *Selbstanzeige*, it has to focus on its own subjectivity and peculiarity. "[H]istorians suppress, repeat, subordinate, highlight, and order […] facts […]. To call this act a literary act is, for White, in no way to detract from its significance" (Hutcheon, *Politics*, 67-68). White justifies his focus on the historian as fiction-maker by suggesting that how past events are transmitted and how they find their way into history depends entirely "on the historian's subtlety in matching a particular plot structure with the set of historical events that he wishes to endow with a meaning of a particular kind. This is essentially a literary, that is to say a fiction-making aspiration" (White, 49).

Historiographic metafiction makes overt the limits of conventional historical representation and plays with a new potential released by the discharging of linear teleological development. It experiments with different approaches to history and displays how history is textually constructed. "[T]here is an intense self-consciousness in the act of narrating in the present the events of the past, about the conjunction of present action and the past absent object of that agency" (Hutcheon, *Politics*, 71). Corresponding to and interacting with postmodernism's fascination with the past and history is another field of great concern, that is, how we can make sense of our lived reality, the present. Past and present, thus, in postmodern thought, are not separable entities but constantly interplay with each other in their different (con)textualisations.

2.2.2) BAUDRILLARD AND THE 'END OF HISTORY'

The French social critic Jean Baudrillard criticises epistemological postmodernism for its lack of correspondence with contemporary sociocultural experience (cf. Baudrillard, *Simulacra*). According to him, postmodern culture neither expresses any emancipatory potential, nor is it capable of critically reworking the enlightened system of thought. The present is sometimes referred to as the time to realise utopian thought and if one takes into account Werner Welsch or Hutcheon's (cf. Welsch, *Moderne*; Hutcheon, *Poetics* and *Politics*) claim of postmodernity as the advocate of plurality, one might agree with this conclusion. The postmodern rejection of the *grand narratives* offers the opportunity to realise small or marginal narratives. The era of increasing liberties and choices should lead to a diversification of experience and thought. The contrary is the case, Baudrillard argues. In his sociocultural analysis the liberating potential, instead of taking active steps towards the realisation of utopia/ae, has turned against itself, leading to final indifference and passivity in the era of universal simulacra.

In this bleak prospect, for Baudrillard, reality is no longer accessible, because it has been substituted by signs of the real. We live in an utterly simulated reality, which cannot be actively combated. When there is no reality anymore, there no more can be illusion, says Baudrillard (cf. Baudrillard, *Simulacra*). Welsch mourns this loss of illusion, the loss of play(fulness) and Baudrillard's apparent reluctance to propose counter-strategies. In the latter's line of argumentation, a counter-rhetoric against the rampant growth of indifference would or could only further increase its growth. Inexorably, indifference will continue to conquer all fields of the social and cannot be altered or even stopped by opposition. On the contrary, Baudrillard fears, it might even push the process forward.

For Welsch, Baudrillard is to be associated with the posthistoire (cf. Welsch, *Moderne*, 149-154.) One of the major representatives of the aesthetics of the posthistoire, Arnold Gehlen, argued that there cannot be historical innovation anymore. There is no more forthcoming because history has reached its end. There cannot be anything new. The world is culturally crystallised (cf. Gehlen, 133-143). The posthistoire, the after-history, can only reproduce in a static manner. Contrary to Lyotard, who – more than a decade later – sees in the disposal of the *grand narratives* a revaluation of the many small narrations, for Gehlen, the loss of belief in what Welsch labels "Globalideologien" (Welsch, *Wege*, 26) signifies the end of philosophy.

> [D]enn in einer prinzipienpluralistischen Gesellschaft und angesichts einer Fülle heterogener Wissensbestände gibt es keinen archimedischen Punkt mehr, von dem aus man alles überblicken und organisieren könnte. Ideen bewegen nichts mehr – gegen derlei anachronistische Erwartungen ist Zynismus zu richten. (Welsch, *Wege,* 26)

Interestingly, Baudrillard, two decades later and coming from a different philosophic background, sympathises with Gehlen's pessimistic theory, however, from a point of view that aims at analysing contemporary circumstances (cf. Welsch, *Wege,* 28). Despite or exactly because of this bleak outlook, Baudrillard's theory has become extremely popular. Welsch locates the source of fascination and strength of the claims in the suggestion of "Alles schon geschehen" (Welsch, *Moderne*, 152). Yet, that "there is nothing new under the sun" (Ecclesiastes, 1.9, qtd. in Ruthven, 125) is apparently not an insight of the twentieth century. "[W]hatever can be said has been said already: *tout est dit*" (Ruthven, 125). And exactly this insight made the classical principle of *imitatio* (*veterum)* possible in the first place and, ironically, simultaneously provides the premise for postmodern artistic practices of parody, pastiche and citation.

At this point, however, it is essential to proceed with care as social criticism and literary theory and practice may not be lumped together

uncritically. While the literary field – though as constructed in text as the field of cultural reality – is provided with experimental space for testing and finding different aesthetic accesses to a world in which *tout est dit*, in social theory it appears more difficult to accept the notion of *tout est dit* without falling prey to the cultural pessimism of Baudrillard. "When the real is no longer what it used to be, nostalgia assumes its full meaning. There is a proliferation of myths of origin and signs of reality, of second-hand truths, objectivity and authenticity […]" (Baudrillard, *Simulations*, 3). But also in the literary field critical voices in relation to postmodernism's reappropriation of the past have become loud. Fredric Jameson argues:

> [W]ith the collapse of the high-modernist ideology of style […] the producers of language have nowhere to turn but to the past: the imitation of dead styles, speech through the masks and voices stored up in the imaginary museum of a now global culture. (Jameson, 17-18)

Interpreting Jameson, Robert Weimann explains that there is to be experienced something akin to a nostalgia for the present. The present can only turn to the past in order to experience itself, as, on its own, it is only a hollow object lacking any power (cf. Weimann, 79). "[History's] reinjection has no value as conscious awareness but only as nostalgia for a lost referential" (Baurillard, *Simulacra*, 44). This understanding of the interrelation between past and present as uncreative and unproductive, is contested by postmodernism. Indeed, *tout est dit*, but this does not signify a necessary end to history or a necessarily nostalgic turn backwards of today's culture. "[M]uch contemporary theory of history […] does not fall into either 'presentism' or nostalgia in its relation to the past it represents" (Hutcheon, *Politics*, 71).

The paradox of the postmodern experience, however, also involves a very uncritical revisiting of history. Not always is it Hutcheon's claimed irony that is at work when it comes to (re)appropriating the past in contemporary culture. "Memorial culture" (Huyssen qtd. in Ignat) is Andreas Huyssen's term for this unreflected fascination with history. 'History light' as a new fetish for consumer culture, has proven to be a

cash cow for the flourishing heritage industry, be it in form of historical theme parks, period dramas or retro-festivals. Thematised in Julian Barnes' novel *England, England,* there is a nostalgic moment in contemporary culture, the longing for a putatively pure past, when authentic experience was still possible, and life closer to the 'origin'. "Our entire linear and accumulative culture collapses if we cannot stockpile the past in plain view. […] We require a visible past, a visible continuum, a visible myth of origin, which reassures us about our end." (Baudrillard, *Simulacra*, 10).

Baudrillard's compatriot Gilles Deleuze does not object to the apparent postmodern interest in the past, neither does he see the present as a hollow repetition or a nostalgic moment as does Baudrillard. In his line of argumentation the problem does not arise from reappropriating the past, that is from repetition itself, "da sie die Bedingung der Möglichkeit von Denken, Sprechen, Leben überhaupt ist" (Ott, 11). However, agreeing here, for instance, with Hutcheon's understanding of postmodernism, Deleuze maintains that this repetition has to refrain from being a mechanical one, "die trotz des zeitlichen Abstandes ein Identisch-Werden anstrebt und nicht das Andere im Wiederkehrenden begrüßt" (Ott, 11). Difference and plurality, thus, result from repetition, repetition in terms of an appropriation of an already existing reality. Deleuze, essentially in line with postmodern argumentation, rejects the idea of a past oriented nostalgia and stresses the potential of a critical reworking.

2.3) Postmodern Representation – Origins, Reality and Simulacra

2.3.1) The Silent Apocalypse – A Baudrillardian Scenario

How do we make sense of the world? Is reality directly perceivable? Is it mediated through representations or images of that reality? Or has representation completely replaced reality? Questions such as these are pivotal to postmodern theory. In this respect various theories of the simulacrum have gained influence. The simulacrum denotes a copy of a supposed original, which is basically indistinguishable from its model, and thus becomes an independent form. It is a copy, which rejects the control of its original.

The thematisation of representation is highly topical in postmodern theory, as it once more states a critical reworking of concepts which have gained the status of truth, transparency and logic without having ever been thoroughly questioned. Where some critics attest a severe crisis of representation with regard to the postmodern era, others simply perceive conventional representation as unsatisfactory and regard it as one of the concepts to challenge in order to threaten the dominance of humanistic master narratives.

> Postmodern representational practices […] deploy hybrid forms and seemingly mutually contradictory strategies frustrate critical attempts […] to systematize them, to order them with an eye to control and mastery – that is, to totalize. (Hutcheon, *Politics*, 37)

Hutcheon, as a literary theorist, stands in for a more moderate position in relation to a crisis of representation than for instance Baudrillard. While Hutcheon aims at contextualising her claims in the field of postmodern literary practice, Baudrillard remains on a far more abstract philosophical level in his criticism of contemporary culture. This high level of abstraction – in this respect Baudrillard as well as Deleuze

prolong a French intellectual tradition – has been both criticised and celebrated. Whereas some of the detractors of Baudrillard's theories reject his apparent reluctance to analytically deduct his theories leaving nothing but a heap of unreadable texts, his followers celebrate exactly this quality of rhetoric play, which refrains from traditional approaches to philosophic questions. Baudrillard himself contends: "[I am] a very bad analyst" (Baudrillard, *Live*, 166). "[…] I am a terrorist and nihilist in theory as others are with their weapons. Theoretical violence, not truth, is the only resource left to us" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra*, 163).

Paradoxically enough, Baudrillard – though a non-conventional thinker in his own right – cannot really be called a postmodern philosopher. If one takes totalisation as the one big common target of even the most distinct fields within postmodernist thought, then Baudrillard clearly has to remain outside this framework. Although he acknowledges plurality in our culture, he postulates that this plurality is only a superficial one, which, in fact, has engendered the totalising simulacrum of today's reality.

He presents himself rather pessimistically if not apocalyptically with regard to the alleged inherent quality of postmodernism, i.e. plurality. Postmodernism's supposed plurality, for him, finally results or has already resulted in indifference. As suggested, unity or totality is a concept regarded as highly problematic in postmodern thought. Far from being euphoric about latent aspects of uniformity in contemporary (media-) culture, postmodern theorists regard it as highly dangerous in terms of its suppressive potential.

Thus, plurality has to be central. The turn – which in contemporary culture has basically taken place in theory only – from a dichotomous world picture to one of interconnected plurality has opened the sphere "between those autonomous domains created by binary oppositions" (Ruthven, 65). Pluralisation, for Baudrillard, today only works towards general uniformity, which results in a final indifference he pessimistically diagnoses with our society. The enormous amount of information made

accessible by our age of mass media, does indeed carry the potential of empowering democratic and active experience. However, floods of information, as they come in our times, cannot be processed and consequently engender indifference, a passive mass of indifferent people. Baudrillard's claim departs from the assumption that the more in number the options of choice, the less the value of each single option. And in the end, they have lost any meaning. To follow Baudrillard further means to acknowledge that "the mass media form has created a total, closed system [which] has led to a blurring of the relationship between cause and effect, between the subject and its object" (Epstein/Epstein, 141).

Not only do the simulated realities of today's information culture blur the boundaries between cause and effect, he puts forward, but they subvert the principle of causality by suggesting that the appearance precedes reality, that the copy precedes the original. This is the basic assumption of the theory of simulation and simulacra (cf. Weibel, 28). The real has been replaced by independent copies of the real. In this line of argumentation representation is not in a state of crisis, rather, it is effaced altogether, because mere simulation has replaced representation. "[Simulation] is the radical negation of the sign as value, as meaning, as referential. [In representation] a sign could refer to the depths of meaning, a sign could exchange for meaning" (Baudrillard, *Simulations*, 10). Today, however, we are moving into "the era of simulation [which] is inaugurated by a liquidation of all referentials" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra*, 2).

In the era of simulation the real has lost its autonomy. If there is no real anymore, representation loses its ground and becomes impossible. "It is no longer a question of imitation, nor duplication, nor even parody. It is a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra*, 2). According to Baudrillard, we no longer have the means to criticise this tendency in contemporary culture, as we, ourselves, are already absorbed by the simulacra of the real. We cannot

place criticism, as all the secondary instances such as theory, criticism or depiction have already become part of this reality, which in fact is nothing but an omnipresent simulation.

Baudrillard's theories touch upon one of postmodernism's nagging issues: uniformity challenged by plurality and vice versa. How does contemporary culture approach the matter? What we are definitely dealing with is a kind of hybridisation of culture, the encounter of plurality/-ies in the widest sense. The question remaining is whether this plurality, as Baudrillard claims, is only an apparent one (cf. Welsch, *Wege*, 13-21). The open discrepancy between Baudrillard and postmodern thought derives from the fact that postmodern philosophy rejects any kind of totalitarianism. For Baudrillard, however, the age of information culture is dominated by the totalitarian rule of the simulacra. All meaning and difference implodes in the sphere of hyperreality, that is "the generation of a real without origin or reality" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra*, 1). There is no way out. Difference engenders indifference and passivity. The silent apocalypse has taken place without anybody noticing it. In contemporary information-culture, reality is generated by the media, by information. As a consequence, it becomes increasingly harder – if not impossible – to distinguish between reality and simulacrum. When reality and simulation permeate each other, we find ourselves in a state of universal simulation and the Möbius-strip has become the emblem of our time (cf. Welsch, *Moderne*, 150).

Nevertheless, simulation or the dominance of appearance does not mean that reality does not exist anymore in a material sense, instead, it indicates that the conventional understanding of how to make sense of the world, i.e. a world where everything can be ascribed an origin or a real referent, has lost its efficiency (cf. Jung, 381). Simulation theory suggests that there is no more a necessary referential tie,

> [n]o more mirror of being and appearances, of the real and its concept. No more imaginary coextensivity. The real is produced from miniaturized cells, matrices, and memory banks, models of control – and it can be reproduced an indefinite number of times

> from these. It no longer needs to be rational, because it no longer measures itself against either an ideal or negative instance. It is no longer anything but operational. (Baudrillard, *Simulacra*, 2)

Reality simply functions, fulfils its operational duties "ohne in ihnen einen Ausdruck des kollektiven Sinns, der Geschichte oder der Vernunft zu sehen" (Jung, 381-382), i.e. teleology has been disposed of.

2.3.2) Deleuze and The Reversal of Platonism

Teleology as a concept to dispose of is also the target of Gilles Deleuze, who – in contrast to Baudrillard – develops a different conception of the simulacrum more applicable to the ideas of 'mainstream' postmodernism. Deleuzian philosophy is characterised by thought "ohne vorgefasste Begriffe und kategoriale Hierarchien […] Begriffe und Affekte [sind] untergründig verbunden, auf dass ein 'rhizomatisches' Netz von Querverstrebungen und affektiven Wechselwirkungen entstehe" (Ott, 13). Deleuze thinks the simulacrum with regard to its emancipating, empowering potential and thus provides a valuable counter-narrative to Baudrillard's apocalyptic pessimism. Whereas difference, for Baudrillard, only serves as a means to cause final indifference, Deleuze's concept is based on the theorem that difference arises from other differences (cf. Welsch, *Moderne*, 141).

In his attempt to approach philosophy in a subversive way, emancipated from the dogmatic power of Western philosophical tradition, Deleuze aims at rethinking ancient philosophy, more specifically Platonism. Thus, in relation to the simulacrum, he focuses on its platonic conception only to reverse it, i.e. to offer an alternative approach, which does not rely on a hierarchical structure of original, copy, and simulacrum. Instead, his theory of the simulacrum is based on an egalitarian structure, which he delineates as rhizomatic.

Already ancient philosophy subjected the issue of originality, of clearly definable origins, to critical analysis. Plato's theory of the simulacrum, exemplified in *Sophist* (cf. Plato, *Sophist*), became one of

the most influential ideas with regard to the relationship between original and copy in the history of philosophy. In its platonic conception the simulacrum is burdened with derogatory notions of the false or the unfaithful. In fact, it is perceived of in exclusively negative terms. Plato departs from the idea of an original, a pure and unflawed idea. A copy of this original can either be a faithful copy, also labelled icon, or an unfaithful copy, that is, a simulacrum. The triadic structure Plato ascribes to the dialectics of original and reproduction is a hierarchic one. The original (*das Bild)*, as the prime moment, the source of everything else is valued the most. The faithful copy (*das Abbild*) internally resembles the original, whereas the simulacrum (*das Trugbild*) only externally resembles the original. Internally, though, it deviates from the original idea or corrupts it. The good copy is characterised by likeness to the ideal original, whereas the bad copy only pretends to be alike. In fact, it de-naturalises the original. The basic distinction Plato highlights, is, then, not the distinction between original and copy (good or bad), but the differentiation and hierarchisation of good and bad copy (cf. Deleuze, *Ancient Philosphy*, 291-303).

The good copy as the full resemblance of the idea, that is, the original, is not criticised at all, whereas the bad copy, the simulacrum, is regarded as inferior, if not dangerous, because it refrains from reproducing all the inherent qualities of the idea. It becomes something else, a fake. Yet, on the surface it is indistinguishable from original and copy. In the platonic perception the idea of the origin(al) is a prime focus. The closeness to the original, for Plato, brings about a copy's value. Thus, the good copy entirely derives from the idea, the original. The simulacrum only appears as to have the same origin. From there, to follow Plato, results its dangerous potential. It masks its origin. It simulates an origin which is not a faithful or true one.

"The task modern philosophy has been defined: to overturn Platonism" (Deleuze, *Difference*, 71). In order to reverse the platonic simulacrum Deleuze approaches the issue from the opposite direction.

"Overturning Platonism, then, means denying the primacy of original over copy, of model over image; glorifying the reign of simulacra and reflections" (Deleuze, *Difference*, 80). For him, the essential criterion is not likeness but difference. From this premise he sets out to re-evaluate the simulacrum, not as something bad, unfaithful or fake, but as something different and independent in its own right. It is an emancipated copy. Neither does it rely on the original anymore nor does it appropriate a hierarchical systematisation of meaning.

This conception becomes relevant in connection with postmodern ideas of origin, truth, deception, representation, etc., as the basic assumption underlying Deleuze's thought is that of difference, "harbor[ing] a positive power which denies *the original and the copy, the model and the reproduction*" (Deleuze, *Ancient Philosophy*, 299). Conventional deductive rationality becomes obsolete. He rethinks difference not in terms of conventional categories such as identity, similarity, analogy or opposition but liberates his concept from the idea of the identical (cf. Welsch, *Moderne*, 141).

Only what deviates is designated to exist. Deleuze's work is characterised by analyses of deviation and difference. In his conception of difference as delineated in his seminal text *Difference and Repetition*, however, there is no model in the first place from which difference can result, but difference itself is understood as preceding the model. Alexander Farshim, thus, attests Deleuze an extreme anticonservatism (cf. Farshim, 123). Deleuze reverts the causal and transcendental principle of philosophy dominant since the ancients. He rejects the idea of representation in terms of the identical, which is based on the underlying concepts of origin, identity and similarity (cf. Farshim, 123). Instead, his philosophy of difference is an act of becoming, and a very postmodern approach to originality, as it undermines the possibility of an origin in the first place. "Angefangen wird mittendrin […]" (Ott, 10-11).

In an attempt to relate contemporary conceptions of the simulacrum as different as those of Deleuze and Baudrillard it proves fertile to go

back to Scott Durham's analysis, who highlights the contradictory nature of the two theories:

> on the one hand, the claim to have released the virtual potential of a new humanity to freely reinvent itself without any reference to any founding essence or transcendental law; on the other hand, our experience of that virtuality as the emanation of a spectacular world from which we are separated. (Durham, 5)

For Baudrillard, the simulacrum signals that meaning can no longer be attained, as the real is no longer accessible. Deleuze, instead, argues that the simulacrum creates meaning as it emerges from difference and hence contributes to the plurality of contemporary experience. Where Baudrillard still embarks from the assumption of an underlying original, though entirely withdrawn from the simulacrum through the processes of simulation, Deleuze completely contests the idea of a relation between original and simulacrum. There are no processes of removal at work, but a simple underlying assumption of internal difference. Brian Massumi, who cannot follow Baudrillard's theses, welcomes Deleuze's theory as a sensible premise from which to set out to analyse "our cultural condition under late capitalism without landing us back with the dinosaurs or launching us into hypercynicism" (Massumi). Massumi also draws attention to the lamentable fact that Deleuze does not really elaborate on his theory of simulacra in specific.

Both Baudrillard and Deleuze depart from the notion that humanistic principles such as a teleological understanding of history or causality do not serve contemporary purposes. However, while the breakdown of these principles for Baudrillard renders experience impossible outside a universal state of hyperreality, for Deleuze it signifies a chance for difference and plurality.

Despite the fact that both philosophers present their theories in highly abstract terms, the controversy arising from the different viewpoints presented has become essential for both the posing of epistemological questions on the one hand and a sociocultural analysis of the present on the other hand. With regard to contemporary literary

practice it, thus, turns out to be of extraordinary interest to examine the aesthetic strategies postmodern texts employ in order to self-consciously reflect on sociocultural and epistemological concerns raised by contemporary theorists such as Baudrillard or Deleuze.

2.4) The Fake, THe Genuine and The Literary System

Both Peter Ackroyd's *Chatterton* and Peter Carey's *My Life as a Fake* express a straightforward postmodern distrust in origins and artistic originality by thematising literary forgery. The novels thereby exhibit the "power of literary forgeries to disturb the societies in which they are produced" (Ruthven, 2).

Fake and forgery, delineated by Julian Barnes as "guerrilla attacks on the authority of the cognoscenti" (Barnes, *Fake!* 24) are burdened with almost exclusively negative associations. Branded as inauthentic, secondary, false and sinister, they represent society's hypocritical attitude towards literariness. As K. K. Ruthven points out, original and fake or forgery are presented as dichotomous. "[L]iterature is valorised as the authentic Self and literary forgery [is] disparaged as its bogus Other" (Ruthven, 3). Thus, the conventional conception of literary art is that of a unique original piece of invention clearly set aside from its supposed counterpart, i.e., the dishonest and spurious fake or forgery. According to Ruthven, however, "literary forgery is not so much the disreputable Other of 'genuine' literature as its demystified and disreputable Self" (Ruthven, 3).

Julian Barnes' novel *England, England* focuses on the sociocultural field of interaction between originals and fakes. The construction of a fake England, which ironically treats contemporary culture's fascination with theme parks and heritage industry, implicitly thematises today's paradox of hunting for the real thing while thereby being absorbed by reproductions of reality.

> The heritage and tourism industries are frequently criticised for inferiorising the real by habituating us to simulacra, thus heightening our sense of disappointment with some shabby actuality first drawn to our attention by a glossy reproduction of it: a ubiquitous inauthenticity, we are told, has now superseded the unproblematic authentic. (Ruthven, 169)

Social simulacra, or what Daniel Boorstin calls “pseudo-events” tend to supersede reality as they are designed to be more intense, more concise than reality itself. They are “easier to disseminate and to make vivid” (Boorstin, 36) because that is what they are aimed at being: “more intelligible and hence more reassuring […], more persuasive than reality itself “(Boorstin, 36). In his argumentation Boorstin even goes as far as asserting that “whenever […] a pseudo-event competes for attention with a spontaneous event in the same field, the pseudo-event will tend to dominate” (Boorstin, 39). Fake reality “tend[s] to drive spontaneous happenings out of circulation” (Boorstin, 40), says Boorstin and thereby demonstrates an almost Baudrillardian pessimism.

While the fake on the sociocultural level appears to go hand in hand with the rise of the media and the age of information and, thus, stands in for a specifically contemporary experience, literary fakes can look back on a longer tradition. But also the concept of literary originality is a quite recent one if one looks back on the history of literature. Nevertheless, since its rise in the Romantic period it has gained enormous importance in terms of judging the literary value of a text. The perception of the author as an original genius has been predominant until roughly the middle of the twentieth century.

With the advent of postmodernism, however, the aesthetics of the genius has been disposed of as ineffective. Literary originality is a myth as, according to Roland Barthes, “writing is the destruction of every voice, every origin” (Barthes, 49). Barthes therewith highlights the intersection between *epistemological* and *aesthetic postmodernism*. While on the epistemological level, thanks to poststructuralism, the irretrievability of origins has been analysed, aesthetic postmodernism has repudiated the primacy of origins by employing new textual strategies. Literary originality no longer is at the centre of artistic attempts, rather, there is to be noticed a strong tendency towards a reappropriation of already existing texts through techniques such as parody, pastiche, citation, etc.

These intertextual, and mostly self-reflexive texts, draw attention to the inaccessibility of literary originality and thereby play with literary conventions. *Chatterton*, for instance, focuses on the topic of literary forgery both on the level of content as well as on the structural level as intertextual references are being made without quoting the supposedly original source.

For Ruthven, literary forgeries are especially interesting and moreover important as the premise for a critical analysis of the conventions of the literary system.

> [Literary forgeries] exhibit a carnivalesque irreverence towards the sanctity of various conventions designed to limit what is permissible in literary production. Whenever they succeed they destabilize the fragile economy of literary accreditation by drawing attention both to its conceptual shoddiness and the expediencies that characterise its operations. […] Seeing that these supposedly 'irregular' and 'abnormal' literary phenomena occur more frequently than is generally acknowledged, the burgeoning archive of literary forgeries remains an unresolved problem for cultural analysts. (Ruthven, 4)

The literary system is conventionally perceived as being based on a dichotomy, that is, the binary opposition between original and fake text. "[A] fake literary text is merely supplementary to those genuine ones, which make up the corpus of literature. Sometimes amusing, sometimes outrageous, but always deemed to be 'outside' literature" (Ruthven, 70). Postmodern literary practice aims at emancipation from – to appropriate Raymond Federman's terminology – "the lie of originality" (Federman, 57). "[L]iterature merely plagiarizes itself" (Federman, 58) and texts basically consist of quotations of other texts. There is no original voice as each voice is the result of uncountable previous voices, suggests Barthes, referring to the text as an *echo chamber*. Implicitly or explicitly, each textual construct is intrinsically intertextual. In terms of an epistemological approach, "texts" as John Frow suggests, "are therefore not structures of presence, but traces and tracings of otherness" (Frow, 45). The postmodern thematisation of intertextuality, forgery and

plagiarism highlights: “[l]iterary forgery is criticism by other means” (Ruthven, 171).

To quote, then, in a postmodern understanding is not something uncreative or secondary. Instead it alludes to the human capacity of becoming aware of and establishing connections, that is cross-thinking. Horst Peter Neumann points out that even a text entirely consisting of quotations can be labelled as creative because “[er könnte] die fremden Texte in Gespräche verwickeln, deren Dynamik die Teile übergreift und auf neue Weise zum Sprechen bringt” (Neumann, 296). Reference to other texts do not represent an exotic practice but can be identified as the norm in the process of literary composition (cf. Ackermann, 11).

3
ANALYSIS

I had read in books that art is not easy
But no one warned that the mind repeats
In its ignorance the vision of others
Ern Malley 'Durer: Innsbruck 1496'

3.1) JULIAN BARNES' *ENGLAND, ENGLAND*

Historical consciousness, one of the recurrent concerns of the 1946 born English novelist Julian Barnes, is at the core of his 1998 satirical novel *England, England*, which was short-listed for the same year's Booker Prize. Barnes, whose oeuvre comprises both traditional and experimental texts, is especially known for his hybrid style of writing. "[A]dvocating multiplicity and decompartmentalisation", Vanessa Guignery maintains, "his books blur and challenge the borders that separate existing genres, texts, arts and languages" (Guignery, *History*, 60). Apart from the implicitly metafictional novel England, England, his preoccupation with historical knowledge and its consequent problematisation become especially obvious in his historiographic metafictionial works like the acclaimed *Flaubert's Parrot* (1984) or *A History of the World in 10 ½ Chapters* (1989).

The strength of England, England, it can be argued, becomes palpable in Barnes' attempt to follow a double strategy. On the one hand, he - typically postmodern in his attitude - raises epistemological questions regarding conceptions of history, truth, authenticity, origins, reality and simulacra. On the other hand, possible answers to these questions are straightforwardly tested against the background of a cultural scenario which might appear extreme, yet not completely

unthinkable in relation to contemporary sociocultural experience. Thus, from a theoretical stance, *England, England* develops its potential at the intersection of epistemological and sociocultural postmodernism.

The scenario mentioned above is media tycoon Pitman's enterprise of establishing a theme park on the Isle of Wight, which should comprise all the essential qualities of England on one single spot. The tiny island is meant to fulfil the purpose of presenting a condensed and richer form of the mother country. Already the ironic redoubling in its name England, England alludes to the implicit promise of being able to offer twice as much as England in an almost ridiculously small area. The project flourishes. England, England is a great success, withdrawing all the attention from the mother country, it exposes the latter to retrograde and decay. Completely isolated, England, renamed Anglia, devoid of all its former glory based on national myths and history, falls back into a more or less pre-industrial state.

In *England, England* Barnes embarks on an investigation into the construction of identity. By intertwining the individual quest for identity of his female protagonist Martha Cochrane with the highly artificial identity of a newly created version of England, i.e. England, England, the novelist establishes a tight connection between two major factors in the process of identity construction: personal memory on the part of the individual and collective memory based on 'history' on the part of the nation.

The novel's three parts chronologically align with three different stages in the life of protagonist Martha Cochrane. Part one, labelled England, relates to Martha's childhood experiences in the late 20th century. Part two, England, England, recounts a defining stage in Martha's professional life as a successful member of the theme park's management in the early 21st century. Part three, called Albion, yet constantly referred to as Anglia, finally describes Martha as an old lady and her retired life in the old country.

Martha serves as a classic example of highlighting Barnes' general choice of characters. Instead of living history, Gregory J. Rubinson

contends, Barnes' characters "research history" (Rubinson, 77). As much as many other protagonists Barnes gives life to, Martha fails in her attempt to "uncover any definite answer to [her] quest for historical knowledge" (Rubinson, 77) and, thus, her failure proves to be representative of Barnes' own attitude towards historical certainty as "a flawed concept" (Rubinson, 77). Corresponding to Hutcheon or White's view of history as underlying fictional processes, Barnes' interpretation of history as a "soothing fabulation" (Barnes, *History*, 242) is already articulated in *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters*. There is no way of ever fully seizing it: "The history of the world? Just voices echoing in the dark" (Barnes, *History*, 242). And also Geoffrey Braithwaite, protagonist of *Flaubert's Parrot*, philosophises: "history is merely just another literary genre: the past is autobiographical action pretending to be parliamentary report" (Barnes, *Parrot*, 90). Obviously, as Rubinson suggests, Barnes interweaves theoretical reflections with lived experience. Taking Martha Cochrane as an example, this lived experience is severely overshadowed by her own theoretical self-reflections, which finally prevent her from becoming part of or identifying with her surroundings. Martha does not only research history, rather, she researches her own epistemological frame and reaches the conclusion that authentic happiness is unattainable as it depends on being true to one's heart and one's nature (cf. EE[1], 226). To know one's heart and one's nature, however, is as impossible as to gain historical knowledge, because

> the past was never just the past, it was what made the present able to live with itself. The same went with individuals […] when the brain told you now what it claimed had happened then [it] would be coloured by what had happened in between. (EE, 6)

Truth, authenticity and origins are out of reach, memory is elusive and "knowledge gleaned from academic modes of enquiry is inevitably limited" (Rubinson, 77).

[1] References regarding *England, England* will be abbreviated as EE in the following chapters.

3.1.1) (De)constructing Origins - The Impossibility of Authenticity

3.1.1.1) England - Distrusting Individual Memory

Grounded in a double quest for identity the dialectics of private and public experience in *England, England* is exemplified by a strong longing for retrievable origins on both levels. On the private level it is the memory of individual persons that becomes crucial in the process of identity construction, whereas on the public level collective memory represented as official history plays the essential part.

Right on introducing the girl Martha, Barnes thematises the problem of retrieving origins or of regaining at least a primary conscious moment. "'What's your first memory?' someone would ask. And she would reply, 'I don't remember'" (EE, 3). Although still being a child, Martha distrusts the concepts of origins and even memory itself. "A memory was by definition not a thing, it was … a memory. A memory now of a memory a bit earlier of a memory before that of a memory way back when" (EE, 3). Already Freud dedicated parts of his studies on neurosis to the hunt for an *Urszene*, a prime moment from which the respective problem could be derived. His findings showed that a single origin could not be traced but a "multiplicity of origins" (Carroll qtd. in Ruthven, 132). "Since what the 'origin' marks is not the beginning of something but the horizon beyond which our understanding of its genesis can go no further, hermeneutically it is always irretrievable" (Ruthven, 132).

However inaccessible an origin may be, traditionally, it is perceived as one – if not *the* – basic element as regards identity-formation. In Baudrillardian terms: "[w]e require a visible past, […] a visible myth of origin, which reassures us about our end" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra*, 6-7). Martha, not being able to recover a first memory, decides to conform to social conventions and simply invents her first conscious moment. "Yes, that was it, her first memory, her first artfully, innocently arranged lie"

(EE, 4). By depicting Martha's first memory as utterly constructed, the novel already introduces its sometimes implicitly, sometimes explicitly presented focus, that is, the postmodern fascination with an apparently authentic present which entirely depends on the constructedness of the past.

As a satire *England, England* exaggerates the postmodern fetish of constructedness. It ironises numerous aspects of contemporary reality, yet simultaneously it does not dismiss postmodern perspectives as essentially unproductive. In a nutshell, it can be argued that the novel demonstrates an extreme amount of implicit self-consciousness by ridiculing the peaks of postmodern thought, while at the same time showing its potential to account for contemporary experience. In this sense, the construction of a simulacrum of England surely is one of the novel's successful endeavours to ironically highlight some of the excesses of contemporary culture. Nevertheless, the text does not expose today's entire reality to ridicule. On the contrary, by confronting the collective with the individual Barnes seems to suggest that each of the distinct conceptions of authenticity presented turns out to be problematic. "[T]he self is a site of contesting fictions of identity" (Eva Müller-Zettelmann, 71), Eva Müller-Zettelmann says, and so is the nation, Barnes might add.

Martha's traits of independence, detachment and cynicism and her mistrust in given facts render her a classic postmodern character. She is highly conscious of the sometimes even contradictory processes of construction taking place within herself as well as in her surroundings. Her problematization of memory does not reside in a straightforward rejection of the value of memory as such, but rather consists of constant reflections on how it can become so powerful in the first place. One element she ascribes to the power of memory is "a continuing self-deception […]. Because even if you recognized […], grasped the impurity and corruption of the memory system, you still, part of you, believed in that innocent authentic thing – yes, thing – you called a memory" (EE, 6-

7). The temptation for Martha resides in the objectification of memory rendering it as something seizable, touchable, concrete and real.

Martha's "Counties of England jigsaw puzzle" (EE, 4) is the first metaphorical link Barnes establishes between her personal identity and the identity of England. England's counties depicted as differently coloured pieces are waiting to be put together correctly in order to have the puzzle solved. The nation's potential instability is exposed by Martha's problem of finding the jigsaw's last piece, "whereupon a sense of desolation, failure, and disappointment at the imperfection of the world would come upon her" (EE, 5). Ironically, her father "who always seemed to be hanging around at this moment, would find the piece in the unlikeliest place" (EE, 5-6). It is a mighty father figure that finally manages to establish the unity of the puzzle. The metaphor of a piece found by him "in the unlikeliest place" (EE, 6) relates to power structures at work in processes of identity construction on a collective level. Memory always goes hand in hand with power. What to remember and what to forget, or where to take the missing jigsaw piece from still widely depends on patriarchal power. Not surprisingly, the allegedly homosexual historian Dr. Max point outs: "History, to put it bluntly, is a hunk" (EE, 148). "His line", Barnes contends, "which is not particularly original, is that there is still a sort of masculine bias for history […] you forget – I am not saying anything unusual – you forget the silent fifty per cent" (Barnes qtd. in Guignery, *History*, 65).

Seeing her father restore the coherence of England, Martha feels delighted, as "her jigsaw, her England, and her heart had been made whole again" (EE, 6). Yet, when her father leaves the family for another woman, he unknowingly takes with him a piece of Martha's puzzle (cf. EE, 14-15). For Martha, then, England and her heart were never to be whole again. Bruno Zerweck perceives this double loss of identity as constitutional for Martha's most dominant character traits, which are cynicism and independence, and takes them furthermore to be the source of her future "Bindungsängste" (Zerweck, 255).

After an initial period of desolation, Martha, in response to her mother's recovery after having been left, "made a decision" (EE, 17). Piece by piece she would deconstruct the England-jigsaw and unconsciously also her longing for completeness by disposing them between the seats of the school bus. Emancipated both from her father as well as from the desire of coherence, Martha grows up a headstrong and independent woman.

Her general distrust in memory results from her perception that it was neither reliable nor authentic, but rather its sentimental potential was made to serve the most diverse purposes following the rules of the market. In analogy to her personal memory Martha is also suspicious of collective memory. In both spheres Martha detects "[a]n element of propaganda, of sales and marketing […] A continuing self-deception as well" (EE, 6). When Sir Jack interviews Martha for the job of a special consultant, he detects a number of calculatedly untrue details in her personal file. On being asked whether the rest was "as approximate to the truth as that" (EE, 45), Martha nonchalantly answers: "It's as true as you want it to be. If it suits, it's true. If not, I'll change it" (EE, 45). Martha herewith suggests that truth is always relative and adaptable to specific circumstances.

The implication of Martha's curriculum vitae being as constructed as her first memory once more underlines her unconventional way of thinking with regard to authenticity and truth. Whereas for most people a curriculum vitae, comprising the most relevant data of one's life, is meant to represent a truthful account of a personal history, for Martha, it simply signifies a means of reaching her goals and she does not refrain from changing details that do not fit her marketability. Yet, it is not an underhanded act on Martha's part, because for her the so-called facts about her life do not count in an absolute way.

In history lessons at school Martha experiences "the chants of history" (EE, 11) as an almost religious experience. Her teacher Miss Mason "would lead them in worship like a charismatic priestess, keeping

time, guiding the gospellers" (EE, 11). The importance of history for Martha exceeds by far the importance of religion. "Martha was a clever girl, and therefore not a believer" (EE, 12). Martha's rejection of religion can be seen as the postmodern replacement of religious belief in favour of a deep fascination with history. Furthermore, history in Miss Mason's class does not rely on a linear development.

> There would be actions which called for dates; variations, improvisations and tricks; the words would duck and dive while they all clung to a scrap of rhythm. Elizabeth and Victoria (clap clap clap clap), and they would reply 1558 and 1837 (clap, clap, clap, clap). […] She led them in and out of two millennia, making history not a dogged process but a series of vivid and competing moments. (EE, 12)

Thus, already as a girl Martha experiences a spatialisation of history and moreover also a selection of historical events corresponding to contemporary tastes which will later come to dominate her professional life in the theme park England, England. "Cross-epoch extravaganza" (EE, 228) it is called, when the current King "shake[s] hands with his own great-however-many-times-granny" (EE, 164) and does not manage to get a smile from Queen Victora. Due to his sexual harassment of Nell Gwynn, he is threatened with Oliver Cromwell to take over official representation (cf. EE, 189).

Apart from several allusions to a wider focus, i.e. the sphere of collective identity construction, in its first part the novel accentuates the personal level of building one's character (cf. EE, 15). Although Martha's personal development does not cease to be a centre of attention in the novel's second and third parts, the text's scope noticeably widens as the issues of collective memory and consequently also collective identity gain importance.

The analogy between individual and collective identity is furthermore underlined by postmodern theories of memory, which stress that the dialectics between past and memory are not linear in terms of a seizable

past being the basis for memory. The contrary is the case: "Erinnern konstruiert Vergangenheit" (Schmidt, 217).

> Gedächtnis und Erinnerung spielen eine entscheidende Rolle beim Aufbau und dem Erhalt individueller wie gesellschaftlicher Identität. Ohne individuelle und soziale Selbstkonzepte und Geschichtsentwürfe können die ablaufenden Prozesse der Selbstvergewisserung keine Stabilität bekommen. […] Kultur, Gedächtnis und Erinnerung sind daher autokonstitutiv und in diesem Sinne abgekoppelt von der sog. Objektivität der geschichtlichen Ereignisse. (Schmidt, 217)

Martha's disbelief in her own memory thus represents a problem with regard to the constitution of what is commonly perceived as a stable identity. Her awareness of all the ongoing processes of self-deception in relation to giving meaning to her life prevents her from getting involved with the world. Barnes depicts her as a highly reflective character and, hence, she remains detached form her own personality, detached from the Pitmanian project and finally also detached from her surroundings in Anglia. It can be argued that, paradoxically, Martha's insights into her own personality and the world around her designate her to remain an outsider forever.

3.1.1.2) England, England and Anglia - Trusting Collective Memory

The specific difference between the individual Martha and the collective memory of England is the latter's lack of scepticism. While Martha displays a tendency to cynically question anything that comes her way, society is characterised by a passive receptiveness. While the novel's plot evolves around Martha, Sir Jack Pitman and the project management, the target of their enterprise, i.e., the future customers, whose collective memory the theme park is based on, is not even ascribed a minor active role. Different voices within the collective get lost in the data of statistics and later on dissolve in the anonymity of tourist masses.

In order to excavate the essence of what people, that is the potential customers of "Quality Leisure" (EE, 47), associate with England, the project's management commissions a survey of the "[t]op fifty characteristics associated with the word England" in order to find out "how much people know" (EE, 58). The results are meant to provide the basis for the future theme park. The outcomes, however, are not too encouraging: the top characteristics associated with Englishness cannot be directly taken over by the project as planned, because they do not only include the most marketable images of Englishness. While the top three attributes, the Royal Family, Big Ben/Houses of Parliament and Manchester United, will not present any major problem regarding their reconstruction on the Isle of Wight, other traits like hypocrisy, which ranks right after double-decker buses, or a stiff upper lip, frigidity or bad smell (cf. EE, 83-84) will have to be adapted or even abandoned altogether in order to ensure economic success.

An analysis of the 50 English quintessences displays a definite orientation towards the past, as the top ranking Royal Family, Big Ben or Robin Hood prove. Cynically, those quintessences, which do not bear any explicit reference to the past, but rather describe what might be the general timeless picture of a collective English identity, are for the most part negatively connotated such as snobbery, hypocrisy or perfidy. Martha sarcastically points out the problem of marketability of these connotations: "[H]ow do we advertise the English? Come and meet representatives widely perceived […] as cold snobbish, emotionally retarded and xenophobic. As well as perfidious and hypocritical, of course" (EE, 108). Zerweck claims that the reinterpretation of these negative connotations into a "radikal bereinigte[…] Version von Englishness" (Zerweck, 260) is the main characteristic of Pitman's undertaking.

English people are not very charming and the days of English glory are to be located in the past. These are the prerequisites for Pitman's economic but also – as he highlights - patriotic project. "I am a patriot

too, you forget" (EE, 37). His consultant Jerry Batson phrases the problem of the English present the following way: "So, England comes to me, and what do I say her? I say, 'Listen, baby, face facts. We're in the third millennium and your tits have dropped. The solution is not a push-up bra." (EE, 37). Yet, England's advantage is that it is

> a nation of great age, great history, great accumulated wisdom. […] We are what others may hope to become. This isn't self-pity, this is the strength of our position, our glory, our product placement. […] We must sell our past to other nations as their future. (EE, 39)

England, England is an economic undertaking, which, however, from Pitman's perspective has also patriotic undertones. Apart from the economic success he expects, he also perceives himself as the saviour of the grandeur of the English national past and takes this as a justification of an extreme restructuring and amalgamation of English history. Seeing that some of the survey's outcomes would have to be dismissed as unusable and taking into account the general unfamiliarity with England's official past on the part of the future target group, Sir Jack suggests that, since there is no knowledge to refer to, this knowledge has to be constructed. He advises Dr. Max, the project's "Official Historian" (EE, 58):

> You are our Official Historian. You are responsible for our, how can I put it, for our history […] Well, the point of our history – and I stress the our – will be to make our guests, those bying what is for the moment referred to as Quality Leisure, feel better. […] Feel. We want them to feel less ignorant. Whether they are or not is quite another matter, even outside our jurisdiction […] So we don't threaten people. We don't insult their ignorance. We deal in what they already understand […] They'll come to us to enjoy what they already know. (EE, 70-71)

The lack of historical knowledge Dr. Max is confronted with in his survey might suggest that the collective memory presented does not exist on firm grounds. In this respect Vera Nünning mentions "that the national 'echo-chamber' supposedly ringing with voices and traces of the past is curiously hollow, consisting at best of names, dates or

meaningless catch-phrases" (Nünning, 66). Yet, Barnes appears to highlight the contrary. The less people know about the possible origins of their national past, the more stable is their collective identity. Dr. Max observes "that patriotism's most eager bedfellow was ignorance, not knowledge" (EE, 82). In this sense, the novel implicitly hints at Martha's individual identity, which underlies the same structures as collective identity but is shown as the counter-experience. The more she knows about and reflects on her own history, the more she doubts it.

In order to succeed in its enterprise the project has to reduce, simplify and caricature English history to a minimum of presupposed knowledge, a process which Martha calls a "repositioning of myths for modern times" (EE, 148). This process involves the disposal of 'unnecessary' historical burdens. Sir Jack employs the well-worn metaphor of history as a heavy backpack:

> Why [were] people […] burdened by yesterday, and the day before, and the day before that? By history? Here, on the Island, they had learnt how to deal with history, how to sling it carelessly on your back and stride out across the downland with the breeze in your face. Travel light: it was true for nations as well as for hikers. (EE, 203)

The extent to which Sir Jack forces the lightness of his customer's travels can be exemplified by the restructuring of "a primal English myth" (EE, 146): Robin Hood, "no. 7 on [the] list of The Fifty Quintessences of Englishness" (EE, 146). The myth is reshaped and adapted to fit contemporary circumstances. The changes concern all possible interpretations of adequate political correctness and only start with rethinking gender roles departing from the possible consequences of the assumption that Robin, in fact, is a sexually ambiguous name (cf. EE, 146-152).

As a counter narrative to all the ongoing processes of construction, be it the actual building of the theme-park itself or the related building of new traditions based on fragments of historical evidence, Barnes lets Martha be tempted by experiences of the real and authentic in the love-

relationship with her colleague Paul. "[T]h novel," James Miracky argues, "satirically explores the inauthenticity of 'theme parking' but also sets out in pursuit of the authentic or that which can be considered 'real', which Barnes seems to locate in human experience" (Miracky, 168). While in both their professional lives an aura of artificiality embraces all actions, in their scarce private time, they both attempt to be just and true to each other. "She was careful, she was honest; so was he" (EE, 89). Their relationship is based on high esteem and respect for each other and their apparently genuine affection for each other provides the counter balance to their artificial surroundings. Miracky sees the importance of the relationship reflected in the use of "the language of the real" (Miracky, 168). Searching for an adequate description for his feelings for Martha Paul mentions: "That was the word: falling in love with Martha made things real" (EE, 103). Nevertheless, Martha, silently talking to herself, recognises that authenticity and happiness are not necessarily linked (cf. Pateman, 80) and the old cynicism awakes.

> -No, it feels like this: no games, no deceptions, no pretence, no betrayal.
> -Four negatives make a positive?
> -Shut up, shut up. Yes, by the way, they might. So shut up.
> -Don't say a word, Martha. Sleep well. Just out of interest, why do you think you woke up? (EE, 97)

As soon as her old cynical self reappears, the relationship is bound to fail and Martha withdraws from Paul. By testing the possibility of an authentic relationship Barnes seems to question the poststructuralist assumption "that the human subject has been disposed as an interesting ontological category" (Fjellman qtd. in Miracky, 168).

The failure of a relationship based on terms of the true seems to go hand in hand with the flourishing of the project, which is deeply grounded in the discourse of the fake. "The Island" (EE, 179) is being fully accepted and 'history light' serves as a tourist magnet. Dr. Max explains how reality and history are adapted in order to make them fit for people's taste.

> R-eality is r-ather like a r-abbit, […]. The great public – our distant, happily distant paymasters – want reality to be a pet bunny. […] If you gave them the real thing, something wild that bit, and if you'll pardon me, shat, they wouldn't know what to do with it. Except strangle it and cook it. (EE, 133)

The real thing, the Official Historian points out, cannot be handled, thus, it has to be shaped and formed into something nice and neat, i.e. into something people feel happy to live with. By selecting just the positive attributes of English history and identity, by reshuffling them and by reducing them to a straightforward basis, Barnes suggests, a new English identity is being forged. This collective identity does not self-reflectively question its own characteristics but passively accepts them.

Martha as an individual struggles with coherence, trust and authenticity and represents the postmodern idea of a fragmented subject, presenting not a single coherent identity but competing experiences, which do not allow for a linear progessive development of Martha's character. The masses, on the contrary, composed of an indefinite number of individuals, are happy with a preconstructed identity to take on. While a single personality stands for the multiplicity of possibilities, the multitude of characters only find refuge in a single, almost totalitarian collective identity preshaped by the project.

Martha's most intense experience on The Island is a meeting with the actor employed to play 'Dr. Samuel Johnson'. However, he does not perceive himself as an actor anymore but as the real Dr. Johnson and, thus, develops the same personal characteristics as the historic model, for instance, he suffers from a heavy spleen, which apparently annoys customers. Vera Nünning observes: "The 'English malady' of melancholy may be English, but it was not accepted as such by visitors, who prefer and demand an idealized version of Englishness that is adjusted to the tastes of the present" (Nünning, 2001, 65). Martha realises that "[t]he Island was itself responsible for turning 'Dr. Johnson' into Dr. Johnson, for peeling off the protective quotation marks and leaving him vulnerable" (EE, 217).

Yet when she talks to him, that is the fake Dr. Johnson, she gets the impression of experiencing truth and authenticity for the first time. "She was alone with another human creature" (EE, 211). All role-playing suddenly disappears. Neither is she the tough "business women, [n]or even a person of her time" (EE, 211). She simply is. And so is the superficially fake Dr. Johnson, who is far from enacting his role. When he leaves, Martha feels irritated: "he had behaved as if she were less real than he was. At the same time, she felt light-headed and flirtatiously calm, as if, after long search, she had found a kindred spirit" (EE, 212). To a certain extent he is more real than she is, because he takes on the historic Dr. Johnson in all his complexity, not just the 'pet bunny' as Dr. Max would call it, but the real 'rabbit'. He is the same complex being as the historic Dr. Johnson, not just a simplified caricature of him as intended by the project. "The sudden truth she had felt when he leaned over her, wheezing and muttering, was that his pain was authentic […] because it came from authentic contact with the world" (EE, 218). The fake Dr. Johnson has turned into a Baudrillardian simulacrum, and has become indistinguishable from the real Dr. Johnson. Paradoxically, Martha feels the truth and authenticity of the simulacrum more than she has ever felt herself real, original.

Martha, who does not believe in the project, is finally dismissed by the management and has to leave The Island. She finds refuge in old England, renamed Anglia. As all the national and international attention has been withdrawn from the country, Old England finds itself in a basically pre-industrial state. "[O]nly those with an active love of discomfort or necrophilic taste for the antique need venture there" (EE, 185). Far from presenting a supposedly more authentic possibility of collective memory or national identity or even a utopian place, Barnes states that

> the third part is meant to be the slow movement of the book and it's meant to be rather opaque and rather ambiguous. […] What I try to do is ask the question: say everything collapses somewhere, and

> then you start again, what does that starting again consist of for a country? (Barnes qtd. in Guignery, *History*, 71-72)

The Anglian village Martha is prepared to spend her old age in, is willing to start anew, and being completely robbed by its collective identity and its history it is confronted with the problem of reinventing a national tradition. "Old England had lost its history, and therefore – since memory is identity – had lost all sense of itself" (EE, 251). Barnes uses Anglia's enterprise as a metaphor for all (re)constructions of history:

> In many ways, it's a completely fake village. It's a bogus village reinventing itself. We create something from fragments and bits of memory, national memory and we stick it together with a very rough glue, and then once it's been there for a certain time, like a year, we think it's real, this is authentic, and then we celebrate it – it's fabulation all over again – convincing ourselves of a coherence between things that are largely true and things that are wholly imagined. (Barnes in Guignery, 2000, 72)

Anglia is a curious amalgam of archaic and newly invented structures, claiming to be entirely authentic. For instance, there is Jez Harris, the former American legal expert Jack Oshinsky, who decided to "backdate both his name and his technology" (EE, 243) and to stay behind when his firm left the country. He takes enormous pleasure in inventing folk tales and "play[ing] the yokel whenever some anthropologist, travel writer or linguist theoretician would turn up inadequately disguised as a tourist" (EE, 243). Martha is only mildly amused at all the undertakings to establish a new sense of village identity, one of which is the "reviv[al] – or perhaps, since record were inexact, [the] institut[ion] of a village Fête" (EE, 245). Yet, she is willing to contribute some of her childhood memories, as she "unlike most of the village's current occupants, had actually grown up in the countryside" (EE, 245). Despite the fact that Martha is able to contribute one of the scarce possibly authentic memories, the villagers vote in favour of newly invented traditions for their constitutional celebration. Martha, socially on the margin of Anglia, reflects:

> She was not sure if she had done right, if Anglia had done right, if a nation could reverse its course and habits. Was it mere willed antiquarianism […] – or had that trait been part of its nature, its history anyway? Was it a brave new venture, one of spiritual renewal and moral self-sufficiency, as political leaders maintained? Or was it simple inevitable, a forced response to economic collapse, depopulation and European revenge? (EE, 257)

The villagers do not care, they are happy with their newly invented tradition, defined as "hybrid amusement" (Miracky, 169) by Miracky. "The Fête was established; already it seemed to have its history" (EE, 266). At night, when Martha feels bored by the Fête she leaves and watches the new national dance "[t]he conga, national dance of Cuba and Anglia" (EE, 265) from the nearby hill. Ironically, it is a rabbit that captures her attention. Rustling nearby it was "fearless and quietly confident of its territory" (EE, 266). The inhabitants of Anglia have finally managed to create their own version of 'history light', i.e. their own 'pet bunny'. History, Barnes seems to suggest, is not inexistent, yet it is as inaccessible as a wild rabbit.

Both England, England and Anglia base their possible collective identity on the artificial constructions of fake traditions. Despite the fact that on The Island the commercialisation of tradition works on a much larger scale, the same processes are at work in Anglia, where a colourful past is invented in order to satisfy scarce visitors who are interested in Anglia for scientific reasons only. Yet, in Anglia there is also the tendency to invent traditions not only for tourists but for the villagers' own sake. They need a tradition in order to be grounded, rooted. The fact that these roots are constructs does not prevent them from feeling authentic. The Anglian endeavour proves to be as ridiculous as the large-scale economic enterprise, nevertheless it feels definitely more pathetic as the community itself aims at establishing a collective identity.

In England, England it is the project's management that decides which myths to reproduce or how to adapt them. The people, i.e. the tourists, are merely the target. They are passive consumers. Umberto Eco, in his analysis of Disneyland argues in the same line: "An allegory

of the consumer society, a place of absolute iconism, Disneyland is also a place of total passivity. Its visitors agree to behave like […] robots" (Eco). In Anglia, on the contrary, the inhabitants of the village themselves are the creators of the myths and traditions. They actively construct, and decide what to take and what to leave. Yet, in the end they also have their "pet bunny". The rabbit, real history, is hopping on alone at night, unseizable as Geoffrey Braithwaite's piglet in Flaubert's Parrot.

Anglia's inhabitants consciously reject the only connection they have to the past, that is records in books and Martha's own memories of her childhood. In fact, however, this does not make any difference as these records or Martha's memory are as constructed as the new inventions. Dr. Max was right when he stated: "[T]here is no authentic moment of beginning, of purity, however hard their devotees pretend. […] What we are looking at is almost always the replica […] of something earlier" (EE, 132). In his essay "Fake!" published in Letters from London (1995) Barnes himself argues against the possibility of ever recovering authentic origins, both as an individual and as a nation:

> The British are good at tradition; they're also good at the invention of tradition […]. And like any other nation, they aren't too keen on having those invented traditions exposed as bogus. […] And since any individual identity depends in part upon national identity, what happens, when those symbolic props to national identity turn out to be no more authentic or probable than a fur-bearing trout?" (Barnes, *Fake!,* 27-28)

By deconstructing authenticity, Barnes thereby also implicitly undermines the concept of mimetic literary representation. The constant questioning of the real and the original on various levels hints at an additional level not explicitly mentioned, that is the level of narrative construction. The narration pinpoints the constructedness of individual identity and the constructedness of collective identity and thereby successfully highlights its own constructedness, its status as fictum (cf. Zerweck, 262). By establishing an analogy between real and fictional processes, Barnes accentuates the blurring of the boundaries between

fact and fiction und thus alludes to the fictionality of reality (cf. Domsch, 27), which according to Sebastian Domsch has been Baudrillard's main contribution to contemporary theory. With reference to Baudrillard, Sebastian Domsch affirms that the simulacrum signifies an ontological uncertainty, which results from the difficulty of distinguishing reality and non-reality.

3.1.2) (DE)CONSTRUCTING ORIGINALITY – THE REPLICA'S RULE

The quest for or the deconstruction of the authentic in *England, England* does not only indulge in the analogy between personal and collective identity-construction. Again posing epistemological questions alongside sociocultural realities, Barnes furthermore sets the question of possible relations between original and replica, i.e. simulacrum. The theme-park version of England and its counterpart, the apparently original mother country, are the basis for deliberations on identity and difference. The condensed replication of England, which supersedes the original functions as a parody of the Baudrillardian conception of the simulacrum.

Baudrillard's theory is not only instrumentalised as an abstract allusion to the postmodern problem of representation, but by introducing a "French Intellectual" (EE, 52), whose function is the scholarly justification of the project, Barnes, though not explicitly referring to him, presents an ironic subversion of Baudrillard's ideas. It can be argued that Barnes offers a reversal of late twentieth-century Baudrillardian thought as a widely shared philosophical point of view in the early 21st century. "[I]n our intertextual world […] reference, however ironic, is of course implicit and inevitable" (EE, 53), the French Intellectual puts forward, and thereby self-reflectively alludes to his own state of being a parody of Baudrillard.

While Baudrillard, in his pessimistic cultural theory of our simulacral age of mass-media, – it is not by chance that Sir Jack Pitman is a media

tycoon resembling 'originals' such as the late Robert Maxwell or Rupert Murdoch – laments the loss of direct access to reality, Barnes' intellectual celebrates this step as an advance. The original is a concept of the past, he seems to suggest, and should, thus, be discharged in favour of the replica. There is no longer the need for the original as a point of reference as technology is able to (re)produce the original and, accordingly, it is capable of constructing an alternative reality, both more complex and more convenient than conventional reality.

> It is well established […] that nowadays we prefer the replica to the original. We prefer the reproduction of the work of art to the work of art itself, the perfect sound and solitude of the compact disc to the symphony concert in the company of thousand victims of throat complaints, the book on tape to the book on the lap. (EE, 53)

Yet, the French Intellectual concedes, this euphoric perspective on contemporary culture was not commonly shared right away. "When such discoveries were first made, there were certain old-fashioned people who expressed disappointment, even shame" (EE, 53-54). The reference to old-fashioned people might very well be set in relation to the work of Walter Benjamin, Guy Debord or Baudrillard himself.

Benjamin, in his important essay "Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit," testified a loss of aura to the original piece of art in the age of technical reproduction. This aura, defined by a "Hier und Jetzt" (Benjamin, 12), guarantees the work of art's authenticity. Authenticity, however, Benjamin underlines, cannot be technically reproduced. Yet, ironically pinpointing the antiquarianism of such a perspective, the success of England, England shows that the uniqueness or a Hier und Jetzt of premier sites does not play a major role in touristic tastes. A factor by far more crucial and characteristic for contemporary consumer society is convenience. "[I]f given the option between an inconvenient 'original' or a convenient replica, a high proportion of tourists would opt for the latter" (EE, 181).

The Situationist Guy Debord is directly cited by Pitman's own ironic "Haus-Baudrillard" (Häntzschel qtd. in Zerweck, 263), yet remains unnamed.

> Permit me to cite one of my fellow-countryman […] 'All that was once directly lived', he wrote, 'has become mere representation'. A profound truth, even if conceived in profound error. For he intended it, astonishingly, as criticism not praise. To cite him further: '[…] there remains nothing, in our culture or in nature, which has not been transformed, and polluted according to the means and interests of modern industry.' (EE, 45-55)

Debord's seminal text, *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967), serves to highlight yet another 'old-fashioned' strand of twentieth-century pessimistic analysis of consumer society. The French Intellectual contends: "He understood, this old thinker, that we live in the world of the spectacle" (EE, 5). However, a nostalgic longing for the real thing would not correspond to 21st century attitudes. In contrast, representation "is not a substitute for that plain and primitive world, but an enhancement and enrichment, an ironisation and summation of that world. […] Is it our loss? No, it is our conquest, our victory" (EE, 55).

Barnes has the 'original' 20th-century-Baudrillard undergo a process of what Martha calls a "repositioning of myths for modern times" (EE, 148). His philosophy is reshaped and fitted nicely into the author's narrative purposes. In *Simulacra and Simulation* (1985) Baudrillard develops a theory of representation which argues that reality has been irretrievably lost. The only way of perceiving the world is channelled by universal simulacra. Yet, according to Baudrillard, this was not always the case. Baudrillard's theory of simulacra is marked by three different stages of the image in the cultural development from the renaissance to the industrial revolution and our present stage of hyperreality. It can be argued that Baudrillard extends the Platonic triadic structure regarding the relationship between original and copy, i.e., original, faithful copy and simulacrum, to a fourth stage. Baudrillard, mainly interested in the different functions of the image, takes the original, i.e. in his terms reality,

for granted and starts with the "image as the reflection of a profound reality" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra*, 6). This first Baudrillardian stage corresponds to the second Platonic state, that is, the stage of the good copy. The second Baudrillardian stage of the simulacrum "masks and denatures a profound reality" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra*, 6) and thus can be equated with the final Platonic stage, i.e. the unfaithful copy or the simulacrum. For Baudrillard, however, the simulacrum reaches yet another stage which "marks the absence of a profound reality [and consequently] has no relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra*, 6). In Deleuzian terms, it would be defined as entirely different and no more enslaved by attributes of similarity. Yet, Baudrillard does not choose a terminology of difference but one of priority. In its last stage, the simulacrum is prior to the original, signifying a reality created by the simulacrum. Shortly put, Baudrillard's first and second stages of the simulacrum demand a pre-existing original, while at the third stage, which is also defined as hyperreality, the pre-existing simulacrum shapes reality. In hyperreality society "hat sich hier von jedem Bezug zu einem im Realen begründeten Ursprung gelöst" (Domsch, 29).

Barnes both parodies and makes graspable this rather abstract theory. The theme park England, England, it can be observed, is designed to commence on the second order of the simulacrum. It is not a direct copy or a faithful image of the mother country, but an "original reproduction (oxymoron intended)" (Nünning, 61) as it aims at a condensation, i.e. at retrieving the essence of what used to be England by means of selection and adaptation. "Ignorant critics", the French Intellectual warns the project's management, "will no doubt assert that you are merely attempting to recreate Olde England […]" (EE, 55). However, Pitman's goal reaches far beyond a mere replication, rather, he wants to achieve to "substitute the real for the signs of the real" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra*, 2).

Following the principles of 'history light' and 'correct product placement', England, England, on the second order of the simulacrum does not mimetically reflect the reality of old England but denatures it. Consequently the boundaries between the fake and the original begin to blur. Actors, employed to represent the historical characters, for instance, undergo a process of identification with their models. The gang of Robin Hood and his Merrie Men refuse to stay within the strictly defined bonds of their role-playing and begin to act like real outlaws. They turn into the historical characters. And so does the actor of the historic Dr. Johnson. By taking on all of the latter's character traits, Dr. Johnson becomes his own simulacrum. In this sense, a certain development manifests itself, which lets the project hover on the edge between the simulacral stages two and three.

However, taking into account the proceedings in old England, that is Anglia, it can be argued that Barnes suggests that the original country England, England referred to when it started as a project, no longer exists and thus England, England lacks any reference to a pre-existent reality. It has turned into a third order simulacrum, which precedes the original.

Barnes' application of Baudrillard's theory of the simulacrum has been both celebrated and disapproved of by critics. Miracky, for instance, appreciates the author's attempt at making a complex and sometimes even opaque theory ironically palpable. According to Miracky "Barnes satirizes both the world of hyperreality and that of critical theory, in effect creating a parody of a parody, or a novel that continually turns in on itself" (Miracky, 165). Pateman, however, does not contribute to the panegyric and argues that Barnes falls prey to oversimplifying postmodern theory. The dialectics between the simulacra and the real

> ha[s] been the mainstay of much of contemporary theory and philosophizing. Translating some of these often obscure and difficult arguments into novelistic form here has the effect of sometimes banalizing the arguments, and sometimes obscuring the novel. […] While [the French Intellectual's] exposition is certainly a reasonable

> pastiche of a sort of postmodern theory, it sits uneasily here. [M]ainly because it reads like a lesson that Barnes himself is proud to have learned so well, but rather embarrassed to have included. (Pateman, 79)

Moreover, Pateman repeatedly points out the novel's lack of artistic originality and draws attention to its resemblance to Barnes' earlier novels *Metroland* (1980) and *Talking It Over* (1991). As a kind of self-referential pastiche, *England, England* could be labelled, Pateman argues. Yet, he views the technique Barnes apparently employs, i.e. "the strategies of simulacra, inauthenticity, and fake in order to tell a story of simulacra, inauthenticity, and fake" (Pateman, 75) as not very sophisticated in its far too blatant ways of calling attention to itself.

The lack of control we can exert on reality makes us fear it, the French Intellectual says. Accordingly, it is only a logical consequence that controllable simulacra of that reality assure us in our yearning for power and dominance.

> [W]e must understand and confront our insecurity, our existential indecision, the profound atavistic fear we experience when we are face to face with the original. We have nowhere to hide when we are presented with an alternative reality to our own, a reality which appears more powerful and therefore threatens us. […] We must demand the replica since the reality, the truth, the authenticity of the replica is the one we can possess, colonise, reorder, […]. (EE, 54-55)

Sir Jack does not see himself capable of averting the loss of importance and seriousness of England, "dubiously termed 'the original' (EE, 54). Yet, the reproduction, the simulacra, provides him with unlimited power. It can be argued that the mighty father figure in the novel's first part with its ability of re-establishing metaphorical coherence by means of the jigsaw-puzzle serves as the anticipation of Sir Jack's patriarchal power. The analogy between the jigsaw as a symbolic replication of England and the theme park-replica draws attention to the fact that in both cases the father-figure, i.e. the epitome of human supremacy, is not apt to master reality itself. Only the reality of the

replica is governable. 'Original' reality, which of course is also implicitly questioned as a fictional(ised) construct, withdraws from his sphere of influence.

Pitman is growing old and hence the idea of one last great strike, one last assertion of power, increasingly manifests itself: the megalomaniac project of replicating the glory of England. "We are not talking theme-park. […] We are not talking heritage centre. We are not talking Disneyland. […] We shall offer far more […] We are offering the thing itself" (EE, 59). Yet, the Disneyesque atmosphere of England, England cannot be fully discarded. In a Baudrillardian conception Disneyland is not concerned with a deceivingly authentic reproduction of a supposed reality but with exceeding the limits of reality. In his analysis of America Baudrillard even argues that Disneyland is staged as overtly imaginative in order to cover the fact that the rest of American reality has already ceased to be real itself.

> All of [America's] values are exalted by the miniature […]. Embalmed and pacified. [Disneyland is:] digest of the American way of life, […] idealized transposition of a contradictory reality. Certainly. But this masks something else and this 'ideological' blanket functions as a cover for a simulation of the third order: Disneyland exists in order to hide that it is the 'real' country, all of 'real' America that is Disneyland (a bit like prisoners are there to hide that it is the social in its entirety, in its banal omnipresence, that is carceral). (Baudrillard, *Simulacra*, 12)

A straightforward application of this idea to England, England proves to be futile as the theme park does not function as a – however fake - self-confirmation of a 'real' England, but is meant to entirely replace it. 'Original' England has ceased to exist and thus cannot be compared to England, England. Thus, Pateman's accusation of the novel's oversimplification of complex theories becomes palpable. Simultaneously, however, it can be argued that Barnes takes the idea of 'repositioning myths for moderns times' so far as to pick out only fragments of Baudrillard's theory in order to instrumentalize them for his own textual purposes. In doing so, he once more underlines the

processes of construction on the level of content as well on the structural level.

Baudrillard is not the only one to analyse American reality from a euro-centric perspective. Eco's *Travels in Hyperreality* (1991), for instance, has also become widely known. For Eco, Disneyland embodies what he defines as "the Absolute Fake" (Eco, *Travels*). And he agrees with Baudrillard that the participation in the spectacle functions as a means to assure oneself of one's own reality. "[T]he customer finds himself participating in the fantasy because of his own authenticity as a consumer" (Eco, *Travels*). Moreover, Eco argues that "Disneyland tells us that technology can give us more reality than nature can […] and afterwards reality will always be inferior to it" (Eco, *Travels*). He thereby agrees with Baudrillard and also Boorstin's analysis of pseudo-events, which claims that fake reality tends to supersede reality because the former can be controlled, intensified and presented as unambiguous (cf. Boorstin, 36-40).

While some of Barnes' attempts to ironically appropriate specific Baudrillardian elements appear to be rather forced and while, according to Pateman, others even completely fail (cf. Pateman, 72-81), the hilarious parody of a general Baudrillardian perspective exhibits Barnes' virtuosity as a postmodern novelist. Baudrillard laments: "[i]t's as if art, like history, was recycling its own garbage and looking for redemption in its own detritus" (Baudrillard, *Objects*, 8). Pitman's entire project is a celebrated recycling of historical garbage and thus an ironic subversion of Baudrillard's complaints.

"Employing quotation, simulation, reappropriation, it seems that contemporary art is about to reappropriate all forms and works of the past, near or far […] in a more or less ludic or kitsch fashion" (Baudrillard, *Objects*, 7). While Baudrillard perceives the ludic aspect of postmodern art as hollow and uncreative, Barnes seems to act in line with mainstream postmodern theory as represented for instance by Linda Hutchean, and revels in the ludic potential of contemporary art. The two

perspectives will hardly be reconciled as Baudrillard argues: "Of course, all of this remaking and recycling claim to be ironic; but this form of irony is like a threadbare piece of cloth – a by-product of disillusion – a fossilized irony" (Baudrillard, *Objects*, 7). Barnes' novel, however, does not appear to be fossilized. On the contrary, the self-reflective irony employed indeed reveals the threads of a piece of cloth, but only to make visible how its different layers are interwoven to form an apparent unity in the first place.

3.2) PETER ACKROYD'S *CHATTERTON*

Born three years after Julian Barnes, i.e. in 1949, Ackroyd and the former belong to a generation of British writers who explicitly and implicitly process postmodern concerns in their literary works. Ackroyd's ideas on contemporary theory were first expressed when he was studying at Yale in the early 1970s. His *Notes for a new Culture* (1976), which he later called "a polemic" rather than an essay, is deeply grounded in French and American poststructural theory, its main theoretical influences being Derrida and Lacan. Even though Ackroyd has later relativised some of his more radical ideas articulated in the 70s, he nevertheless foregrounds that the basic tone of this essay would still correspond to his theoretical convictions today (cf. Finney, *Chatterton*).

His fascination with postmodern concerns such as the revaluation of historical knowledge, one of the underlying ideas in *Chatterton*, are prevalent in most of Ackroyd's literary works mediated via fictional (auto) biographies such as e.g. *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde* (1983) or via self-conscious reworkings of historical events such as for instance in his well-known text *Hawksmoor* (1985). Historiographic metafiction is one of the preferred genres the author is known to adopt as a means of artistic expression.

Like Julian Barnes and many other writers of the postmodern era, Peter Ackroyd is highly conscious of and reflexive on postmodern epistemological and aesthetic positions based on contemporary theory. Both novelists exhibit a deep awareness of the dialectics between postmodernism and orthodox views on history, reality, truth and originality.

However, while Barnes in his satirical novel *England, England* tends to focus on the sociocultural aspect of contemporary experience, Ackroyd opts for explicitly addressing the sphere of art itself. He thereby accentuates the extent to which art both forms and is formed by so-called reality. Whereas Barnes stresses artificiality in relation to the (re-)

creation of a nation's history on the shaky basis of collective memory correlating with contemporary consumer society, Ackroyd emphasises this constructedness of history by interlinking it with artistic practices. Thus, his main argument is that history and fiction share the same ontological characteristics, i.e. both are highly subjective and 'created'. Much like *England, England*, *Chatterton* shatters the enlightened assumption of history as "pure fact, independent of individual perception, ideology, or the process of selection necessitated simply by creating a written narrative" (Lee, 29).

The idea of writing history as a rather passive undertaking, which is moreover generally regarded as a direct and mimetic depiction of reality is contrasted with artistic production, generally perceived as active, creative and imaginative. Ackroyd reveals that this traditional distinction cannot be maintained, as both spheres – if at all one can distinguish one from the other – share more characteristics than there are to separate them.

Ackroyd explores this basic postmodern frame challenging so-called 'truths' in order to raise a number of other related questions. *Chatterton* is set in the artistic world of poets and painters and in this respect Ackroyd draws attention to one of the most pressing issues concerning art, i.e. the distinction between original and fake or copy.

Ackroyd here establishes the same line of argumentation as in his history versus fiction or art discourse. Conventional enlightened theory is based on the following dichotomy: history is real/true and thus contrary to art, which is invented. Within the sphere of art itself there is to be detected a similar structure. An original piece of art by a clearly identifiable artist is claimed to be truthful, authentic and valuable, whereas the copied, faked or forged piece of art only simulates originality, which means that it is judged to be of a secondary and indirect nature.

Like history the originality of a work of art is regarded as organic, while fiction or a faked work of art is constructed. In this respect Edward

Young comments: "[a]n original may be said to be of a vegetable nature; it rises spontaneously from the vital root of genius; it grows, it is not made" (Young qtd. in Höfele, *Originalität,* 77). Andreas Höfele furthermore contrasts the perceived authority of the original in relation to the fake/forgery and thus explains:

> Fälschungen ‚wachsen' nicht, sie werden gemacht. Origin, origo, Ursprung – diese Wörter bestimmen die Genese des Kunstwerks als natürlichen Prozeß, der in der organischen, der gewachsenen Einheit, des fertigen Textes resultiert. Im Gegensatz dazu bezeichnen die englischen Wörter forgery und fabrication menschliche Tätigkeiten. (Höfele, *Originalität*, 77)

Thus, in *Chatterton,* the ontological uncertainty regarding the nature of art and consequently also the nature of reality, provides the basic battleground on which to negotiate competing assumptions prevalent in 20th century cultural and literary theory.

Short-listed for the 1987 Booker Prize, Peter Ackroyd's celebrated fourth novel *Chatterton* is placed in the world of art, more precisely the world of poets and painters. Ackroyd employs three different yet interrelated storylines set in different historical periods, all of which are revolving around the historical figure of Thomas Chatterton. Chatterton, a young 18th century poet, became (in-)famous for his forging of medieval poems ascribed to a medieval monk named Thomas Rowley, whose entire existence was invented by Chatterton himself.

Ackroyd locates his first narrative strand in the late 18th century, i.e. Chatterton's own lifetime and depicts both his short life and death. Official historical records claim the young poet to have committed suicide at the age of only 17 due to his lack of success on the literary market with works published under his own name.

The second narrative sets its focus on the Victorian period. The painter Henry Wallis is fascinated with the idea of portraying the young Chatterton on his deathbed. In order to establish the greatest realism possible he asks the poet George Meredith, another historical figure, to model the dying Chatterton. Wallis' portrait *The Death of Thomas*

Chatterton (1856) is said to be the only one of the late poet and turns out to be one of the sources of the ongoing fascination with the figure of Chatterton.

The third storyline is set in the late 20th century and concentrates on yet another but entirely fictional writer, the unsuccessful poet Charles Wychwood, who, inspired by a different portrait of Chatterton showing him as a middle-aged man and therefore contradicting official records, which highlight Chatterton's early death, sets out to find out the truth about the mysterious forger Thomas Chatterton.

The central link holding the three scenic approaches together is provided by the figure of Chatterton, who can be taken as symbolic of literary and artistic concerns in general. By choosing this controversial historical person as the centre of his historiographic metafictional novel, Ackroyd sets the scene for a highly self-reflexive enquiry into the interrelated spheres of art, reality, originality and history.

3.2.1) NARRATING (TRANS)HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE

Introduced by a number of paratextual passages Peter Ackroyd's text first of all is preceded by an official historical record of Chatterton's life. Like an encyclopaedic entry these first lines seem to comprise the most important details about his short life and his artistic work, part of which made him (in)famous as the great forger of the medieval Rowley poems (cf. Ch[2], 1).

Presented as a linear and coherent version of history this introductory entry is followed and contrasted by four different fragments from the three different storylines set in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. While the first three fragments are in chronological order and correspond to the respective historical setting, by the end of the fourth fragment the novel's challenging of traditional logics of space and time becomes

[2] References regarding *Chatterton* will be abbreviated as Ch in the following chapters.

obvious, as here the 18th century poet Chatterton interacts with 20th century Charles Wychwood.

The paratextual strategy employed in the beginning highlights the author's double aim, as it stresses Ackroyd's consciousness of balancing structural against content elements. On the one hand, he offers a concise anticipation of the novel's content in terms of thematising its most pressing concerns, i.e. art, authorship, history, authenticity and the questioning of a linear conception of historical development (cf. Ch, 2-3). On the other hand, Ackroyd simultaneously forecloses his narrative technique, which heavily relies on repetition, variation and pastiche. It can be argued that these first paratextual fragments form a mise en abyme of the text proper with all its variations on both content and structural level. In short, Ackroyd fastidiously executes what he allows to be Chatterton's view of originality but at the same time he also offers a postmodern contribution to the highly polemic issue of artistic originality: "Chatterton knew that original genius consists in forming new and happy combinations, rather than in searching after thoughts and ideas which had never occurred before" (Ch, 58).

Chatterton inspires the painter Wallis as well as the poets Meredith and Wychwood in their work, much like a predecessor inspires the generations to follow. This conventional approach, based on a linear and causal understanding of time is expanded and simultaneously subverted by Ackroyd, as he allows his novel to undermine conventional conceptions of historical experience by transgressing temporal constraints. In this respect Susana Onega speaks of

> a cyclical space-time continuum that constantly feeds on itself and simultaneously moves both forward and backward, so that the protagonists of each story, the visionary poets Thomas Chatterton, George Meredith, and Charles Wychwood, can easily cross their respective historical boundaries and interact with each other. (Onega, *Metafiction*, 60)

While Susana Onega comprehends time in *Chatterton* as cyclical, Brian Finney underlines Ackroyd's understanding of time as "essentially

atemporal", as "past and present interact in the moment" (Finney, *Chatterton*). However, a more accurate way of describing Ackroyd's use of temporal development throughout the novel would be a transhistorical conception of time in terms of a symbiosis of Onega and Finney, which allows for both, a meandering between different times without rejecting historical experience as such and a temporal experience not limited to a circular matrix.

It has to be noticed, however, that the 18th century's Chatterton is more likely to transcend his historical period in order to interact with his literary companions in later periods than Wychwood or Meredith are able to retrocede in history. Chatterton supports his fellow poets in moments of crisis, such as during Charles' malady foreshadowing his actual death (cf. Ch, 47, 78, 152) or when Meredith considers suicide after having acknowledged the failure of his marriage (cf. Ch, 70). It appears that the timeless essence of art impersonated by Chatterton is most seizable in contemplation of death. The motif of death, and more precisely the motif of the death of the artist is a recurrent one in *Chatterton.* It is not by chance that Ackroyd here echoes Roland Barthes' *The Death of the Author*. Similar to Barthes Ackroyd seems to argue that the artist and especially the author is not immortalised by his works, but by the traces his works leave in the works of other artists, i.e. his influence is of a purely intertextual nature.

Death, art and the immortalisation of the artist become topical as Chatterton lives on through his fame of being a great forger as well as through being represented by Meredith in Wallis' portrait. Ackroyd makes a point of the traces left by Chatterton when he describes Wallis at work: "On the following morning he began. […] But as he watched that absolute white drying slowly on the canvas he could already see 'Chatterton' as a final union of light and shadow" (Ch, 164).

Traces of Meredith live on in the portrait and traces of Charles can be found in Philip's discovery of his own artistic creativity. The author

lives on, though not directly in his texts but indirectly as part of an intertextual system.

Meredith and Charles access Chatterton's world first of all by so-called historical knowledge, in the case of the former provided by Wallis' project and in the case of the latter provided by the documents which Charles takes to be originally composed by Chatterton. Apart from this access, which is linked to the sphere of reason, logic and temporal causality, both poets furthermore get into contact with Chatterton in the irrational world of dreams or daydreams. Meredith mentions:

> 'Did I tell you, Henry, that I dreamed of Chatterton the other night? I was passing him on some old stairs. What does that signify?' 'I believe stairs are an emblem. Was that your word? Stairs are an emblem of time'. (Ch, 139)

Charles is able to transcend time and to enter the world of Chatterton when his son Edward and he are taking in Wallis' picture of Chatterton in the Tate Gallery for the first time. In a daydream-like manner Charles here anticipates his own death and perceives himself as the corpse in Chatterton's attic room (cf. Ch, 132).

If Meredith, Wallis and Charles believe to gain access to the past via so-called historical knowledge, this allegedly objective sphere of historical knowledge is reduced to absurdity. Wallis, aiming at the greatest realism possible, constructs a pseudo-realist setting for his portrait with Meredith acting as the representation of the dead Chatterton. Furthermore, Charles, on investigating into the death of Chatterton, falls prey to faked historical documents on his part.

Ackroyd's criticism of enlightened culture follows the argument that conventional historical theory grants historical research unchallenged authority as regards the representation of the past. Ackroyd hence deconstructs this dogma by presenting alternative but equally valid and most importantly fragmented versions of the historical events in question. According to official records Chatterton committed suicide due to his lack of literary success. Ackroyd, however, offers two further

alternatives. One possible version describes Chatterton as a person who did not only fake poetry, but furthermore even faked his own death in order to be able to continue his practices without being restrained by the hypocritical corset of society (cf. Ch, 81-92). The other alternative Ackroyd offers is Chatterton's accidental death caused by an overdose of arsenic meant to cure a venereal disease (cf. Ch, 191-234). All three versions appear equally credible, yet they contradict each other. Ackroyd hereby once more draws attention to the fact that the return to past events, which seem more or less easily retrievable, is constructed and its truth claim highly questionable, while the move forward in history, as Chatterton is able to do in a sphere transcending rationality, is presented as a possibility of interaction between past and present worth considering.

> The past as referent has been effaced, time has been textualized, leaving only representation, texts, pseudo-events, images without originals: a spatial rather than a temporal order of simulacra. (Bennett qtd. in Janik, 160)

That time can be imagined in a spatial conception rather than a temporal is a polemical concern of 20th century theory. While 'end of history' theorists like Baudrillard or Jameson have mourned this move away from a linear temporal development, defenders of postmodernism like Hutcheon underline its emancipatory potential as regards its capacity for self-reflexive ironic and parodic analysis. It is not the rejection of history or the empty celebration of a vacuum as Jameson claims, but the subversion and calling into question as Hutcheon argues (cf. Hutcheon, *Politics)*.

Apart from the physical aspect of transhistorical experience Ackroyd repeatedly employs repetition and déjà-vu as structural devices for blurring the boundaries between different historical periods. Charles sits at a fountain (cf. Ch, 46) just as Meredith is described to sit next to a fountain in historical record found by the librarian Philip (cf. Ch, 60). Meredith is thinking of suicide (cf. Ch, 60) just as Chatterton is claimed

to have committed suicide (cf. Ch, 196). Chatterton meets a boy living in ruins, who later on will be known as Tom (cf. Ch, 208-210). It appears to be the same boy painted in a portrait by the late Seymour (cf. Ch, 35) etc. Many events in the lives of the artists seem to echo events from different historical periods and thus Ackroyd creates a tight link as regards transhistorical experience. These moments of shared experience seem to diminish the dominance of historical records and historical coherence. It is Ackroyd's employment of repetition and déjà-vu that deconstructs a teleological understanding of history and a linear development of time.

Hence, it is not by chance that the three writers take on the same physical position when it comes to death and the representation of death. Even when Charles plays a corpse, he unconsciously adopts the position Wallis has chosen for his portrait of Chatterton. "[Vivien] managed to smile as Charles feigned death and fell across the sofa, with one arm trailing on the carpet" (Ch, 15). It is the same position he will assume on his actual deathbed in hospital. "His right arm fell away and his hand trailed upon the ground" (Ch, 169).

Ironically, the position Charles assumes most probably is not Chatterton's own position when dying but it is influenced by Wallis' highly romanticised version in the portrait. "[Meredith] stepped back quickly when he saw Wallis' body lying on a bed, one arm trailing down upon the floor. But the body spoke: 'Don't be alarmed, George. I'm rehearsing your part'" (Ch, 136). On painting the portrait of Chatterton's death some decades after the poet's real death, the Victorian painter aims at a direct mimetic representation of the historical event based on official records. Ackroyd here stresses the paradox of mimesis. "'So the greatest realism is also the greatest fakery?'" (Ch, 139). Wallis seeks to establish a setting which corresponds to Chatterton's own circumstances as closely as possible. He has Chatterton modelled by another poet and has his model Meredith wear 18th century clothes. He arranges all the props as they – in his own imagination inspired by official historical records –

might have looked like in Chatterton's attic. Wallis even has Meredith and his wife Mary visit Chatterton's attic room in order to familiarise themselves with the originality of the setting.

> 'You cannot beat the reality, Mrs. Meredith. This is Chatterton's room, precisely as it was…' 'Is everything the same?' Mary surveyed it, steadily taking in her husband as she looked around as if he, too were part of the old furniture. 'Yes, it is! And, you see, if I can depict the room now I will have fixed it forever. Even the poor plant, of all things the frailest, that too will survive.' (Ch, 142)

Ackroyd lets Wallis comment on the originality of the plant on purpose, as the latter thereby explicitly contradicts himself because the "small plant" (Ch, 137) can be identified as one of the current resident's few belongings in the attic room. History is not directly mirrored but adapted and appropriated according to Wallis' needs. Wallis, as he has no direct access to Chatterton other than via Catcott's historical records, is well aware of the fact that he is rearranging things but he neglects the effects of these rearrangements, while Meredith is highly conscious of his inability to mirror the world as it is, as he, as a poet, perceives himself to be caught in the framework of language. Wallis insists: "'After all, I can only paint what I see'. […]" (Ch, 133). But Meredith counters: "'And what do you see? The real? The ideal? How do you know the difference'" (Ch, 133)? In the following dialogue between Wallis and Meredith Ackroyd thus explicitly comments on the artist's role as creator, not just recreator of the world.

> 'It is just that everything I do becomes an experiment – I really don't understand why and, please God, I never shall – and until it is completed I never know whether it will be worth a farthing.'
> 'But how can you experiment with what is real? Surely you only have to depict it.'
> 'As you do? But what about your phial of poison, which miraculously changed its position?'
> 'But the phial was a real object. *That* did not change.' […]
> 'I am in the same boat. […] I said that the words were real, Henry, I did not say that what they depicted was real. Our dear dead poet created the Monk Rowley out of thin air, and yet he has more life in

> him than any medieval priest who actually existed. The invention is always more real'. (Ch, 157)

It can be argued that Ackroyd makes the figure of the Victorian painter Wallis an implicit personification of the role of the enlightened historian, which increasingly is confronted with postmodern criticism. Superficially, Wallis only recreates what he believes to be the truthful past. Thereby, however, he is far more engaged in creative activities than he is willing to admit or even conscious of. Ackroyd here again seems to comment on the impossibility of a mimetic access to reality, whether through art or through history. Historical research usually claims to gain direct and objective access to past events. Its only basis, however, are textual traces of history, which are being amalgamated – in a creative process – into a single, coherent and meaningful narrative. The depiction of a past reality is impossible as much as the depiction of a present reality is impossible. "'The poet does not merely recreate or describe the world. He actually creates it. And this is why he is feared'" (Ch, 157). Neither does the historian merely describe or depict the world.

Ackroyd makes visible how the creation or adaptation of a past reality is transformed into reality itself. Thus, in Ackroyd's line of argumentation, which rejects the orthodoxies of a causal and transparent historical development, it is only a logical consequence that Chatterton's own death position resembles the one created by Wallis approximately 70 years later. "He stretched out upon the bed, lying with his arm across his forehead" (Ch, 224).

Though in this version of the poet's death, which is presented by Ackroyd as competing with other equally credible or dismissible possibilities, Chatterton does not commit suicide. Rather, his death is caused by an accidentally overdosed medicine against a venereal disease. The picturesque death position imagined by Wallis, the author suggests, might as well have been preceded by a death in agony.

It is one of the novel's main virtues that it effortlessly transcends the boundaries of historical time in order to make artistic and historical

experience palpable. Like mirrors set in parallel the text displays its ludic elements by reproducing concerns related to art in the various periods thereby spinning a tight net of inter- and intratexutal references. Hence it does not come as a surprise that the 20th century storyline interlinks with the 18th and 19th centuries as Harriet Scrope's friend Sarah Tilt is working on a project on the representation of death in English painting and thus has analysed Wallis' painting *The Death of Chatterton*. "'And so the dead can be exalted by others feigning death?' 'The whole point of death is that it can be made beautiful. And the real thing is never pretty. Think of Chatterton – '" (Ch, 34).

Ackroyd offers competing versions of Chatterton's possible life and death, neither of which can be sustained as ultimate truth. He thus explicitly interweaves postmodern theoretical positions into his novel without being shy of parodying his own theoretical ideas, which he argued in *Notes for a New Culture*:

> 'Can we imagine reality?' [Charles] settled back again on the sofa, quite at ease with the sort of theoretical discussion he had once had at university; in fact, his understanding of such matters had not significantly advanced since that time. 'Oh yes', he said, 'it's a question of language. Realism is just as artificial as surrealism, after all'. He remembered these phrases perfectly. The real world is just a succession of interpretations. Everything which is written down immediately becomes a kind of fiction. (Ch, 41)

The textuality of reality is one of the concerns of postmodern theory. The inaccessibility of reality through language is characterised by a paradox. Neither can we put our experience of reality in words, nor can we experience reality without the frame of language. "'It can only be experienced. It cannot be spoken of'. […] 'And yet the words for it still haunt us, pluck at us, fret us'"(Ch, 162).

Artistic experience is contrasted with historical knowledge and Ackroyd's focus on transhistorical experience suggests his siding with experience as the medium for transmitting authenticity. Artistic experience can be communicated and lived across centuries, whereas historical knowledge claiming its own coherence, objectiveness and

traceability, can only remain fragmented, subjected and polyphone. It cannot offer direct access to reality.

> Just as contemporaries of Chatterton found his supposedly medieval poems more historically authentic than some actual medieval verse, so Mary Meredith finds her husband less real than either Wallis's representation of him on paper or his own poetic writing. The past can best be recaptured by the imaginative act of the artist, not the painstaking researches of the historical scholar. (Finney, *Chatterton*)

Interestingly, the conventionally sharp distinction between the fields of art and history is undermined by Ackroyd's focus on the relativity of originality. It is a fake portrait of Chatterton's supposedly real death, which becomes so convincing that it gains apparent authenticity. Analogously, supposedly objective historical knowledge becomes so fragmented that it can no longer be put together to a single coherent narrative as Charles notices that various biographies – a literary genre closely connected to history's universal truth claim – on Chatterton offer quite different information. "In any case he noticed that each biography described quite a different poet: even the simplest observation by one was contradicted by the other, so that nothing seemed certain"(Ch, 127).

It is Charles' ability to deal with these fragments that render him a truly postmodern character. "At first Charles had been annoyed by these discrepancies but then he was exhilarated by them: for it meant that anything became possible. If there were no truths, everything was true" (Ch, 127).

Not only does Ackroyd cast doubt on the possibility of retrieving a unified and valid version of history in a wider sense, but also on the possibility of retrieving one's own history. Harriet Scrope ponders on fragments of what are supposed to become her memoirs. Apart from the fact that she does not even intend to write them herself – instead she asks her secretary "to put them together" (Ch, 27) – Harriet is well aware of the fact that the notes from her own past do not correspond to factual truth. "'Why don't you just link dear Tom with those bits about Fitzrovia? […] There must be a connection, you know. I can't think of everything'" (Ch, 27). When Mary out of moral reservations refuses to do as

demanded, Harriet reacts laconically. "'I can't write it for you. I can't make it up'. 'But didn't you know? Everything is made up'" (Ch, 28).

Displayed against each other Ackroyd's narrative strands convey the general impression of narrative coherence. This coherence, however, can only bear up against a superficial analysis. It is mediated via a very subtle postmodern use of authorial voice and narrative structure. Ackroyd therewith foregrounds the fictional processes at work both in historical documentation as well as in artistic production. "[T]he real world is just a succession of interpretations. Everything which is written down immediately becomes a kind of fiction" (Ch, 40).

Violeta Delgado stresses the ambivalence of Ackroyd's use of the narrative voice. On the one hand, the author opts for a traditional heterodiegetic, omniscient and ubiquitous 3rd person narrator indebted to realist tradition, whose authority, on the other hand, is undercut by the use of multiple competing storylines. The effect created by the narrative mode of realism "is that of immediacy and unmediated direct access to a world that exists as an objective entity and that furthermore exists independently from its representation" (Delgado, 350). However, by contradicting itself, it sets itself apart from the traditionally objective and intersubjective perspective conveying a coherent meaning based on the principle of causality (cf. Delgado, 350). Rather, Ackroyd presents his narrative voice as unconscious of its own contradictory strategy. It appears to be a narrative voice that is tricked and furthermore also trapped down by its own content. For Delgado Ackroyd here reveals a

> Barthean conception of the modern author as 'scriptor', who refuses to impose a single unified meaning on the text – and thus, sacrifices himself -, in favour of the text itself, and of the preceding texts it includes, without sacrificing storytelling. (Delgado, 348)

Similarly Onega stresses that Ackroyd's works like those of other historiographic metafictionists seems to be inhabited by what Hutcheon termed "a longing for the traditional relish in storytelling while simultaneously underlining the fact that this return is problematic"

(Hutcheon, *Poetics, 124-125*). While conventional realist fiction relies on the implied willingness of the reader to fully accept the narrative construction without challenging its validity in terms of its ability to mirror reality as precisely as possible, metafictional art draws attention to its own status of being constructed (cf. Onega, *Metafiction*, 1-2). "Art that conceals art, fiction that covers its own fictionality, is the basic aesthetic principle of mimetic realism" (Delgado, 349).

Mimetic realism as the basis for both art and history is a mode of narration Ackroyd implicitly presents as highly controversial as "direct or phenomenal reference to the world means [paradoxically] the production of a fiction" (Caruth qtd. in Clingham, 35). By undermining the authority of his own narrative voice in terms of introducing multiple storylines, Ackroyd simultaneously undermines the generally unchallenged role of the historian as the mediator of past events. Ackroyd, like other "novelists of history understand[s] and capitalize[s] on the fact that all historical accounts employ the same narrative strategies as novels […]" (Finney, *English fiction*, 25). He subverts the principle of mimesis which, among other criteria, relies on the principle of detailed world description by letting it turn against itself. Meticulously Ackroyd manages to describe the respective worlds of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. Only by offering contradictory, unexplained or irrational fragmentary elements, does he cast doubt on the validity of mimetic narratives. Greg Clingham comments, "Ackroyd's novel conceptualizes the difference between then and now – repeats and defers the closure of history as a metaphysical system – by holding up a mirror to that trace and allowing us to see it more fully in operation" (Clingham, 40). It is not so much the rejection of traditional strategies of storytelling that Ackroyd highlights, but rather their subversion, the making use of strategies and thereby foregrounding their problematic aspects.

Already on the structural level does Ackroyd thereby introduce the idea of the fake. The fake becomes apparent in terms of a faked history narrated by an only apparently authentic and objective narrative voice.

The rejection or at least the calling in question of principles like originality and fake is exemplified on the structural as well as on the content level, as Ackroyd does not highlight a single dominant and valid history but a number of equally possible and highly subjective histories.

> Ackroyd is evidently concerned to show from the start of his book that we all appropriate the past for our own purposes and in our own ways. There is no such thing as an objective past, let alone a recoverable figure of Chatterton. (Finney, *Chatterton*)

In his subtle use of language Ackroyd focuses on the assumption that our access to reality is shaped by our use of language. As Zwierlein summarises, there is no access to reality but through language. And language transforms our experience of reality. "[J]ede außersprachliche Wirklichkeit entzieht sich dem menschlichen Zugriff" (Zwierlein, 251). On the structural level of *Chatterton* the postmodern conception of the fake is furthermore strengthened by a pastiche use of language. It is this narrative strategy that shapes our perception of the different historical periods presented in the novel in the first place.

3.2.2) Fakes, Forgeries and Palimpsests – On Artistic Authenticity

In *Chatterton* each narrative stratum is composed in a pastiche style reflecting the use of language of the respective period. Pastiche, however, is not only a structural device Ackroyd makes use of but also a relevant concern on the content level as Ackroyd not only grants his protagonist, the forger-poet Chatterton, a late 18th century style but also lets him explain how it is possible to make pastiche work, i.e. to speak in a language of a different period and/or person. The successful use of pastiche is Chatterton's source of fame.

> Here were such phrases as 'sendes owte his greetings', 'ye have gyvyn me a grete charge' […] and it seemed even then that the

> Dead were speaking to me, face to face; and when I wrote out their words, copying the very spelling of the Originals, it was as if I had become one of those Dead and could speak with them also. […] I found that I could continue in my own right; there was a pritty little Sentence, *viz* 'And so they toke him by every parte of the body', to which I then added, 'and bare hym into a chambir and leyde him a rych bedde'. The very words had been called forth from me, with as much Ease as if I were writing in the Language of my own age. (Ch, 85)

Chatterton describes how he invented Thomas Rowley and how the late medieval speech patterns came naturally to him. Thereby Chatterton implicitly and explicitly lays bare Ackroyd's own procedures when composing a novel. In a similar way as Chatterton creates Rowley, Ackroyd creates Chatterton thereby mimicking 18th century speech patterns, which he regards as a natural process:

> [T]he speech we use today contains or conceals previous levels of speech, from the most recent to the most ancient. They are as it were implicit in modern speech, modern writing, and it only takes a little effort to peel back the layers. (Ackroyd qtd. in McGrath, 46)

Form and content of the novel are interwoven in terms of presenting a protagonist who explicitly comments on structural devices Ackroyd employs himself. Having the protagonist Chatterton explain the use of pastiche can be identified as forming part of the level of content, while detecting the same element of pastiche as a means of Ackroyd's own artistic expression points towards the novel's structural level. Ackroyd hereby seems to argue for the transhistoricality of literary experience. His 18th century poet employs the same literary techniques as the postmodern author himself and thereby once more underlines Ackroyd's understanding of literary originality as "forming new and happy combinations" (Ch, 58).

Through his perfection in creating a pastiche of medieval language Chatterton is able to bring into existence an entire poet. "[C]ontemporaries of Chatterton found his supposedly medieval poems more historically authentic than some actual medieval verse" (Finney,

Chatterton). From the 18th century onwards, however, the literary system clearly differentiates between good original art and bad faked art. The value of a text is judged by its supposed authenticity. Oscar Wilde once mentioned, thereby underlining Ackroyd's view on the hypocritical cult of the original in the artistic world, that "to censure an artist for a forgery, was to confuse an ethical with an aesthetic problem" (Wilde, 1150).

A forgery is hardly ever subject to aesthetic criticism for its own sake as is the supposed original. First of all it is perceived as an artistic failure on account of an underlying moral judgement. In a second step, an aesthetic dimension only becomes relevant in terms of its resemblance to its original. Is it a good imitation or a bad one? Is its supposed inauthenticity easy or difficult to make out (cf. Höfele, *Originalität*, 75-76)? Höfele lists two common basic criteria when it comes to discerning the originality of a work of art. The first criterion relates to the independence or self-containment of the original, as it should directly reflect the author's individuality. The second criterion highlighted refers to the priority of the original. "[D]as Original ist immer ein Erstes, ein noch nie Dagewesenes" (Höfele, *Originalität*, 77). The conventional but for a postmodern understanding rather artificial separation between the original and the fake is reduced to absurdity with the acknowledgement of intertextual indebtedness applicable to each work of art.

Harriet Scrope assures herself about her tendency to plagiarise a long forgotten Victorian author: "In any case novelists do not work in a vacuum. We use many stories. But it's not where they come from, it's what we do with them" (Ch, 104). The artist does not exist in an empty space but is influenced and inspired by numerous other artists, their artistic products and practices.

> Dass ein Text Fälschung und Original gleichzeitig sein kann, verliert den Anschein des Widersinnigen, wenn man bedenkt, dass selbst die auffälligsten 'originalen' Werke stets durch ein Netz von Abhängigkeiten an bereits existierende Modelle und Normen gebunden sind. (Höfele, *Originalität*, 78)

Clingham emphasises that the historical figure of Thomas Chatterton used to be of rather marginal literary interest. His relevance for contemporary literary criticism and its fascination with historiography results from his work being of a forged nature. Furthermore, Clingham underlines the relativity of artistic originality by pointing out that up to the 18th century the reception of literary creativity worked along different lines compared to conventional contemporary criticism. Only with The Copyright Act of 1709 and its introduction of the idea of intellectual property the modern conception of the author as the creator and proprietor of ideas and compositions which had not ever existed before slowly evolved (cf. Clingham, 38).

> While Ben Jonson could compliment Shakespeare unequivocally for his capacity to forge, meaning his poetic creativity, by the 1760s forgery of the kind practised by Horace Walpole in The Castle of Otranto, James Macpherson in The Works of Ossian, and Thomas Chatterton in the Rowley poems and various other texts, was seen as conspiracy to undermine the centres of institutional authority. (Clingham, 36)

Postmodern criticism in this sense shares a number of features with the pre-18th century understanding of literary originality and with great subtlety Ackroyd foregrounds the hypocrisy practiced in the system of art. His three different narrative strands echo the same literary concerns. Though clearly separable and distinctive from each other on the surface, they negotiate or meditate on what appears to be a transcendental canon of artistic concerns.

3.2.2.1) Intertextuality – Adaptation and Appropriation

If "every text is the absorption and transformation of other texts" (Kristeva, 146), then Ackroyd's Chatterton is a true intertextualist, as he

"knew that original genius consists in forming new and happy combinations" (Ch, 58). Harriet "believed that plots themselves were of little consequence", and she does not hesitate to "take this one and use it as a plain, admittedly inferior, vessel for her own style" (Ch, 102). Similarly Philip excuses Harriet's borrowings, as he "believed that there was only a limited number of plots in the world (reality was finite, after all) and no doubt it was inevitable that they would be reproduced in a variety of contexts" (Ch, 70). Yet these perceptions are stigmatised in the public sphere of the literary system both in the 18th century and in the 20th century. Harriet is convinced that "if she revealed what even to herself she called her 'secret', there would be an outcry against her, a cleansing and a purification which, she was sure, would lead to her death…" (Ch, 29). Ackroyd's 18th century poet is presented as a proto-postmodernist. While he 'knows' of the interdependence of different texts, Harriet and Philip 'believe' that intertextuality was inevitable.

The balance between structure and content becomes once more apparent when looking at Ackroyd's method of employing historical figures and borrowing existing plots and also quotes, which he interweaves into new creations. In discussing Eliot's *The Waste Land* In *Notes for a New Culture* he anticipates this technique and also conviction:

> [I]n their combination these words cease to be a collection of sources…they have become a new thing. It is not that they possess a meaning which is the sum of their separate parts, not that they embody the poet's own voice within a tradition of voices. The words have acquired their own density and their forces come from the differences of diction which, although staying in evidence, are mediated by the life of the whole. The source of this life is language itself. (Ackroyd, *Notes*, 52)

Repeatedly Ackroyd's close examination of Eliot's work becomes palpable in *Chatterton.* Other implicitly present authors Ackroyd has

worked on are Wilde and Dickens[3]. Not only does Ackryod refer to Eliot in his theoretical essay, but Eliot, also confronted with doubts about the originality of some of his literary work, is also repeatedly alluded to in *Chatterton*. When Chatterton explains his technique of simulating medieval language he points out:

> "[…] I decided to shore up these ancient fragments with my own Genius; thus the Living and the Dead were to be reunited. […] I reproduc'd the Past and filled it with so much detail that it was as if I were observing it in front of me: so the Language of the ancient Dayes awoke the Reality itself, tho' I knew that it was I who composed these Histories, I knew also that they were true ones. (Ch, 85)

At first sight Chatterton's lines seem to echo Eliot's *The Waste Land*: "These fragments I have shored against my ruins" (Eliot, 75, line 430), in a second step, though, they bring to mind that Eliot himself might not be the original genius behind this sentence. By interlinking Chatterton and Eliot, Ackroyd subverts the conventional conception of literary originality as he consciously casts doubt on the origin of the phrase. He thereby stresses the assumption that it is basically of no importance at all, who created it. The important aspect is, that it is used to form part of something new but equally valid. According to Finney Ackroyd here interlinks the Romantic conception of the artistic genius with the modernist understanding of the "self in ruins" (cf, Finney, *Chatterton*). He thereby merges different historical understandings of the literary subject and literary experience into a transhistorical allembracing experience.

On a different level, however, this passage turns out to be even more relevant as it comments on the technique of pastiche Ackroyd makes use of. Like mirrors set in parallel it becomes obvious that Ackroyd reflects his structural techniques on the content level. Structurally speaking it is Ackroyd who makes use of the style and

[3] Ackroyd has published a biography on T.S.Eliot *T.S. Eliot – A Life* in 1984, two books on Charles Dickens *Dickens' London – An imaginative Vision* in 1987 and *Dickens* in 1990 and the fictional autobiography of Oscar Wilde *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde* in 1983.

speech patterns of 18th century literary language in order to create a credible narrative figure of Chatterton. Chatterton on his part made use of pastiche in order to create the language of the past. Consequently, content and structure are interlinked, if not blurred, but nevertheless well balanced.

Intertextual references in Chatterton are uncountable. Ackroyd himself gives further insight into his fascination with phrases already uproduced by other writers:

> I realize now in retrospect that I tended to take lines of various writers and string them together. I wrote a play at Yale, which now I can't find, in which I go about 60 different playwrights. I used a different line of each poet and structured a play out of that. So I presume my interest in lifting or adopting various styles, various traces, various languages, is part of my imaginary trend, and I suppose the use of historical fact as well as other people's writings is just an aspect of this magpie-like quality. (Ackroyd qtd. in Onega, *Interview,* 213)

The ludic aspect of appropriating different quotations becomes especially palpable when Ackroyd employs parodic strategies to make visible the intertextual net all texts rely on. Harriet Scrope's continuous but nevertheless unconscious misquotings from "cutting boughs" where Marlowe spoke of branches (cf. Ch, 3) up to "[l]et them eat cake" are as hilarious as Andrew Flint's almost neurotic habit of expressing himself via classical authors. The apex of parodic playfulness is reached when both interact for instance at Charles' funeral:

> 'Sunt lacrimae rerum, don't you think? Mentem mortalia tangunt?'
> 'Does that mean, *they are dropping like flies?'* She adopted a solemn voice for this phrase. 'Well, they are.'
> 'Exeunt omnes – ' he began to say.
> 'In vino veritas.' (Ch, 177)

But also Chatterton's adaptation of Shakespeare does not lack a hint of irony: "I was a willing Student but, at first, there was more madness than method in my labours" (Ch, 86).

> [I]ntertextuality replaces the challenged author-text relationship with one between reader and text, one that situates the locus of textual meaning within the history of discourse itself. A literary work can actually no longer be considered original […] It is only part of prior discourses that any text derives meaning and significance. (Hutcheon, *Politics*, 126)

Chatterton presents the idea of artistic dialogue between centuries, between different texts but also between different authors. Here Ackroyd's way of dealing with intertextuality can be interpreted as slightly different from Kristeva's more radical rejection of the author. Nevertheless, the notion of "textual productivity" (Hutcheon, *Politics*, 126) superseding the notion of 'authorial productivity' also becomes prevalent in Ackroyd's novel. The author, in this case Chatterton, is not immortalised directly through his works but through traces of his texts in other texts. In this sense it can be argued that in Ackroyd's text the figure of the transcendental author becomes symbolic of the literary trace in general. The author is not rejected in *Chatterton* but transformed from an original creator into a collagist of already existing texts.

> Irony makes these intertextual references into something more than simply academic play and some infinite regress into textuality: what is called to our attention is the entire representational process – in a wide range of forms and modes of production – and the impossibility of finding any totalizing model to resolve the resulting postmodern contradictions. (Hutcheon, *Politics*, 95)

The portrait of a middle aged Chatterton Charles discovers at Leno Antiques is a metaphor for the net of intertextual references in the novel. Like in a palimpsest past and present are interlinked, if not merged. Hence, the Chatterton portrayed on the painting is not a single face but made up of numerous others. Just as Chatterton was influenced by other writers, he will influence both Meredith and Charles. When Meredith looks at the picture it resembles himself, when Edward looks at the painting it seems to mirror his father Charles. But still there are Chatterton's features shimmering through. The becoming similar of the

three poets from the different periods is used as a metaphor for the transcendence of their shared literary experience.

> 'This face is familiar, Mrs Meredith', he said. 'Is it a poet, I wonder?' With trembling hands he held it up against the light, which streamed in from the doorway, and for a moment Mary saw Meredith's own face depicted there – lined and furrowed in a desolate middle age. (Ch, 174)

The portrait's mysterious aura results from its structural complexity: "It's the paint. There are so many different layers" (Ch, 205). It is not just one face but many and can therefore be labelled as "transhistorical palimpsest" (Onega, *Metafiction*, 72). Ironically, it is the forger Stewart Merk who is charged with the task of judging the portrait's originality. On trying to peel back the layers in order to get through to the original painting, he fails as the layers have merged into each other. Any attempt to separate them in order to retrieve the portrait's original layer is bound to fail.

> The face itself seemed to have acquired the characteristics of three or four different images […] He had already realised that it would be necessary to strip the paint altogether and, using the outline on the canvas, begin all over again. But he was still trying to determine which painter of the period he would use as his model: as Seymour had known, Stewart Merk was a fine and subtle painter but one who was preoccupied with technique. For him the pleasure of painting rested in the formal execution and not in imaginative exploration, in mimesis rather than invention. And now he was saying to Cumberland, 'I can restore the finished outlines, but I can't revive the lost colours. I'll have to use fresh pigments. […] Don't worry. I can darken the paint with coffee and dirt. And then pop the canvas into the oven.
> 'The oven?'
> 'Just for the cracks, yes? And then I finish them off with a needle. It will be the best fake you ever saw. Better than this one, anyway.' (Ch, 205)

As Merk is not able to retrieve the separate layers, he contemplates faking the original layer. It is impossible and not even desirable to peel back the layers of intertextuality from different texts. There will be nothing left, Ackroyd suggests. The multitude of different influences from

different periods cannot be separated anymore, as it has become a new entity. In varying, repeating and rearranging fragments from the past, a new text comes into existence. As Merk suggests, the layers are not separable from each other, they would come off together and leave emptiness. It is also criticism of historical research that is alluded to in the textual passage above. Historiography tries to gain insight into to the past by attempting to access one historical stratum after the other. As past periods are intertextual products exactly like literary texts, this undertaking turns out to be impossible. Here, Ackroyd's points out the basic dilemma of historical research: like the forger Stewart Merk, the historian comes to the point where he/she has to either admit his/her failure in retrieving origins or, as Merk does, opts for the artificial creation of a new historical narrative, which will be taken as the original. "If you trace anything backwards, trying to figure out cause and effect, or motive, or means, there is no real *origin* [emphasis in the original] for anything" (Ch, 232). Ackroyd foregrounds his conviction of the intertextual nature of any text by introducing the portrait, which fulfils an intermedial function linking visual art with literature by revealing its textuality.

3.2.2.2) Accepting Influence, Discarding Anxieties

While Chatterton, a proto-postmodernist in his own right, self-consciously reflects on the idea of artistic originality and its relative impossibility in terms of creating something entirely new, the 20th century writers are much more concerned and burdened by the idea of depending on influences from other writers. The antagonistic couple Ackroyd introduces in order to express the most crucial issue of artistic influence and how writers come to terms with it are the plagiarist Harriet Scrope and the blocked wannabe-writer Philip Slack. It is Harold Bloom's theory of the "anxiety of influence" (cf. Bloom) which Ackroyd deconstructs in favour of his own understanding of aesthetic influence.

Finney points out that "Bloom sees the strong poet in precisely the terms that Ackroyd condemned in *Notes*" (Finney, *Chatterton*). According to Bloom influence is only acceptable in terms of "[i]mages and ideas [which] belong to discursiveness and to history, and are scarcely unique to poetry" (Bloom, 71). Bloom continues that "[y]et a poet's stance, his Word, his imaginative identity, his whole being *must* [emphasis in the original] be unique to him, and remain unique, or he will perish, as a poet […]" (Bloom, 71). *Chatterton* clearly rejects this conception as literary influence is welcomed as enrichment and necessity, not as an oedipal struggle against one's writing predecessors. It is not a poet's 'stance' that renders him/her original but his/her style, i.e. his/her way of adapting, combining and rearranging existing plots and structures. These theoretical assumptions form the basis for negotiating Harriet Scrope's and Philip Slack's approaches to aesthetic influence.

Harriet Scrope owes all her literary success as novelist to the plots she has stolen from a forgotten 19th century author.

> Harriet Scrope had written a novel in which a writer's secretary is responsible for many of her employer's 'posthumous' publications; she knew his style so well that she was able effortlessly to counterfeit it, and only the assiduous researches of a biographer had uncovered the fakery. This was very close to the nineteenth-century novel which Philip now held in his hand. He dropped it, and its fall echoed around the basement in the library. (Ch, 69)

Passages like these make visible the novel's extraordinarily dense structure and Ackroyd's subversive strategy. Not only does it suggest Harriet's incapacity of inventing new plots for her own novels, but furthermore it highlights the limitedness of all plots whether in literature or in reality. Repetition turns into a decisive structural element both in literature and in real life. Ironically, Bentley's literary plot from the 19th century is reproduced in the 20th century not only by Harriet, who plagiarises the plot for literary purposes, but also in real life by Stewart Merk and his faked Seymours. Merk, Seymour's last assistant and familiar with his style, had forged Seymour's latest paintings. The

reproduction of a fictional plot in reality is a further hint at the interconnectedness of art and reality and the intertextuality of both, i.e. art can be an intertext for reality and vice versa.

The book echoing in the library on being dropped is a nice metaphor of its intertextual resonance in a world of books and plots. One of these echoes, Bentley's title *The Last Testament* can be identified as an allusion to Ackroyd's own novel on Wilde, *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde.* Although Harriet Scrope is well aware of her incapacity to create something artistically original, she is neither willing nor able to admit her borrowings publicly as she fears sanctions from the literary system. In contrast to Harriet Philip is incapable of producing any text due to his feeling burdened by too many literary voices. While Harriet simply claims them to be her own, the librarian Philip feels blocked and refrains from becoming creative at all.

Bloom's Freudian interpretation of the artist who has to battle the fathers in order to free himself from their burden is contradicted in *Chatterton.* Literary heritage, Ackroyd suggests, is fertile as it offers uncountable possibilities. To murder the father, to assume an oedipal approach to art, would mean to ignore the indebtedness to artistic predecessors and/or be burdened by it. If an artist rules out all influences, the outcome will be someone like Fritz Dangerfield.

> Sarah took up a catalogue […] and read out the summary: 'Fritz Dangerfield's composition, The Opium Dream. He painted the same picture over and over again but he would not be parted from the canvases, which he kept in his bedroom until his death. He did not speak, and he did not write except in an alphabet of his own invention.' She closed the catalogue. 'Now that really *is* madness.'
> 'I see what he meant, though,' Harriet had becomes serious. 'He wanted to be separate from everything. He had his own alphabet because words made him feel unclean. He wanted to start all over again.'
> 'But that's just the point. As a result he was unintelligible. No one can start again.'
> 'So there's no choice. You have to carry it all around with you.'
> (Ch, 116)

Ackroyd employs this exaggerated example for parodying possible consequences of Bloom's theory for artists. Dangerfield has liberated himself from any dependence on other authors. The outcome, however, also implies that thus he has become unintelligible to others. The lack of artistic interaction results in a lack of inspiration and a lack of artistic development rendering the poet an auto-plagiariser bound to reproduce his own pictures again and again without ever changing them. Furthermore, the invention of an own alphabet expresses the desire to establish an existence without the dominance of conventional language. However, outside the textual system communication becomes impossible.

Only by accepting influence and its appropriation the artist can go through a process of artistic empowerment. The reappropriation of the past for present needs does not result in the complete dissolution of the author in intertextual play but involves his/her conscious choices.

3.2.2.3) Simulating Originality

Baudrillard differentiates between simulation and dissimulation. "To dissimulate is to pretend not to have what one has. To simulate is to feign what one doesn't have. One implies a presence, the other an absence" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra*, 3). Applied to the debate on literary originality, dissimulation can be attributed to forgery whereas simulation can be associated with faking. Chatterton, for instance, was dissimulating when he created Rowley as he was hiding his own authorial presence and so was Merk being responsible for some of Seymour's paintings. In contrast, Harriet Scrope is hiding the absence of her own ideas behind Bentley's plots. However, the postmodernist Ackroyd here does not go in line with Baudrillard as he refrains from judging either of the two ways of dealing with influence. Instead, he ludically reveals their potential in calling into question the conception of

artistic originality and historical truth. While Baudrillard laments "that truth, reference, objective cause have ceased to exist" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra*, 3), Ackroyd self-consciously displays the possibilities and limitations of art which thematises its own status of constructedness as well as the artificiality of the so-called objective reality. "When the real is no longer what it was, nostalgia assumes its full meaning. There is a plethora of myths of origin and of signs of reality – a plethora of truth, of secondary objectivity, and authenticity" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra*, 6-7). Postmodern irony is the method Ackroyd adopts to counteract Baudrillard's pessimism. Baudrillard departs from the assumption that the real is an entity we have lost access to through the increasing omnipresence of simulacra of the real. Ackroyd seems to suggest that the real was never accessible in the first place as it is created in textuality.

Whereas Baudrillard diagnoses an abundance of secondary truths and authenticity, Ackroyd's *Chatterton* investigates into these secondary truths by making visible their underlying structure. "Anything became possible. If there were no truths, everything was true" (Ch, 127). In Finney's words: Ackroyd "cultivates a postmodern delight in parody and linguistic self-consciousness" (Finney, *Chatterton*). Especially the intersections of the spheres of art and reality are of great importance to Ackroyd. Does art imitate life or life art? "When Molière created Tartuffe, the French nation suddenly found him beside every domestic hearth. When Shakespeare invented Romeo and Juliet, the whole world discovered how to love. Where is the reality there?" (Ch, 133).

The novel's constant ironic thematisation of apparent realism and fakery and their subversion becomes especially palpable when Harriet's cat hilariously devours a stuffed bird.

> Fortunately she was still wearing her fur hat but, although she was not injured, the canvas knocked off the little stuffed bird which had been fastened to it. Mr Gaskell immediately pounced on it. 'It's not real,' she shouted. 'It's only an imitation!' But it was too late: the bird's stuffing was now strewn across the carpet. She readjusted her

> hat and, with a sigh, got down from the chair. 'Oh well, darling,' she murmured, 'you wouldn't know the difference anyway, would you? You're not really human, after all.' (Ch, 188)

Any attempt to identify the genuine or the original has to fail. It is "an imitation in a world of imitations" (Ch, 91). Formulated by Hutcheon in a theoretical way, and put into practice by Ackroyd's *Chatterton*, the Baudrillardian culture of simulacra fails to characterise contemporary experience. "Past events are given *meaning*, not *existence* by their representation in history. This is quite the opposite of Baudrillard's claim that they are reduced to simulacra: instead, they are made to signify" (Hutcheon, 1989, 82). Representation has not effaced the referent altogether, as Baudrillard argues, but – according to Hutcheon – questions and challenges its own role as the alleged straightforward and transparent connection between signified and signifier, i.e. the sign and its referent. Postmodern representation reflects on and plays with its own state of representation, "that is, as interpreting (indeed as creating) its referent, not as offering direct and immediate access to it" (Hutcheon, 1989, 34).

3.3) PETER CAREY'S *MY LIFE AS A FAKE*

Published in 2003, *My Life as a Fake* is Peter Carey's eighth novel. Apart from South Africa's J.M.Coetzee, the Australian author now living in New York City is the only novelist to have received the Booker Prize twice, the first time for his celebrated novel *Oscar & Lucinda* in 1988 and the second time for *The True History of the Kelly Gang* in 2001 (cf. The Booker Prize Foundation). Like Barnes and Ackroyd, who belong to the same literary generation as the 1943 born Australian, Carey's approach to literature is heavily influenced by his fascination with history and numerous of his novels enquire into its epistemological status.

Unlike the British authors Barnes and Ackroyd, however, whose oeuvre can be roughly summarised as circling around the nature of British cultural identity and in the case of Ackroyd especially around London identity, Peter Carey centres on specifically Australian concerns and the rewriting of Australian colonial history. Despite the fact that all three authors can be subsumed under the label of postmodern authors who employ historiographic metafiction as a means for storytelling, it is Peter Carey's particular approach from the fringes of British literary tradition, which renders the author a highly conscious and critical observer of cultural identity. The deconstruction of the normative distinction between processes of making and processes of faking are the core of all three novels discussed. While Barnes and Ackroyd, however, seem to celebrate the ludic function of postmodern literature, the former most typically in ridiculing contemporary consumer and 'heritage' culture in *England, England*, the latter more specifically and in a technically more elaborate way in accentuating and thus parodying the different processes underlying the literary system in *Chatterton*, Carey, it can be argued, discharges the ludic function in favour of excessive storytelling and an extraordinary focus on an elaborate development of narrative voice.

It is not so much satire or parody that is foregrounded in Carey's novel, than an ambivalence towards concepts such as truth and lie, which, as Macfarlane suggests having *My Life as a Fake* at the back of his mind, "veers between the comedic […] and the sub-gothically chilling" (Macfarlane, 2005, 337). Nevertheless, like many other self-conscious postmodern novels Carey's text has been criticised for the enormous weight of "a theoretical concern, which [according to Macfarlane] occasionally overwhelms the narrative thrust of the novel" (Rubik, 235).

With *My Life as a Fake* Carey attempts a rewriting of a literary scandal which preoccupied the Australian public in the 1940s and has since become known as the Ern Malley Hoax[4]. "[T]he novel demonstrates what the hoax itself revealed, if only we could see it: that real life can be created by the text" (Ashcroft, 29). James McAuley and Harold Steward, two young "anti-modernist" (MLF[5], 273) poets, created poetry by a supposedly lower middle-class poet named Ern Malley, whose existence they entirely invented. Not only did McAuley and Stewart create Ern Malley but also his sister Ethel, who, after Ern's supposedly early death, felt obliged to send her brother's poems to Max Harris, then the young editor of a fashionable literary magazine.

Harris fell prey to the hoax and dedicated an entire edition to the young deceased poet. On revealing the fake McAuley and Stewart, having exposed Harris to public ridicule, argued that the celebrated poems were the product of a Saturday afternoon, when they randomly picked passages from the most diverse sources and simply pasted them together.

Cynically, the verse of the phantom poet Ern Malley did not only ruin Harris' reputation as an editor, but furthermore brought him to trial for editing indecent poetry (cf. Macfarlane, 335-336). In the long run,

[4] For a detailed study on the Ern Malley Hoax see: Heyward, Michael: *The Ern Malley Affair*. London: Faber&Faber. 1993.
[5] References regarding *My Life as a Fake* will be abbreviated as MLF in the following chapters.

however, the most ironic aspect of the entire hoax turned out to be that neither McAuley's nor Stewart's own poetry had much resonance in Australian literary history, whereas Ern Malley's verses today are included in numerous anthologies of Australian poetry. Peter Carey explains:

> If you're a literary Australian of a certain age, then Ern Malley's voice – not just the voice of the poetry but the personality as represented by the sister's fake letters – is real for us. [N]obody reads the hoaxer's poetry, but Ern Malley is remembered and continues to live on. If you look at any contemporary book of Australian poetry, you'll find Ern Malley's poetry in there. (Carey qtd. in Murphy)

This is the historical situation which Carey takes as a starting point for his reworking of the literary scandal. Carey takes interest in the phantom poet and in the consequent textualisation of life and he embarks from the following questions: "What would it be like to […] have been conceived as a joke? … To be known as a fake?" (Carey qtd. in Murphy). The issue of origins and originality in *My Life as a Fake* is thus tackled from yet a different perspective. The novel asks questions about the relationship between author and text, i.e. about a possible independence of a text from its creator, thus adding a further dimension to the discussion on the death of the author.

Carey's historiographic metafictional novel is marked by the interplay of two different narrative strands. While the hoax plot is based on historical accounts, the text's framing storyline, which is equally set in the literary world, is entirely fictional. Significantly, it is the fictional strand mediated by the first person narrator Sarah Wode-Douglas, editor of a British literary magazine, which serves as point of reference in the incredible entanglements of the novel's history-based plot. The breakdown of this point of reference as regards truth and reliability functions as a reinforcement of the hoaxer storyline. By displaying against each other fact and fiction, truth and lie and their consequent

collapse, Carey manages to accentuate his claim of the textuality of reality.

The exoticism of Malaysia provides the scenic background for *My Life as a Fake*. Carey's female protagonist and narrator Sarah is persuaded by John Slater, a British poet and former friend of her upper-class parents, to accompany him to Malaysia. Hoping to clarify the ambivalent role Slater played in her mother's suicide when Sarah was a child, she agrees to join him only to be severely disappointed when being left alone once in Kuala Lumpur. On one of her reluctant walks through the city her attention is drawn to a middle-aged European man reading Rilke in a ramshackle bicycle shop, whose consequent acquaintance will make her enter "a maze from which, thirteen years later, [she] yet [has] to escape" (MLF, 7). It is Carey's hoaxer Christopher Chubb and he relates the most unbelievable story about a phantom poet, leaving Sarah, at a point of crisis in her life herself, - and the reader - uncertain of where to discern between truth and lie, fact and fiction and original and fake; "[…] struggling in a web of mystery that I doubt I ever shall untangle" (MLF, 13). Stimulated by some lines of exceptional poetry, Sarah agrees to listen to Chubb's story. "Rereading the fragment, I felt that excitement in my blood which is the only thing an editor should ever trust" (MLF, 27).

Carey has the two historical hoaxers represented by a single figure, the conservative poet Christopher Chubb. "In Australia they think I am the great conservative. Listen, I had spent more time reading Eliot and Pound than Weiss ever did, and later I would prove it" (MLF, 32). It is this knowledge of modernist techniques that Chubb makes use of in his attempt to trick the avant-garde editor David Weiss into publishing the poetry of Chubb's hoax, the artistic bicycle mechanic Bob McCorkle. "No problem to trick a lazy reader with the mannerisms" (MLF, 32). In his snobbish attitude – "What a notion, that the ignorant can make great art" (MLF, 39) – Chubb relies on Weiss' editorial urge to discover exceptional poetry. "He would so *want* pearls in the shit of swine, so want the genius

to be a mechanic that he would never stop to question the evidence" (MLF, 33).

Chubb, highly disgusted that "people had become so hooked on the latest fashion" (MLF, 40) i.e. modernism, feels compelled to "prove the truth [because] [t]he truth was dead and rotting" (MLF, 40). Modernism, for him signified "a complete decay of meaning and craftsmanship in poetry" (MLF, 40) and thus he sets out to prove his point, just like the historical hoaxers, by patching together stolen verse with non-fiction fragments. By doing so he creates the poetical oeuvre of Bob McCorkle, whom he has die at the age of 24. Only through the letters of McCorkle's – equally invented – sister does Chubb approach Weiss. And Chubb is highly conscious of the influence these letters will have on Weiss. "The writing in the letter, Chubb said, is even better than the poems. You can smell the suburbs in it. […] Reeking odours of the petite bourgeoisie" (MLF, 42). Thus, Chubb creates a double fake. He creates a fake poetic voice as well as a fake non-fiction voice as regards the letters. Only through the convincing textuality of McCorkle's supposedly real sister is Chubb able to launch his hoax. Commenting on the historical hoax, Bill Ashcroft rightly observes that

> [the poetry's] textuality is a continuation of a textual construction that begins, not with McAuley's and Steward's afternoon lark, but with Ethel Malley's letter. […] Whatever the quality of the poems, there is no doubt that Ethel's letter produces the simulacrum of a real person. Who could not avoid the hope that the bicycle mechanic might have produced something of real merit? (Ashcroft, 32)

It can be argued that Carey, from this point in the novel onwards, experiments with the possibilities of textuality. Chubb's imagination *gives birth* (cf. MLF, 32, 41) to a textual creation.

> The photography […] I made myself, patched together from three different men. My creature. Over six feet tall. Fantastic head, huge powerful nose and cheekbones, great forehead like the bust of Shakespeare. I had put him together […]. Chopped him up and glued him. (MLF, 52)

This textual creation, however, as Chubb wants Sarah to believe, comes to life. "I had brought him forth. […] I imagined someone and he came into being" (MLF, 100). The fake becomes original. The lie becomes true, a simulacrum of the real. From the moment his creation assumes physical presence, Chubb's life is forever haunted by McCorkle. At David Weiss' funeral – he is claimed to have committed suicide over being publicly disgraced – Chubb is physically confronted with his brainchild for the first time. When McCorkle begins to recite the verses Chubb had composed for him, Chubb is taken aback:

> [A] strange and passionate recitation. […] Chubb knew the poem, of course, but nothing had prepared him for this performance of it, the strange and passionate waving of his free arm, the twisting of the head, the eyes rolled back like a blind man playing jazz piano. And the voice, which its original author had always imagined to be some variation of standard BBC English, was here so fierce and nasal, hoarse, ravaged by failure and regret. […] this man was like a tethered beast, a wild man inside a cage. […] This was and was not the poem Chubb had written. It had been conceived as a parody and the first key to the puzzle of the hoax, but this lunatic had somehow recast it without altering a word. What had been clever had now become true, the song of the autodidact, the colonial, the damaged beast of the antipodes. (MLF, 83-84)

The text has come to life, it has emancipated itself from the author and it aims at taking revenge for its conception as a fake. McCorkle's revenge consists in kidnapping Chubb's baby daughter.

> Wherever I am, I have put myself outside your power. I have made myself a whole man, almost – except, when I hold this child, I feel the weight of everything you stole from me […]. I know exactly what I want from you. […] This is a childhood. (MLF, 156)

Chubb pursues the kidnapper into the exotic rainforests of Malaysia and its capital Kuala Lumpur. Always keeping track with his creation but never being able to get hold of his daughter, who regards McCorkle as her true father and rejects Chubb. Any attempt at killing McCorkle fails until Chubb is finally able to poison the phantom poet causing his slow death. Yet his death does neither liberate Chubb nor gain him back the

love of his daughter Tina, instead he lives on enslaved by McCorkle's legacy.

3.3.1) THE DIALECTICS OF (INTER)TEXTUALITY

3.3.1.1) Fact and Fiction as Intertexts

By having Chubb – involuntarily though – creating a human being, Carey consciously enters an intertextual dialogue with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, a connection already implied in the epigraph preceding the novel proper chosen from *Frankenstein*. It is Chubb's hybris, his "fastidiously high standards" (Carey qtd. in Murphy), his perceived superiority that predefine his fall. Chubb's hybris, "[…] the blasphemous possibility that he had, with his own pen, created blood and bone and a beating heart" (MLF, 155) echoes Frankenstein's hybris, his "human endeavour to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world" (Shelley, 9). Similarly, Frankenstein's nemesis parallels Chubb's. "His success would terrify the artist; he would rush away from his odious handiwork, horror-stricken" (Shelley, 9). Carey's other main intertextual reference is the historical Ern Malley Hoax from the 1940s.

Official history and fiction as common intertextual grounds for a novel already anticipate the blurriness of the boundaries between truth and lie, history and imagination. This double strategy is further replicated on a different level. Carey amends his account of the hoax with the official trial documents of the Ern Malley affair on the one hand, and on the other hand he employs Ern Malley's poetry as McCorkle's, a scheme he is careful to point out in the author's note of *My Life as a Fake* (cf. MLF, 273-274). It can be observed, thus, that the merging of fact and fiction is at the core of Carey's undertaking. Simultaneously, he thereby stresses the subversion of commonplace truths. The mimetic dogma as regards literary representation, i.e. the norm that fiction mirrors reality, is reversed by Carey's reading of the Ern Malley scandal. Reality, that is

the court trial, is engendered by fiction, that is the poetry of a fictional artist. Thus, in this case it is art that produces reality and not vice versa. The reversal of the mimetic principle leads to a collapse of the boundaries between fact and fiction rendering them both as nothing but textual products. As a result, the only certainty left is the textuality of all being, or as Macfarlane labels it, "the textuality of knowledge" (Macfarlane, 339).

My Life as a Fake gains its narrative strength from being composed of numerous different discourses on truth, history, fact, lie, memory, imagination and fiction. Like Frankenstein's monster, which is made up of different body parts, or McCorkle/Ern Malley moulded from different textual sources, Carey's novel itself is the product of multiple sources, which – combined as they are – leave the impression of the complex, the intense, as their combination is more than just "the sum of their separate parts" (Finney, *Chatterton*). It has become a new textual entity, only echoing its components.

There has to be noticed an uncanny element in *My Life as a Fake*, which is engendered by the disintegration of boundaries between fact and fiction or truth and lie. The reader is not provided with an omniscient or normative voice, but is drawn into the various stories only to doubt them afterwards again. Carey, as Barnes and Ackroyd, seems to say: truth is not accessible, the only access we have to experience the world is language, i.e. textuality.

3.3.1.2) Textualising a Life

The fictional poet McCorkle is born from an amalgamation of multiple sources both factual and fictional, i.e. of encyclopaedic entries and regarding his poetry of lines echoing for instance Pound (cf. Murphy). Even more importantly, he is indirectly created by the supposedly real letters of his fake sister Beatrice McCorkle (cf. MLF, 41-42). Again, Carey draws attention to the labyrinth of fact and fiction one

cannot withdraw from. In Ashcroft's words: "both truth and lie, history and hoax, are a function of narrative. Both gain life by stories told about them. The stories that survive as truth are the stories that best convince their audience" (Ashcroft, 28). Furthermore, Ashcroft stresses that how "we come to know about a life" (Ashcroft, 32) is based on history or memory. Taking into account the textuality of both forms just mentioned, James McAuley or any other person that really lived can be regarded as textual as Ern Malley (cf. Ashcroft, 32). Most significantly the textuality of the simulacrum Ern Malley cannot only be reduced to his poetic textuality itself, as it also has a social dimension mediated via Ethel's convincing letters.

In order to stress the quality of the real in the simulacrum Ern Malley, model for Carey's simulacrum Bob McCorkle, Carey quotes the hoaxed editor Max Harris' convictions in his author's note to *My Life as a Fake*:

> In all simplicity and faith I believed such a person existed, and I believed it for many months before the newspapers threw their banner headline at me. For me Ern Malley embodies the true sorrow and pathos of our time. […] a living person, alone, outside literary cliques, outside print, dying outside humanity but of it… (MLF, 274)

The impossibility to distinguish between hoax and reality paradoxically provides the basis for Chubb's creation in the first place and in a second step also the ground for his nemesis. Chubb's nemesis turns out to be especially tragic as he "set[s] out to prove the truth" (MLF, 40) and does not only fail in doing so but, moreover, he contributes to an even more blurred version of reality. Instead of making his point by means of his own poetry, his failure is furthermore made obvious by his creation of a simulacrum which is to supersede his own artistic capacity. When the editor Sarah is shown poems written by Chubb himself, she is rather disappointed: "If this was his 'real' poetry, then I preferred the fake. […] Frankly, these dry yellow pages were priggish, self serving, snobbish" (MLF, 88). Chubb's own poetry is not at all convincing. Thus, it

is even more tragic that the only thing he would be remembered for are fake poems he did not intend to be taken seriously (cf. MLF, 30).

In an interview with Jessica Murphy, Carey mentioned that he started off his novel detesting the hoaxers as they – as he put it in *My Life as a Fake* – "had preyed on the best, most vulnerable quality an editor has to offer. […] that hopeful, optimistic part which has you reading garbage for half your life just so you might find, one day before you die, a great unknown talent" (MLF, 21). In the course of the novel, however, it is the wretched Chubb the reader is most likely to sympathise with (cf. Carey qtd. in Murphy). His hoax, conceived with bad intentions played back on him, leaving him a haunted, desperate and lonely person, unable to use his own creativity for anything else but to pursue his simulacral creation.

"*My Life as a Fake* also dramatizes and psychologizes the competing claims to and anxieties of ownership about a textual creation – Chubb's (the claim of the author), Sarah's (the claim of the reader) and McCorkle's own (the claim of the text)" (Macfarlane, 343). Who owns the text, then? Is it its creator, Chubb? Is it the reader, i.e. Sarah, who attributes meaning and thus lets it grow authentic? Or is it McCorkle, who has emancipated himself from Chubb? In a postmodern reading it is the reader, who gains valorisation as regards the authority over the text. Thus, it lies with Sarah to believe or to discard Chubb's story. Yet, both author and text make it almost impossible for her to decide what to believe. Is the author Chubb in control of his text and only tricking her into his hoax? Has his text, McCorkle, become indeed independent? Sarah is torn between trusting Chubb's narration and trusting her own rationality, which turns out to be unreliable itself (cf. MLF, 125-140). Sarah "had no understanding yet of what she was flirting with […], [of her] vain attempt to establish the true nature of this gigantic man who had emerged, so [she] assumed, from the darkest recesses of Chubb's disturbed imagination" (MLF, 86). And also John Slater warns her: "He will drag you into his delusional world, and have you believe the most

preposterous things" (MLF, 37). Sarah is indeed caught in the narrative net Chubb has woven around her. "[T]here was no escaping either the teller or the tale" (MLF,81).

Carey employs the phantom poet McCorkle as an allegory of (inter)textuality. The coming to life of a textual construct composed of different sources can be understood as analogous to the complexity of a human existence. Ironically, Carey lets the text generate a life only to prove that all aspects of life are textual.

McCorkle appropriates and transforms Chubb's initial fake into authentic experience. Yet his awareness that he has originated from a fake, a hoax, malicious mischief drives him to hate his creator. "He was the joke and the joke cannot love his maker" (MLF, 217). It is also the aspect of the joke, the lack of seriousness that prevents Chubb from owning up to creation. Rather than ownership it is disgust or alienation Chubb feels according to Freud. "An author's creative power does not always obey his will: the work proceeds as it can, and often it presents itself to the author as something independent or even alien" (Freud, 350). McCorkle is Chubb's brainchild, yet, he is not accepted by him, or even worse, he is rejected by his maker. In a Freudian interpretation it could be argued that only through the destruction of his father-maker Chubb is McCorkle able to develop into a full and emancipated being. It has to be noticed that to overcome his father for McCorkle does not correspond to overcoming the 'anxiety of influence' in a Bloomian sense, but to define his identity in a Deleuzian sense of 'difference'.

The final defeat of both Chubb and McCorkle, according to a Deleuzian line of argumentation, resides in the failure to emancipate themselves from each other. Their relationship is one of dependence corresponding to the platonic structure of original/good copy and bad copy/simulacrum. "You made my life as a joke. […] But where I am, dear father – and he spoke this last word so hatefully that Chubb felt all the hairs rise on his neck – where I live I am not a joke at all, not a fake in any way" (MLF, 155). In order to liberate himself from the stigma of

being a simulacrum, McCorkle has to leave Australia, the sphere of his maker, and create a world of his own in Malaysia, yet their ultimate relationship is one of dependency. The father-son, creator-creation discourse is made even more relevant by McCorkle's attributing his publisher David Weiss the mother role, thus having his origins distributed between Chubb's malicious semen and Weiss' motherly support. "David Weiss was like a mother, for he had brought me into the world, had given me life… When called a fake he never once doubted me" (MLF, 81). It is a typically postmodern interest in textuality Carey here draws attention to. In order to assume life – in a metaphorical sense – a text not only depends on its author but simultaneously also and maybe even more importantly on the belief of the reader.

My Life as a Fake plays with conventional perceptions of truth and reality as the fictional McCorkle assumes real presence and claims his place in the world, a place it claims from his creator Chubb. The moment the fake becomes autonomously real, i.e. is born at the age of 24, the real life of his creator Chubb is directed towards decay and desperation. Designed to be of the lower middle-class background Chubb so much detested, the bicycle mechanic Bob McCorkle is a creature "without the protection of the word that comes from living in it" (MLF, 274). Involuntarily and completely ignorant of the world McCorkle is thrown at the fringes of society. He has assumed real life, has become a real person but still feels like a hoax. With rage he addresses his creator Chubb to provide him with the only proof of his physical presence valid in the sphere of social reality, a birth certificate. It is another subtle hint of irony Carey inserts here by suggesting that the proof of reality, of real life can only be a textual one. Lines taken from Milton's *Paradise Lost* already used by Shelley as the epigraph for *Frankenstein* serve as an illustration for McCorkle's situation: "'Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay / To mould me man, Did I solicit thee / From darkness to promote me?' Give me my bloody birth certificate, he said" (MLF, 97).

It is the birth certificate that grants McCorkle real existence in society. Yet, born at 24, he suffers from the lack of a childhood, a childhood he is to regain by means of kidnapping Chubb's baby daughter, "the living principle of Chubb's art" (Ashcroft, 38). Metaphorical for artistic inspiration Chubb's offspring Tina becomes crucial in his ambivalent relationship with McCorkle. With Chubb's baby, McCorkle feels his ability to fill the existential gap his creator has exposed him to. "The child, the living principle of Chubb's art, becomes McCorkle's child and with the aid of this child he proceeds to build a whole country in words […]" (Ashcroft, 38). With the help of Tina McCorkle exceeds Chubb in creativity and turns into the literary genius whose poetry so much fascinates the editor Sarah.

In panic search for his creativity, Chubb follows McCorkle into the rainforests of Malaysia, the exotic setting which McCorkle uses to create and explore his own world. Supported by Tina and Mrs. Li, he sets out to learn all the possible words of Malaysian reality. "Bob McCorkle has his country stolen, she said. He came here, knew no names, nothing. Our job has been to gather all the names for him" (MLF, 237). He, who is created in language, feels a desparate desire to get in contact with words. "I am a poet who does not know the names of things […]" (MLF, 154).

Chubb's own offspring, Tina, when confronted with her father, disowns him, metaphorically speaking his creativity disowns him (cf. MLF, 227-230). Any link to artistic productivity whatsoever has thus been destroyed. He had been imprisoned by hunting for his poetic inspiration but at the moment that he found it again, he has to realise that it will never be his again.

3.3.1.3) Disrupted Textuality

The simulacrum McCorkle has become more real than the original Chubb. "What a triumph he now was. He had overcome me. I had

brought him forth ignorant into the world, but now he knew six languages, five of which I never heard of. So learned now […] He was the greatest writer ever born" (MLF, 255). Chubb furthermore has to realise that McCorkle has emancipated himself so much from his origins that Chubb is almost incapable of influencing him in any way. "If I could create you, [Chubb] said, did you never fear that I might unmake you too?" (MLF, 230). On his chase after McCorkle and Tina through Malaysia Chubb follows numerous strategies to 'unmake' McCorkle, all of which, however, seem to fail. McCorkle appears unapproachable. Nevertheless Chubb's final attempt to 'unmake' the phantom poet by poisoning him is effective. However, their fate is inseparably linked as McCorkle's perishing requires Chubb's own death. "I labour all my life to make a work of art. And now the end is here, there is only you to give it to. My old enemy" (MLF, 262). Their relatioship is based on dependency. On his deathbed McCorkle says to Chubb: "I am easy now … We are one you and I" (MLF, 262). Chubb, who cynically turns out to be the guardian of McCorkle's legacy, i.e. his own hostile daughter Tina, Mrs Li and most importantly McCorkle's volume of poetry *My Life as a Fake*, only grasps the deeper sense of McCorkle's last words years later:

> I had thought this hatred of me all gone, but recently I have come to wonder if, even when he seemed so gentle, he was secretly relishing the notion of making me a bicycle mechanic. So like him. To trick me into living my own lie-*lah*? […] Did he wish his fate to be mine? (MLF, 263)

Carey has Chubb live the fate he has designed for his own hoax – as a bicycle mechanic in a dirty Kuala Lumpur back street – when Sarah's attention is drawn to him. The first thing she notices about him is his desolate state of health. "What struck me most particularly were the angry red sores on his sturdy legs" (MLF, 8). Although this first encounter to a certain extent already anticipates Chubb's fate, his death, indicated by his poor physical condition, will come about violently. As John Updike observes "the ulcerations of Malaysia eat away at his legs" (Updike), which are his metaphorical connection to the ground, to reality.

Having them slowly rotting away implies Chubb's loss of connection to the real world, his "attracti[ng] the mad" (MLF, 100) and thus indicates one of Carey's subtle hints at the possible unreliability of Chubb's narration. The metaphorical loss of Chubb's legs as a proof of his connection to the real world is furthermore stressed by the Malaysian's antipathy and disgust as regards the Australian poet. For them, McCorkle is the real person and Chubb the evil spirit.

> 'He come into the street in the middle of the night. Not human, Missus. No legs, see?'
> Was I meant to believe Christopher Chubb had somehow floated up Jalan Campbell like a figure of Chagall? […] All I understood was that Christopher Chubb had seriously alienated his neighbours. (MLF, 122)

As opposed to Australia, in the Malaysian reality Chubb has become the fake and McCorkle the true poet. Carey highlights the slow decomposition of Chubb's person in his Malaysian surroundings by employing numerous metaphors linked to decay. So does Chubb use a rubbish bag in order to protect himself from the tropical rain showers.

> [Sarah] collided with the human rubbish bag. It had almost been comic from the imperial detachment of my room but was not in the least amusing on the street. [Sarah] tried to step around that thing, but it would not let [her]. From deep in the folds of the plastic, a pair of strangely determined eyes confronted [her]. (MLF, 70)

Moreover, Chubb's old Australian suit, his only link to his home country and his status as a serious artist, is completely ruined after being cleaned.

> [Chubb] reached down to his suit, and I finally understood, watching him stroke the lapel, that the process of cleaning had so shocked that fabric that it was now broken on the creases, papery and crumbling in his hands like the wing of a dead butterfly. (MLF, 102-103)

The image of dry paper is not only applied to his suit, but also to Chubb's own physical features like voice (cf. MLF, 22, 29), eyelids (cf. MLF, 44) and hands (cf. MLF, 101). "The tropics are not kind to paper"

(MLF, 27), Chubb comments, when Sarah holds the fragile journal in her hands for the first time. Neither are they kind to Chubb himself. It can be argued that Chubb represents the papery basis on which McCorkle inscribes his poetry. Neither of the two can exist without the other. It is significant that Chubb's murder committed by Tina and Mrs. Li goes hand in hand with the loss of access to McCorkle's exceptional poetry (MLF, 266-272). Chubb's death is the last step in the detextualisation of McCorkle's possible existence. "It would take [Sarah] an awfully long time to accept the full extent of the horror […] because [she] had no sensible explanation of McCorkle himself" (MLF, 271). Fragmented like the truth Sarah felt committed to find out, is finally Chubb's body. "The body of truth, […] dismembered and scattered – in Greek, *sparagmos*" (MLF, 271).

> I reached down and felt meat, as raw as in a Chow Kit butcher's shop. Then I saw the soft burr of that beautifully shaped monk's head, and I knew at last what it must be. *Sparagmos.* This was the horror at the poem's end. The man I had spent the afternoon with was now dismembered, his warm blood on my hands and spreading like honey across the floor. (MLF, 269)

Chubb, who pasted together his creation McCorkle from the most diverse sources, regarding both his poetry and his physical features, is now equally disintegrated as the initial components of his fakery. It is the multiplicity of sources of all life and its textuality including the impossibility to ever gain a unified and true narrative that Carey draws attention to. According to Macfarlane the "epistemological blurriness […] is part of Carey's point. *My Life as a Fake* ends in an ambiguous and bloody scene which deliberately unsettles even further the ideas of fakery, authenticity and creativity that the novel triangulates" (Macfarlane, 338).

3.3.2) The Precession of the Simulacrum – McCorkle's Subversive Appropriation of Reality

3.3.2.1) The Simulacrum Writes Back

If one feels inclined – and *My Life as a Fake* invites to do so – to take the novel at least to a certain extent as an allegory of Australian (post)colonial history, then Ashcroft's reading of McCorkle as the "embodiment of post-colonial transformation" (Ahscroft, 36) becomes comprehensible. McCorkle becomes representative of Australia's yearning for an authentic literary voice in its colonial context and its desire to be taken seriously in the literary world. It is the desire of a fringe culture to be taken for full by the literary canon of the centre. "Australia has an unusually rich and messy history of literary fakery" Macfarlane argues and explains this "susceptibility [to hoaxing and fakery as stemming] from Australian culture's desperation to be recognized as a producer of authentic literature and not just as its consumer" (Macfarlane, 340).

When Slater mentions Chubb's literary hoax to Sarah for the first time, he points out the fragility of the Australian cultural self-esteem. He compares Chubb's hoax with a comparable situation in Britain and makes his point by suggesting that hoaxes happening in Britain would never have the same resonance as in Australia.

> My point is that a prank's a prank and [the hoaxer] wasn't going to pull the whole of English culture down around our ears. Whereas if you take a country like Australia, you see the whole thing is much more fragile […] This all takes place in 1946. Imagine – twenty-four years after *The Waste Land*. You'd think the battles had been fought and the dead buried […]. (MLF, 19)

Slater relates this cultural vulnerability to Australia's geographical position. "[T]his is the country of the duck-billed platypus. When you are

cut off from the rest of the world, things are bound to develop in interesting ways" (MLF, 19). Slater characterises Chubb like most of Australian society of that time as "[o]f a horrible prim, self-righteous sort" (MLF, 19). Being at the fringe of literary activities, the Australian public is depicted as far more restrictive than its cultural 'original' Britain. The cultural position on the fringe is doubly fragile. On the one hand, the simulacrum Australia suffers from the lack of an own authentic and independent voice and, on the other hand, it is more conservative than the centre itself. It is highly cynical that Carey has an authentic Australian literary voice, i.e. that of McCorkle, developed out of a miscarried hoax by a conservative, whose intention it was to "prove the truth [which] was dead and rotting" (MLF, 40) due to the anti-conservative developments involved in modernism, which had belatedly entered Australian avant-garde circles. Initially, McCorkle's 'antipodean' voice is an accident, unintended and designed as a parody. Through his endeavour of emancipation from his creator his voice devoid of any parodic element becomes authentic. "It had been conceived as a parody […], but this lunatic had somehow recast it without altering a word. What had been clever had now become true, the song of the autodidact, the colonial, the damaged beast of the antipodes" (MLF, 84). In this context Ashrcoft argues with Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'minor literature', which represents "a political transgression, embodied not in the content but in the voice" (Ashcroft, 33). McCorkle's voice has made the underlying lie become true and authentic and Carey thus once more highlights the "narrative function of truth and the ambivalence of lies" (Ashcroft, 28).

Chubb's detestation of Australia's provinciality is furthermore substantiated by his own social background, the narrow minded world of the petite bourgoisie which he always attempted to flee from by means of his great learning.

"[Chubb] had been born into a second-rate culture, or so he thought […] – a terror that he might somehow be tricked into admiring the

second-rate, the derivate, the shallow, the provincial" (MLF, 86-87). His malevolent revenge on society consists in the creation of a textual simulacrum whom he grants exactly the same social background he himself is so much disgusted by. McCorkle, on the other hand – thrown into this life without support –, soaks in as much as possible of this world Chubb so much detests and subverts it into textuality – though incomprehensible by the mind – of unbelievable beauty. If Australia is understood as a second-rate culture, it has been empowered through McCorkle's voice, which has transformed the derivate, the fake into the authentic.

Chubb's own voice, which is oriented towards canonical standards, is defined as "[f]ormally very rigorous" (MLF, 18). According to Slater, representing the literary centre, Chubb is "[a] very serious provincial academic poet, committed to a life of envy and disappointment" (MLF, 18). The paradoxical tragedy for Chubb is that his attempt to give truth a new standing results in a complete blurriness of truth, which does not allow the reader to believe in his words.

Another interesting aspect Carey draws attention to is the discursive construction of monstrosity as an intertextual product regarding McCorkle and in a wider sense also Australia itself. When Slater refers to the platypus as an archetypical Australian animal (cf. MLF, 18), he thereby intends to stress its specific peculiarity of being made up of parts which appear as belonging to various different animals, yet it is a single unique living being. McCorkle is made up of different parts in a double sense as his poetry is composed from various different sources and his appearance is shaped by the physical features of three different men.

The plurality of sources as the basis for any creation can furthermore be seen in relation to the novel's most prominent fictional intertext *Frankenstein*. In her author's introduction to *Frankenstein* Shelley notes that "[i]nvention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of void, but out of chaos" (Shelley, 8). It can be argued that Carey takes *Frankenstein* as a sort of hypotext, which

provides the basis for his own hypertext. There are numerous parallels between the two novels. And Carey even explicitly commens on intended analogies.

> There's a scene very early in *Frankenstein* where the creature is glimpsed leaning from crag to crag. I thought, if this were taking place in Australia, it wouldn't be icy crag to crag. It would be tropical. And, of course, in *Frankenstein,* that scene does not take place in Britain, the reader's home country but in Europe. I started to think about a chase scene, and the geography for it. (Ackroyd qtd. in Murphy)

It has to be noticed, however, that Carey develops his monster further than Shelley did with her creature. In *My Life as a Fake* McCorkle starts off as a monster, unloved and feared like Frankenstein's creation. However, he is able to get back at his creator, i.e. he even supersedes his creator in being a more authentic human being. While Frankenstein's monster is caught in its own monstrosity, McCorkle is partly able to emancipate himself and to start embracing life with an eagerness, which is expressed by his urge to learn all the words possible of his world, Malaysia, where he is taken as the original.

Carey, making use of Ern Malley's poetry, lets McCorkle appropriate the lines and by doing so he has, according to Ashcroft, "Bob McCorkle, and hence Ern Malley, [be] a surprising figure of colonial resistance" (Ashcroft, 36). "Now I find that once more I have shrunk / To an interloper, robber of dead men's dream […] I am still / The black swan of trespass on alien waters" (MLF, 84). Yet this colonial resistance, which empowers the colonial subject McCorkle/Australia as 'interloper' and 'robber' to take advantage of the decaying hegemony of the literary canon of the centre, is not a joyful one. It is a melancholic acceptance of the impossibility of the fringe to become part of the centre, "The Tyranny of Distance" (MLF, 30).

3.3.2.2) Making is Faking – History and Memory as Discursive Simulacra

The conception of memory, and thus also history as an equally textual product, as fallible is placed by Carey in the novel's framing plot, which leads Sarah to follow the aging poet Slater to Malaysia in the first place. She perceives the journey as a means to commit Slater to own up to the role he played in her mother's suicide decades ago.

> I cannot say that I understood his role in my parent's marriage, and only when my mother killed herself […] did I suspect that something was amiss. In the last minutes of her life I saw John Slater put his arms around her and finally I understood, or thought I did. From that moment I hated everything about him. (MLF, 3)

It is Sarah's understanding of the events going on around her that Carey highlights in this paragraph taken right from the novel's beginning. The narrative device of uncertainty employed underlines that her narration will not be omniscient, but rather unreliable. The idea that she "finally […] understood, or thought [she] did" (MLF,3) is the first hint at Sarah's being biased, i.e. her incapacity to judge events objectively, both as a narrator of her own life as well as the possible editor of Chubb's or rather McCorkle's extraordinary poetry.

Sarah is thus a first person unreliable narrator on a quest for truth. As regards Slater she already has her prefabricated version of history written in her mind, i.e. that her mother committed suicide over an unhappy love affair with Slater. The editor departs from her own standards as regards truth and lie and history and imagination. Yet, these standards, and her apparent sovereignty in setting them up, are severely shaken in the course of the novel.

"I loathe dishonesty." This is how Chubb introduces his narration. "So you see how bad it is that what I am remembered for is a fake" (MLF, 30). And indeed, it is a daring first sentence to be articulated by a hoaxer. For Sarah, however, the nature of his story appears to be of no

importance at all until she is finally "struggling in a web of mystery" which results in a nervous breakdown (cf. MLF, 272). The collapse of her own personal history, which she has to acknowledge as faked by her own memory, represents the collapse of her personal access to her own private truth. When this access is lost, Sarah's identity becomes fragile and she is more and more drawn into Chubb's narration. "[I]n truth I had no interest in his story at all. All I wished was to read that fragment again, as he well knew, and so I must endure his tale" (MLF, 124). The longer the tale goes on, the more intrigued Sarah is by the ambivalences of Chubb's personality. "One minute I would be filled with pity and the next with such intense dislike that I could only shudder" (MLF, 125).

Carey exploits this ambivalence towards Chubb in order to create and hold up the enormous narrative intensity of *My Life as a Fake.* However, for Sarah it is not only Chubb's ambivalence or her impossibility to judge the truth of his tale, but even more the coming to terms with the ambivalences in her own biography, in her personal history, which she so long had refused to acknowledge.

When Slater is finally willing to talk about the past telling Sarah that her mother had killed herself because of her father's homoerotic flirtatiousness, Sarah is devastated (cf. MLF, 124-135). "Please don't tell me lies, I said. I can bear whatever it is so long as I know it is the truth" (MLF, 128). Sarah has to painfully realise that "everything [she] had assumed about [her] life was incorrect, that [she] had been baptised in blood and raised on secrets and misconstructions […]" (MLF, 136). Carey has Sarah's life based on lies, i.e. a fake version of truth. She has to admit the constructed nature of her own past and thus 'her own life as a fake'.

Chubb's possible unreliability as a narrator of his tale is thus equalled by Sarah's unreliability as regards her own life. Carey's focus on the constructedness of experience or more specifically on the textuality of experience becomes palpable in this approximation of both narratives. While Chubb's tale counteracts any rational analysis, Sarah's

'true' tale has been repressed by her rationality. The conception of the malleability of memory turns out to be programmatic for Carey. But he does not stop at this stage but rather takes the idea further by declaring our entire experience including the so-called 'objective' sphere of history as malleable by textuality, which Ashcroft subtly summarises:

> The hoax played on [Sarah] by memory is a counterpoint to the McCorkle hoax, and operates in a cunning way: the lie of Sarah's memory is superseded by Slater's 'true' story, while the 'lie' of McCorkle's poetry, is superseded by the novelist's 'true' story – the real McCorkle! McCorkle is given life by the test, his truth is the 'lie' of Carey's narrative. (Ashcroft, 37).

It is significant that Carey has on both structure and content level the two narrative strands, i.e. Sarah's narration and Chubb's narration, merge into one, as Sarah increasingly gets involved in Chubb's fate. Additionally, the impression of approximation of both tales is furthermore intensified when looking at parallels between Sarah and McCorkle. It can be argued that Sarah, due to her loss of trust in her own memory, becomes equally shaken in her identity construction as the simulacrum McCorkle, who was never granted a memory in the first place. "[A] visible past" and "a visible myth of origin" are, according to Baudrillard, the prerequisites for being able to bear up to the future (Baudrillard, *Simulacra,* 6-7). It is the deconstruction of a reliable past in Sarah's case and the futile attempt to construct a past on McCorkle's part that summarises the ambivalent nature of memory: memory is constitutional for forming one's personal identity. Paradoxically, the insight into the constructedness, i.e. the textuality of memory and the consequent disintegration of an apparently coherent narrative as regards one's own personal history in turn renders indentity construction highly problematic.

Apart from the intended maze of truth and lie, Carey's experiment in provoking the creation of a life out of mere texuality is successful and so is his main argument, i.e. that the authentic can result out of the fake. In McCorkle's case the signs for the real have substituted the real (cf. Baudrillard, *Simulacra,* 2), leaving him a simulacrum. Yet in his

eagerness to approach and create his world, he has superseded Chubb's disgust with reality and thus appears to be in closer contact with reality than his original. It can be argued that Carey's simulacrum oscillates between a Baudrillardian conception of the simulacrum as having preceded its original and a Deleuzian construction which argues the simulacrum not as derivate which has become independent but as different in the first place. In any case, however, it has to be noticed that McCorkle and Chubb are inseparably interlinked, two sides of one and the same textual coin.

4 CONCLUSION

Postmodern metafictional texts have often been criticised for their – sometimes exaggerated – focus on theoretical concerns. It has been argued for instance by Macfarlane that storytelling is at constant risk of being sacrificed in favour of highly intellectual constructions. Ergo, he sees both *My Life as a Fake* and *England, England* in danger of "paralyzing [their] own literary intelligence" (Macfarlane, 343). Other objections sustained as regards the metafictional genre relate to the risk of falling prey to oversimplifying complex contemporary theories on reality as emphasised by Pateman (cf. Pateman, 79). Of course, criticism of this kind is legitimate and comprehensible, yet simultaneously, the strong aspect of self-reflection including the implicit or explicit thematisation of theoretical preconceptions forms part of the aesthetic prerequesite of postmodern metafiction.

It is the constructedness of reality, which provides the common grounds for the novels discussed. Their application of basic postmodern aesthetic principles has been analysed as stressing the fragmented, the plural and most dominantly the ambivalent. The enlightened myth of origins and originality is called into question and consequently all three novels are intrigued by the textuality of life. This underlying assumption leads Barnes, Ackroyd and Carey to investigate further into the sphere of all-embracing textuality.

The three different approaches to (de)constructing authentic experience highlight postmodern plurality. While Barnes by means of satire follows his novel's undertaking of constructing an alternative reality by means of selecting, inventing and rearranging history in bits and pieces, Ackroyd sets out from the opposite direction to investigate the same issue. Contrary to *England, England,* which aims at constructing a

future reality, *Chatterton,* by means of presenting various competing versions of one and the same event, focuses on the deconstruction of a past presented as omnipotent. Thus, both authors bring about the artificiality of reality, that is, the textuality of reality. Moreover, they therewith highlight their doubts about the strict separation between the spheres of art and reality as they reveal that both spheres are equally constructed in language.

Peter Carey's contribution in this deliberation on origins and originality is less characterised by an attempt to construct or deconstruct (past) realities but *My Life as a Fake is rather* concerned with the daring conception of a reality that becomes independent from its own constructed basis. The author thus offers an even more blurred entry to the debate on textuality, art and reality.

In short, the three authors ask different questions all of which are circling around the ontology of reality. Barnes centres on the aspect of what is needed to construct reality, Ackroyd accentuates what becomes crucial regarding a deconstruction of reality, and Carey finally elaborates on the emancipatory potentional of a text: What if a textual reality frees itself from its own constructed basis? Is the 'obviously constructed' the most 'authentic' we can access?

It is thus a highly theoretical background the novelists aim at tackling in their individual texts. Barnes and Ackroyd seem to balance the weight of theory with an enourmous extent of postmodern play, which appears to be almost automatically involved when it comes to postmodern self-reflection. Carey, on the other hand, seems to discard the ludic element in favour of the uncanny or the irrational. His novel exhibits a high level of theoretical awareness, yet his mode of storytelling healthily contrasts Barnes' and Ackroyd's parodic approaches.

It can thus be argued that the collection of novels analysed in this study form a net of variations of one single issue, i.e. the constructedness of origins and originality. Barnes has his most ironic construction of the theme park England, England, that is the

sociocultural undertaking of creating a convincing reality, framed by meditations on identity construction. This identity construction is based on memory when related to the individual, as Barnes' highly cynical protagonist Martha proves, and it is based on collective memory, commonly called 'history', as regards the nation.

Ackroyd deliberates on the constructedness of history and original art, but furthermore also on the hypocrisy of a literary system, which claims its ability to distinguish between good and bad art, meaning original and faked art. Yet, when Ackroyd, full of artistic self-reflection, has his plagiariser Harriet expose her knowledge of the fake Seymours to the gallerists Cumberland and Maitland, who authenticated the paintings fearing both public ridicule and financial loss, it becomes clear that the lines between true and faked art are not to be drawn in an aesthetic sense, only in a pseudo-moral one. Authenticity and beauty lie in the eye of the beholder.

The idea of authenticity as lying in the eye of the beholder becomes even more relevant when related to Carey's *My Life as a Fake* and his textual simulacrum McCorkle. McCorkle's existence and his authenticity rely on readerly belief, i.e. the eye of the beholder. By basing his novel on the most peculiar historical circumstances, Carey's text focuses on the ambivalence of experience and the contradictory nature of reality. His experimentation with the emancipation of a text from its author becomes highly provocative when paralleled to the novel's historical basis, the Ern Malley Hoax, and the relative prominence Ern Malley's poetry gained in Australian literary history compared to the hoaxers' 'authentic' poetry.

Carey shows that the mimetic principle can be subverted. It is not only reality that engenders fiction but also vice versa, fiction generates reality.

Plato, Deleuze and Baudrillard have been cited as philosophers who aim at providing an applicable theoretical frame for cultural analysis, and here specifically for analysing the simulacrum, a representation of the

real, which claims to be real and is indistinguishable from the real. The concept of the simulacrum has proven to be a useful category when looking at postmodern novels which negotiate the real and the fake. Applied to the texts discussed the simulacrum assumes presence. Barnes' faked *England, England* becomes the simulacrum of contemporary England and furthermore a most self-consciously parodic amalgamation of postmodern theories on contemporary consumer culture. Especially Baudrillard's theory of the order of the simulacra becomes palpable yet also endangered of being oversimplified, as Pateman suggested.

Ackroyd negotiates the relationship between the real and the fake in the sphere of art and thus reaches the conclusion that a differentiation between the real and the simulacrum pretending to be the real can only be futile as reality itself is accessible through textuality only. Language itself, it can be argued, is the universal simulacrum of reality, which renders us to live in a state of hyperreality, as Baudrillards laments. In contrast to Baudrillard, Ackroyd appears to argue that the loss of access to reality is not engendered by our age of information culture. Rather, it is constitutional to textuality as such. We have never had access to reality except through language creating the simulacrum of reality.

Carey's approach to textuality and the simulacrum is charaterised by a desire to become authentic by means of difference. If McCorkle's poetry is to be regarded as a textual simulacrum of Chubb's, then it is one governed by the principle of difference, as Deleuze's theory suggests. McCorkle's poetry is the same as Chubb's poetry and yet it is not. It is McCorkle's own voice that makes it different. Similarity and difference are the basic conceptions Deleuze uses for his attempt to reverse the Platonic triadic structure of the original, the good copy and the bad copy, the simulacrum. McCorkle is able to emancipate himself from Chubb, but only to a certain extent. Finally, their relationship is one of deep dependence and Deleuze's theory cannot be applied.

It has been claimed that philosophical theory trying to account for contemporary reality helps to underline the postmodern concerns of the three novels and vice versa, yet their relationship has to be regarded as rather loose. It is not the novels' purpose to emphasise contemporary theory, but their focus is a self-conscious reflection on contemporary experience.

This contemporary experience is governed by mistrust in claims of objectivity and coherence. Neither is it possible by means of apparently objective historical research to retrieve a prime moment of origin, nor is a concept of originality sustainable which denies its obligation to traces of other cultural products. The trace becomes emblematic for contemporary experience and together with it also intertextuality, that is the interdependence of all life, which can be regarded as the living principle of art.

It is a quest for authenticity which is thematised in the three novels. This quest is exemplified on a national and private level in *England, England.* It is stressed as a problematisation of one's own authentic artistic voice as regards for instance Harriet and Philip but also Chatterton himself in *Chatterton,* and it is accentuated in *My Life as a Fake* both on an artistic level as well as on a sociocultural level, as McCorkle can either be read as the postmodern valorisation of the reader, which has the text undergo a process of emancipation from the author, or McCorkle can be read as allegorical for Australia in its postcolonial striving for its own cultural voice.

It has been argued that the three novels and their close affinity to processes of (de)construction deal with the awkward quality of historical representation. Ackroyd and Carey already stress this interest by choosing historiographic metafiction as their narrative genre. Instead of focusing on a historical event and its consequent narrative destabilisation, Barnes, stressing the content level of his novel, creates the outrageously constructed vision of a future only to prove its dependency on an equally constructed past.

The problematisation of history goes hand in hand with the problematisation of personal memory on the part of the individual. Accordingly Barnes and Carey develop their protagonists. In *England, England* it is Martha's consciousness of the limited objectivity her own memory grants that makes it impossible for her to develop an authentic identity, too many doubts and contradictions constrain her biography. Carey thematises two further approaches to one's own memory, which, however, fail in a successful identity construction as well. Sarah's trust in her own memory is shaken when she hears an alternative version of her own past. This experience extremely unsettles her and the nervous breakdown she suffers from at the end of Carey's novel indicates her incapacity to regain control over her memory. Sarah's failure is contrasted with McCorkle's craving for experience and memory. For him, it is his lack of memory that makes a positive identity construction impossible. The problematisation of memory and thus also history as regards the construction of authentic experience as an individual and as a collective becomes metaphoric for postmodern experience in terms of being governed by paradox and contradiction, as Hutcheon stresses (cf. Hutcheon, *Poetics*). Concluding from the novels, it can be argued that the potential of postmodern authenticity does not reside in the possibility of a coherent narrative, but in the admission of breaks, clashes, ambivalences and inconsistencies and their consequent reworking.

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7
APPENDIX

ABSTRACT

Der kritischen Auseinandersetzung mit Epistemen der Aufklärung wird in der postmodernen Kultur- und Literaturtheorie ein zentraler Stellenwert eingeräumt. Insbesondere das sich wandelnde Verständnis von Konzepten wie Ursprung und Originalität lässt den erkenntnistheoretischen Bruch zwischen Aufklärung und Postmoderne deutlich werden. Während in konventioneller humanistischer Denktradition mit dem Gedanken an Ursprünglichkeit Konzepte wie Beginn, Reinheit und Authentizität gleichgesetzt werden, verwickeln postmoderne Denkansätze diese Konzepte in einen Dialog mit ihren traditionellen Gegenentwürfen. So kann beispielsweise die Diskussion über künstlerische Originalität nur unter gleichzeitiger Einbeziehung von Kopie, Plagiat oder Fälschung erfolgen.

Die Ambivalenz und Vielschichtigkeit postmoderner Erfahrung steht oft im Zentrum der Werke postmoderner Autoren, so auch in den metafiktionalen Erzählungen von Julian Barnes, Peter Ackroyd und Peter Carey, deren narrative Wirkungskraft sich aus der Dekonstruktion traditionell antagonistischer Paare wie Realität und Fiktion/Textualität, Original und Kopie, Wahrheit und Lüge entwickelt. Während Julian Barnes sich in seinem satirischen Roman *England, England* insbesondere der Konstruktion von Geschichte und der Schaffung einer artifiziellen Realität widmet, hebt Peter Ackroyd in *Chatterton* die (Un-) Möglichkeit künstlerischer Originalität bzw. die Bedingungen kreativen Schaffens hervor. Auch Peter Carey siedelt die Handlung seines Romans *My Life as*

a Fake im literarischen Bereich an. Wird Literatur generell gerne als möglicher Spiegel der Wirklichkeit angesehen, so wird in Carey's Erzählung eine Wirklichkeit verhandelt, die erst durch Textualität enstehen kann.

Der spezifisch postmoderne Zugang zu Entwürfen von Ursprung und Originalität, den besagte Autoren auf unterschiedliche Weise repräsentieren, ergibt sich aus dem Zulassen und der mitunter ironischen Neuverhandlung von Brüchen, Abhängigkeiten, Ambivalenzen und Widersprüchlichkeiten menschlicher Erfahrung.

GERLINDE HEINDL

Gerlinde Heindl, 1982 in Wien geboren, studierte Anglistik und Hispanistik in Wien und Barcelona. Ihrem Sprachenstudium gab sie eine literatur- und kulturwissenschaftliche Ausrichtung, die ihr Interesse an der Einbettung literaturwissenschaftlicher Fragestellungen in interdisziplinäre Kontexte förderte. Spezialisierungen erfolgten im Bereich postmoderner Theorie und Literatur, insbesondere anhand der intensiven Auseinandersetzung mit postmoderner Metafiktion, Aspekten des Mensch-Tier-Diskurses und postkolonialer afrikanischer Literatur.

Während des Studiums absolvierte Gerlinde Heindl Lehrgänge im Verlagswesen und in betriebswirtschaftlicher Basiskompetenz. Wiederholt war sie an Projekten im Medien- und Kulturbereich beteiligt. Unter anderem arbeitete sie für den Freien Rundfunk Oberösterreich und das Österreichische Lateinamerika Institut.

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