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NARRATIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH
ATONEMENT AND *THE BLIND ASSASSIN*

Ⅰ MUST BEGIN WITH A WARNING. In this article, I give away the endings of two wonderful books: Ian McEwan's *Atonement* and Margaret Atwood's *The Blind Assassin*.[1] If you haven't read these books already, you may want to stop reading now: you'll enjoy reading the books much more if you don't know the details that I reveal below. These books are philosophically interesting, I argue, because they reveal something about the nature of the understanding and appreciation of narrative. They show us that an audiences' participation in narrative is much more subtle and complex than philosophers generally acknowledge. An analysis of these books reveals that narrative imagining is not static or unified, but dynamic and multi-polar. I argue that once the complexity of narrative engagement is better understood, some prominent philosophical problems and debates concerning narrative dissolve.

I have in mind a set of interrelated problems and debates concerning the nature of the imagination and narrative identification or viewpoint in narrative. (I focus on literature in this article, but much of what is said here can be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to other narrative genres, such as theater, television, film, comics, and so on.) These questions have been much discussed in the recent philosophical literature on narrative: (1) Is it necessary that the audience imagine an implied author when engaging with a narrative? How does the perspective of the implied author figure into the experience of reading? (2) When one engages with fiction, does one typically imagine centrally (that is, from a character's point of view), or acentrally, as a neutral spectator on the fictional scene? (3) Given that audiences are sometimes emotionally affected by narratives, by what means are they affected? Attention to

which aspects of the narrative provokes these responses? In what follows, I look more closely at each of these problems in turn. Each of these problems, I suggest, arises out of a philosophical tendency to simplify a complex phenomenon. Once the full complexity of narrative engagement is appreciated, these problems dissolve (or, at least, they take a quite different shape).

I

What is an implied author? What role does the perspective of the implied author play in the experience of the reader? The term "implied author" is Wayne Booth's,[2] but it is closely allied with Kendall Walton's "apparent artist,"[3] and Alexander Nehamas's "postulated author."[4] These terms do not designate exactly the same thing, but they are fairly close in meaning. For Booth, the implied author is a species of narrator (*TROF*, p. 151). Booth says that even in works where the narrator is not dramatized, readers form a conception of the consciousness responsible for creating the work. The implied author is the reader's conception of the agent who makes the decisions about what story to tell, and how to tell it. Booth is particularly interested in the moral character of the implied author, and he argues that readers either form or fail to form friendships with implied authors based partially on the extent to which the reader and the implied author share a moral sensibility.

Walton's apparent artist applies to all the arts, even non-narrative arts. The apparent artist is similar to Booth's implied artist, though Walton's focus is different. Walton treats the apparent artist not primarily as a center for a moral sensibility, but rather as a source of apparent aims and intentions in the work. On Walton's view, the work can prescribe us to imagine that the apparent artist had characteristics and aims that the real author may or may not have had. For this reason, the apparent artist can be an important part of the imaginative experience of the work.

Alexander Nehamas's postulated author is slightly different. Nehemas formulated the concept of the postulated author in response to Barthes's and Derrida's claims about the death of the author,[5] and Nehemas's postulated author is meant to solve some of the problems posed by the death of the author. Specifically, Nehemas claims that it is possible to create a model of the author based on the text to serve as a hypothesis on which to test theories and criticisms. This model will be independent of facts about the historical writer. Nehemas's postulated

author is less a part of the reader's imaginative experience and more a theoretical construct for critical discussion. It allows one to talk of aims and intentions without depending on the historical writer.

In one of these versions or another, the idea of an implied author has been quite popular among philosophers, and the term "implied author" figures into a variety of analyses and theories about narrative. But some question the distinction between the actual, historical author and her postulated or implied counterpart; others question the role of any such implied author in the imaginative experience of the reader.[6] The question is not whether implied authors are "real"—everyone agrees that they are not—but whether they are important as fictional postulates, whether they necessarily or commonly figure in readers' experiences of narrative. Do we, as readers, take up the perspectives of implied authors as we read, and should taking up that perspective shape how we respond to the work?

II

The second problem also has to do with the point of view or perspective taken by readers when engaging imaginatively with a narrative. Do we take the point of view of a character in the story ("central" imagining) or rather of an onlooker ("acentral" imagining)? This distinction is Richard Wollheim's,[7] but it shares a certain amount of common ground with Gregory Currie's distinction between primary and secondary imagining,[8] and it has been adopted by many others.[9] The differences between these distinctions are important, but they share some common features.[10] Central (or secondary or inside) imagining is imagining from the point of view of a character (including an implied author) in the fiction. One imagines knowing what that character knows, feeling what that character feels, and so on. Acentral (or primary or outside) imagining is more difficult, and it is easier to understand it negatively. It is imagining not from the point of view of any character. It may be imagining from a (fictionally non-existent) observer's point of view—imagining witnessing Darcy's proposal to Elizabeth from a corner of the room not occupied by any character; it may be purely propositional imagining, from no "point of view" at all— merely entertaining the proposition that over the rainbow there exists a land called "Oz";[11] it may be imagining the scene from impossible points of view, as Wollheim himself seems to have in mind when he

speaks of representing a scene to himself "stretched out, friezelike, the far side of the invisible chasm of history" (p. 73).

While most philosophers who make this distinction agree that we are capable of imagining both centrally and acentrally, there is strong disagreement about which of these perspectives is more important to reader's experience of narratives. Noël Carroll, for example, has argued that central imagining is quite rare, and is unimportant in producing most of our emotional and cognitive responses to narrative.[12] Acentral imagining, in his view, is responsible for most of our responses to and experiences with narrative. Matthew Kieran, discussing simulation theory, has similarly discounted the role of central imagining in appreciating fiction.[13] By contrast, simulation theorists such as Gregory Currie and Susan Feagin attribute a great deal of our response to and understanding of narratives to central imagining.[14]

The problem of central/acentral imagining is further complicated by its relationship to the first problem about implied authors because the theory of implied authors threatens to swallow up all cases of alleged acentral imagining and replace them with central imagining from the implied author's perspective. If the point of view of the implied author is always present to our attention, then we never really imagine acentrally—we always see the world of the fiction through the eyes of the implied consciousness that we imagine creating that world. On the other hand, if there is no implied author, or if the implied author is marginal to narrative experience, then acentral imagining will figure rather more prominently in one's account of imaginative engagement.

III

Given that the experience of narrative can produce strong feelings in audience members, how are these feelings produced? What kinds of feelings are they—are they, for example, emotions? Are these feelings warranted or rational (especially given that many narratives are fictional)? The literature on these topics is much larger than I can adequately summarize here.[15] Much of the recent controversy has centered around Kendall Walton's claim that engagement with art produces make-believe emotions, which differ from ordinary emotions in important cognitive and motivational respects, while sharing the physiological features of their counterpart ordinary emotions.[16] But the larger problem, which has its roots in Aristotle,[17] is understanding how

and why narratives do affect their audiences so deeply. Virtually all aestheticians acknowledge that affective response to narrative is an important part of the value and meaning of narrative works, but the causes and character of those responses are still not well understood.

The difficulty here I focus on is whether the cause of the affective response is located in—to use Peter Lamarque's terminology—the fictive or the literary aspects of the narrative.[18] Attention to fictive aspects involves attention to the events depicted in the narrative, and so resembles attention to events in one's life. Many philosophers emphasize the ways in which one's response to narrative is a matter of one's feelings about the characters or events depicted therein. These would be responses to the fictive aspects of the narrative, because they have to do with the content of what we are asked to imagine. But philosophers also acknowledge that some responses to narrative are caused by the appreciation of the narrative's form, structure, or style. Attention to literary aspects involves an awareness that one's attention is being given to a story, and it involves an interest in how the story is told. These belong to what Lamarque calls the literary dimension.

The example that has received the most philosophical attention in this regard is tragedy. Tragedy seems to produce in us conflicting literary and fictive responses; on the one hand, we are saddened by Lear's death because we come to care about him—this response is due to fictive attention. On the other hand, we also feel relief and pleasure at his death because the story achieves its resolution thereby—this response is due to literary attention. Thus contradictory responses can be explained as the result of simultaneous but independent modes of attention.[19] This account, of course, has its critics. Hume held that somehow the fictive response of pain was transformed into pleasure via something like literary attention; and this view has the advantage of showing an interaction between the two responses.[20] Either our response to tragedy is a unified response to both form and content, or it is somehow a mixture of two independent responses to unconnected aspects of the work.

The problem is not limited to tragedy, and it is related to our first two problems. How do we, as readers, deploy our attention in narrative? Are our responses to narratives a result of attention to fictive elements, literary elements, or both? How does the kind of attention we pay to narratives move us? If we give significant weight to the implied author theory, then does this imply that we attend to the way the story is told (since we are noticing that the narrative has been authored), and thus

that our interest should be described as literary? Or does it imply that we begin to take an interest not in these literary elements for their own sake but only insofar as they help us form a conception of an authorial character, and thus our interest and response are primarily fictive? All of these problems ask how the reader's attention is or should be deployed in following narratives. In each case, we have described for us two or more tracks, and we asked whether audience attention follows one, the other, or possibly both.

I suggest, in what follows, that each of these three problems rests on a false choice; that imaginative attention to a particular point of view is not simply either on or off—it can be partial; that the experience of reading over time allows one to remember prior scenes while reading later ones, and attend to those scenes differently; that readers' attention to and understanding of narratives is not confined to the tracks that philosophers have laid down for us. Reading is not like riding the rails. To see this, let us look at a couple of cases where these tracks, if that's what they were, would have to cross over and loop back on one another, a train wreck waiting to happen.

IV

There are some similarities in the plots, settings, and characters of Ian McEwan's *Atonement* and Margaret Atwood's *The Blind Assassin*. The main events of both books take place during the 1930s, although the books are not "written" by their protagonists until 1999. Both protagonists are quite old at the time the books conclude; one dies at the end, while the other has contracted a fatal illness. In both books, the primary conflict concerns a kind of triangle between the protagonist and her sister, who are aristocratic, and a working-class lover of one of them. But more striking than these similarities in setting and character are the similarities in the two books' narrative structure.

Both books employ the common device of asking us to imagine that the book has been written not by the actual author, but rather by the book's protagonist—as Bradley Pearson is supposed to be the author of *The Black Prince* or Humbert Humbert is supposed to have written *Lolita*. But whereas we are told at the outset that Bradley and Humbert are the authors of their respective books, *Atonement* and *The Blind Assassin* employ this device in an unusual way. The reader is not told that the protagonist is also the author until near the end, and for many readers, this comes as a great surprise, because it changes how we have

understood the book and its characters. The reader is forced to review what she has read thus far and think of it now in a new way, as a story told by the book's protagonist. The reader is also forced to think of the protagonist in a new way, as the author of the book that she has been reading. Thus each book includes a frame story and an inner story, but the nature of the relationship between the frame story and inner story is not revealed until the end. In *Atonement*, it is not clear until the end that there is a frame story. In the final chapters, we learn that we are to suppose that everything but the final twenty pages of the book has been written by Briony as a kind of atonement for her crime, described therein. In *The Blind Assassin*, the reader is aware of the frame story, but the reader is misled as to the relationship between the frame story and the inner story; the reader is told at the start that the inner story is written by Laura. But in the final chapters of *The Blind Assassin*, we learn that this book-within-a-book, also called "The Blind Assassin" is supposed to have been written instead by Laura's sister and the frame story's protagonist, Iris. Thus much of what we have come to believe about Iris and Laura needs to be re-evaluated.

Both books also use a variety of points of view in telling the story. In *The Blind Assassin*, there are three kinds of chapters: newspaper clippings, chapters of "The Blind Assassin" (the prologue of which lists the author as Laura Chase), and a memoir by Iris Chase Griffen.[21] The memoir chapters are written in the first person, and they include a great deal of privileged access to Iris's thoughts, although Iris conceals from the reader the key fact of her authorship of "The Blind Assassin" until the final pages (though, of course, it is possible for the reader to guess this earlier). In these chapters, Iris is a "self-conscious narrator" (see Booth, *TROF*): she is aware of herself as a writer and she comments on the task of writing. The "Blind Assassin" chapters are written in the third person, and have relatively less privileged access to the inner life of either unnamed character. The frame story includes a great deal of psychological language, and first-person evaluations by Iris of the people and situations she encounters, and relatively little dialogue. The inner story, written in terse sentences with no quotation marks to indicate dialogue, has little by way of privileged views of psychological states. It consists largely of the male character improvising a science fiction story to the female character as they pursue a love affair. It has a great deal of dialogue. We are to suppose that the male character is based on Alex and the female character on the author of

"The Blind Assassin." So we first suppose that Laura had the affair with Alex and wrote the book based on that affair; we later learn that Iris did.

The structure of *Atonement* is also complex. The book is divided into four parts, though the fourth part is quite different than the first three. The fourth part, simply entitled "January 1999," is the frame story, and is told in the first person by Briony. We are not to suppose that Briony has written the fourth part down; McEwan simply gives us her thoughts. The novel that Briony has written comprises the first three parts only. These parts are written in the third person, but they nonetheless offer a great deal of privileged insight into the main character's psychology. Part I is divided into fourteen short chapters and the central character shifts from one chapter to the next. (Very occasionally, these shifts also happen within a chapter.) This part of the book includes so many shifts that some readers find it disconcerting. Parts II and III are not so divided, and each has a single main character through whom the reader follows events. Part II follows the victim of Briony's crime, Robbie Turner, as he attempts to find his way back to England during the British retreat from France in 1940. We only get one perspective on these events: his. Part III tells the story of Briony's first attempts to repent for her crime. Again, here we get only her point of view. Each of these parts offers an intimate psychological view of the main character, and as the book goes on more and more hints that Briony is the book's author begin to appear.

There are several features of these books particularly worthy of note with respect to the problems with which we were earlier concerned.

(1) Both Atwood and McEwan drop various clues throughout the book that will allow some readers to determine that the main character is also the author. Many readers find that the idea that Briony/Iris is the author of the inner book dawns on them slowly as they read. The revelation need not happen in a single moment.

(2) Both books place the readers with different characters in different sections of the novel, sometimes shifting every few pages.

(3) In many but not all of these cases, the reader is given a privileged inside view of that character's view of the world.

(4) Both books employ different styles and structural technique in different sections. For example, *Atonement* uses variations of pace to great effect—Parts I and II crawl along, occasionally looping back in time, where Part III moves rapidly; *The Blind Assassin* uses terse, sometimes repetitive sentences in the inner story, and longer, more

complex constructions in the outer story. The different sections of these books differ with respect to literary qualities as well as fictive ones.

What would happen if we posed to the reader of *The Blind Assassin* or *Atonement* the three sets of questions considered above? First, what would we say about the implied author in these books? It seems obvious, first, that at the conclusion of each book, any attentive reader will have a conception of an implied author of the inner book. Since the reader is explicitly told by the end of the novel that the inner book was written by the protagonist for a reason, any attentive reader will naturally turn her attention and imagination to the consciousness behind the inner novel. On the other hand, it is by no means clear that the reader will have had such a conception prior to the discovery, guiding her relationship to the characters and events. So the reader might be tempted to say that she did not have such a conception in mind initially, but once she learns that Briony/Iris is the author, she forms such a conception, and begins to think about how the book is written as a clue to the mind behind it.

Indeed, for some readers, the discovery does come as a shock—perhaps when Iris writes "As for the book, Laura didn't write a word of it" (Atwood, p. 512) or when Part III of *Atonement* ends with the signature "BT, London 1999" (McEwan, p. 349), the reader suddenly realizes that the protagonist needs to be thought of also as the book's author. But it is more common, I think, for readers to figure things out bit by bit; the discovery occurs for most readers as a gradual, almost nagging sense that something isn't quite right. Both *Atonement* and *The Blind Assassin* are rich with clues that can catch the reader's attention without his understanding their significance—as in a good mystery novel, but here the reader doesn't even know the book he's reading is a mystery. The sense of Iris or Briony as an implied author can dawn on a reader slowly, so that the reader never quite "figures it out" prior to being told, but nonetheless the reader is ready for the discovery and is unsurprised when it comes. For example, in *Atonement*, early on we get a paragraph about Briony's future which begins: "Six decades later she would describe how at the age of thirteen she had written her way through the whole history of literature . . ." (p. 41). Here we get an indication that the implied author of the book has information about Briony in the 1990s, and we get a sense that the facts that Briony of the 1990s is a writer, and further, a writer whose career begins at the time of the story, are important. The sense in the reader of an implied author at this point may or not be fully formed—it is possible, however, for

some vague or limited attention to be given to features which later take the shape of an implied author. So to think of readers as either having the perspective of an implied author in mind or not at this point in the book may be misleading.

The issue of implied author is further complicated as the reader recognizes that Briony/Iris are the authors of their respective books, because the reader may then begin to form a new conception of McEwan or Atwood as implied author. The characteristics that one has been attributing to McEwan based on his attitude towards the characters and events of the story are slowly transferred and re-attributed to Briony, but at the same time new characteristics may be attributed to the implied McEwan: now McEwan is seen as having certain attitudes towards the characters and events in the novel in part on the basis of his use of Briony as fictional author. But it is not easy to pry apart Briony, the fictional author of Parts I and II of *Atonement* from the implied McEwan. For example, one may ask whether the portrayal of Briony in Part I as narrow-minded and self-involved is the result of Briony's own self-recriminating attitude, or McEwan's? Is McEwan, perhaps, even criticizing Briony's shallow attempt at atonement? The conceptions of implied author and fictional narrator intersect and overlap.[22]

Similarly, whether the reader engages in "central" or "acentral" imagining seems to vary from place to place in these books. For example, in *The Blind Assassin*, the chapters which consist of newspaper items seem to encourage acentral imagining; Iris's memoirs seem to place the reader in her shoes. So one might think of the reader as simply shifting back and forth, between acentral and central perspectives. The standard view of how readers engage with fictions tends to assume that the mind works like a train, heading down one track or another, possibly switching tracks at various points. Susan Feagin describes these as "shifts" and "slides" (see Feagin). Only occasionally is it suggested that readers attend to two or more aspects of a work at once. But another metaphor we might use is focusing. The reader can have one character in a narrative in focus, while keeping the others well in view. Feagin's shifts should be thought of as changes in focus— foreground becomes background, or vice versa. Deep focus is also possible, where attention is sharp to more than one viewpoint.

In *The Blind Assassin*, the same events are often described multiple times from different perspectives. For example, the voyage on the Queen Mary is first described by a newspaper account, which describes the dancing and eveningwear of the passengers, but which does so

without naming any of the passengers or offering any insight into their thoughts.[23] But reading this account illuminates the immediately pre-ceding chapter, a "The Blind Assassin" chapter which ends with the female character tells the male character that she will be going away for a while, "on the maiden voyage" (p. 345). As soon as one reads the subsequent newspaper account, one knows that the maiden voyage in question must be the Queen Mary's. So as one reads the newspaper accounts, one might, recalling the previous chapter, simultaneously imagine this heroine there, and try to see things from her point of view. It is not simply a matter of shifting gears from acentral to central perspectives. The experience can be simultaneous, or at least overlap-ping. One imagines a lonely passenger in the midst of a lively crowd, caught up despite herself, her guilt and pleasure, and one sees the crowd, as from a journalists' perspective, at once. A few chapters later, we get Iris's account in her memoir, of the voyage on the Queen Mary; again, we have the opportunity, replaying our memories of earlier passages, to imagine this voyage from Iris's viewpoint, a neutral (journalist's) perspective, and from the point of view of the unnamed heroine of the inner novel; further, we can compare and even conflate these views, particularly if we are beginning to suspect that Iris is the heroine of the inner story.

This example highlights the complicating role of memory in reading. (Here perhaps it is particularly important to treat literature differently from other narrative media.) While one reads, one can simultaneously recall earlier chapters or scenes, and these recollections may take a different emphasis than the original experience. One often pauses in reading to dwell on these memories, turns back pages to re-read, and re-interprets the perspective one has already enjoyed while one reads on. And a second reading of a book, especially a second reading of a book like *Atonement* or *The Blind Assassin*, is a very different experience that offers different opportunities to focus than a first reading. Even here too, the memories of one's imaginative experience from the first time around interact with and enrich the current experience.

Finally, whether the reader is attentive to literary or fictive aspects of the work, and which of these aspects is responsible for his responses, turns out to be a very complex matter once we see how porous the two perspectives can be for the reader. In both *Atonement* and *The Blind Assassin*, attention to literary style and structure is *ipso facto* attention to a character's psychology, since these literary features are supposed to be a product of Briony's/Iris's intentions. Fictive and literary perspectives

are not easily separable in the practice of reading. For example, consider the scene in *Atonement* when Briony's manuscript is rejected from Horizon. At this point, if they have not done so already, most readers will conclude that Briony is the author of the book. From the editor's description of the short story, it is fairly obvious that the story is a rough draft of Part I of *Atonement* itself. But the editors go on to point out that Briony's use of stream of consciousness narration and shifting points of view only serve to evade the primary moral and plot questions: what is going on here, and why? The editors write: "Simply put, you need the backbone of a story" (p. 314). Since Briony is concerned to atone for her crime, a description of it which by its literary structure avoids any serious treatment of plot or character tells us something about Briony's moral resolve (or lack thereof). After reflecting on the letter and on what she owes to Cecilia and Robbie, Briony accepts the editor's criticisms, and goes further: "It was not the backbone of a story that she lacked. It was a backbone" (McEwan, p. 320). The reader's response to the literary features of *Atonement* will color her responses to the fictive elements and *vice versa*.

This is not to deny that there is some distinction to be made between fictive and literary elements (or between acentral and central imagining, or between implied authors and historical ones), or that the literary perspective is not a valuable one, worth distinguishing from the fictive in order to provide a critical analysis of a work of fiction.[24] I am not arguing that the two perspectives are not conceptually distinct or useful for some purposes. But as an account of the experience of reading and responding to narratives, we need to be more careful, and more attentive to particulars. How we respond to narrative events like the discovery that Briony has written *Atonement* (or most of it), and further, that she has written it in order to make up for the wrongs she describes herself committing therein, depends on our attention to many things, including the way the book is written, the events described therein, and the larger issues raised about what counts as atonement and the moral authority of the author. Only careful attention to particular literary and fictive features will explain how readers are affected by the revelation in *Atonement*. And these features will not necessarily be the same ones that explain the response to other books, even similar books such as *The Blind Assassin*.

To some extent, how a reader attends and responds to a work has to do with who she is. Some readers are simply more interested in imagining the inner lives and feelings of characters than others, and

will always seek this view out; some readers are very interested in plot and structure; some are quite attentive to the use of language and metaphor; and so on. To some extent, reader's experiences are determined by the choices of the author, who has the power, by the information she either provides or withholds, to make it very difficult to take any but one viewpoint on a narrative, as Part II of *Atonement* gives us Robbie's point of view on events exclusively. We need to keep in mind that which points of view matter to the reader's experience and understanding of narrative will vary with respect both to the individual reader and to the work.

It is possible that simulation theory is partly to blame for the tendency to seek out unified accounts of imaginative engagement with fiction.[25] The widespread appropriation by aestheticians of simulation theory and similar theories of imaginative engagement from cognitive science has led philosophers to expect to discover unified theories of readers' engagement with fiction. However, as Aristotle said, "it is the mark of an educated man to look for precision in each class of things just so far as the nature of the subject admits."[26] Reading is not a science. We should not forget that even if simulation is a good model of imagining, it is only a model, and there are many complicating variables of experience in both reader and work that intervene between the model and its application. There may be very different kinds of imaginative experiences that could all be called "simulation" and yet they differ with respect to level of detail, emotional involvement, and prominence in the imaginer's attention. Further, our minds are capable of performing many different simulations at once, with dynamic changes in emphasis, the fusing of two or more different simulations into one, and other changes in detail and involvement as we go.

The view I am endorsing is a kind of particularism about narrative viewpoints. Philosophers ought not to expect general answers to questions about what kinds of perspectives readers take when they engage with narratives. The importance of implied authors, central and acentral perspectives, and literary and fictive properties in readers' experiences of narrative is highly variable, and in practice these perspectives are often difficult to disentangle from one another. To seek general answers to these three sets of questions is futile. First, as *Atonement* and *The Blind Assassin* show, the imagination has enormous power and flexibility—it does not run on tracks. Second, there is great variation among readers and works in how narratives are experienced. We have seen how these two books bring out in readers certain patterns

of attention that other books need not. *Atonement* and *The Blind Assassin* are remarkable books because they take advantage of readers' enormous flexibility in taking up different kinds of viewpoints and deploying attention in creative and sometimes conflicting ways. They resist easy explanation in terms of general models of narrative perspective and engagement.

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1. Ian McEwan, *Atonement* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2001); Margaret Atwood, *The Blind Assassin* (New York: Anchor Books, 2000).

2. Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction,* 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); hereafter *TROF*; *The Company We Keep: An Ethics of Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

3. Kendall Walton, "Style and the Processes of Art," in *The Concept of Style,* ed. Beryl Lang (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), pp. 72–103.

4. Alexander Nehemas, "The Postulated Author: Critical Monism as a Regulative Ideal," *Critical Inquiry* 8 (1981): 133–49; "Writer, Work, Text, Author," in *Literature and the Question of Philosophy,* ed. Anthony J. Cascardi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), pp. 265–91.

5. Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in *Image, Music, Text,* trans. by Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), pp. 142–48; Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism,* trans. and ed. Josue V. Harari (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), pp. 141–60.

6. Noël Carroll, "Interpretation and Intention: The Debate Between Actual and Hypothetical Intentionalism," *Metaphilosophy* 31 (2000): 75–95; Robert Stecker, "Apparent and Postulated Authors," *Philosophy and Literature* 11 (1987): 258–71.

7. Richard Wollheim, *The Thread of Life* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

8. Gregory Currie, "The Moral Psychology of Fiction," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 73 (1995): 250–59.

9. For example, see Murray Smith, *Engaging Characters: Fiction, Emotion, and the Cinema* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

10. I have been influenced in my thinking on this subject by an unpublished paper of Alessandro Giovannelli's, "In & Out: The Dynamics of Imagination in Narrative Participation," which I had the opportunity to comment on at the American Society for

Aesthetics annual meeting in October 2002. Giovannelli usefully describes in that paper some of the important differences between these different distinctions. Here, however, I overlook these differences and standardize the terminology.

11. This would be what Wollheim calls "non-iconic" imagining, since it is not perceptual.

12. Noël Carroll, *A Philosophy of Mass Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); see chap. 4 especially.

13. Matthew Kieran, "In Search of a Narrative," in *Imagination, Philosophy, and the Arts*, ed. Matthew Kieran and Dominic McIver Lopes (New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 69–87.

14. Gregory Currie, "Imagination and Simulation: Aesthetics Meets Cognitive Science," in *Mental Simulation*, ed. Martin Davies and Tony Stone (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), pp. 151–69; hereafter "IAS"; Susan Feagin, *Reading with Feeling* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

15. Hjort and Laver's collection includes an excellent introduction to these topics by Jerrold Levinson and a helpful set of references at the end. See Matte Hjort and Sue Laver (eds.), *Emotion and the Arts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

16. Kendall Walton, "Fearing Fictions," *Journal of Philosophy* 75 (1978): 5–27; *Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990); hereafter *MAMB*.

17. Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. Gerald Else (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1970).

18. Peter Lamarque, "Tragedy and Moral Value," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 73 (1995): 239–49.

19. Marcia M. Eaton, "A Strange Kind of Sadness," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 41 (1982): 51–63.

20. David Hume, "Of Tragedy," in *Selected Essays*, ed. Stephen Copley and Andrew Elgar (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 126–33.

21. There is also one letter to Richard (Atwood, pp. 405–6), from the director of the institution where Laura has been sent. This is *sui generis*. It is not part of "The Blind Assassin," nor is it part of Iris's memoir, nor is it a public document. The reader gets to see it though Iris does not.

22. The case of *The Blind Assassin* is even more complex, because of the nested story structure. When we learn that Iris, not Laura, is the author of "The Blind Assassin," this does not directly change our perception of the authorship of the frame story (Iris's memoir, the newspaper clippings). But it does change our perception of Atwood's role in authoring "The Blind Assassin," since attitudes previously attributed to Atwood might now be reassigned to Iris.

23. Interestingly, this newspaper account, unlike the others appearing in *The Blind Assassin*, is historical. It is not authored by Margaret Atwood.

24. See Peter Lamarque, *Fictional Points of View* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), especially chap. 12.

25.   Gregory Currie (in, e.g., "IAS") is primarily responsible for introducing aestheticians to the simulation theory from philosophy of mind, but Walton's "make-believe" theory (see *MAMB*), though developed independently, anticipates important features of simulation theory. Other authors such as Feagin (in *RWF*) have adopted simulation in formulating their views on narrative.

26.   Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. David Ross, revised J. L. Ackrill and J. O. Urmson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 3.