Going Beyond the Postmodern in Contemporary Literature

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<u>Introduction.</u>

The complications surrounding postmodernism as being against foundationalism and absolutism stem from its somewhat conclusive development into what has been described by many as a grand narrative. Postmodernism sought to recalibrate away from the grand narratives that potentially defined modernism, to break free from logic and definitiveness, and yet for most, it fell short, thus in turn becoming that which it fought so hard to undermine. Linda Hutcheon for example, asserts that the inclusion of postmodernism on the educational syllabus led to its institutionalisation.[1] The general consensus surrounding the failure or apparent end of the postmodern is that it became *something*. Postmodernism, by definition, became a 'period'. Whether or not this was inevitable is difficult to say. What seems to be the case is the need for definition and categorisation. All that the postmodern stood for was overwhelmed by terminology, by the incessant development of ascribing to it a sense of unique identification or definition – a factor it was supposedly set against in the very first instance. If the postmodern is in fact over, or has indeed failed as a literary and cultural 'period', there arises the ever-pressing question, that is, what has replaced it as a cultural position? This is a question embedded with contradiction. If the general assumption is that definition is unavoidable, there appears

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[1] Linda Hutcheon, 'Gone forever but here to stay: the legacy of the postmodern' ', in *Postmodernism. What Moment?*, ed. by Goulimari (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011) pp. 16-18.

to be an equally general assumption, as outlined in the very make-up of postmodernism, that definition is also impossible. In this sense, there is a need to categorize the current 'period', and an overwhelming inability to do so, a paradox which surrounds any attempt to label the current situation *post*-postmodernism. Nevertheless, it is my attempt in this essay to investigate one of the possible movements, or periods that we have now entered into following the demise of postmodernism.

It will be discussed here that although postmodernism seems to have come to an end, there are continued signs of its on-going presence. I would like to suggest that if we have indeed moved *out* or *away* from postmodernism, this is not something that we are experiencing as a chronological progression. In addition to this, while there is an alteration of emphasis as we move from postmodernism into a new and emergent epoch, there is at the same time an awareness that ruptures have occurred between each 'period' all along. The aim of this work is to explore this supposed movement *beyond* postmodernism with reference to Tom McCarthy's contemporary novel *Remainder* and Luke Rhineheart's 1970's cult novel *The Dice Man*. These novels explore various aspects of selfhood – particularly identity and authenticity – and its relation to the reality of human existence. Where classic postmodern theory would report upon the illusory aspects of selfhood and reality as essentially 'constructs' or 'metaphysical' concepts, my intention here is to demonstrate that these writers simultaneously accept and yet challenge these ideas. Their novels recognise and incorporate the postmodern critique of identity, agency and volition. However, at the same time they are also conveying the desire of their culture to locate a central happiness in the modern world that is substantial and authentic. From a postmodern standpoint, they recognise that this is not possible. Unlike traditional postmodern writers, they also regard it as necessary. These novels are therefore both ironic, deconstructive and playful postmodern texts, and attempts to contest the values of postmodernism. I will conclude this essay by attempting to assess whether these attempts can be said to constitute a viable and coherent alternative to the cultural paradigm of postmodernism. As has been suggested, there is something of a paradox in assigning definition to any given time or place, 'period' or moment, due to the continuous changes that are constantly taking shape. However, it seems

necessary to continue to try to understand ourselves and the world that we exist in if the human condition is to progress.

It is difficult to suggest that we have entered into a place in time that can categorically be termed 'after'-postmodernism; however, it is the contention of Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker that there has been a development in society, one which has grown out of the values of both modernism and postmodernism. Vermeulen and Akker refer to this development as 'metamodernism'. Metamodernism is perhaps the most compelling discourse which can be put forward as a possible replacement for postmodernism, and as such I will be discussing the metamodern in far more detail during the course of this work. This is due to its agenda to locate through theory the emerging aspects and aesthetics of an uncertain, globalised world. Vermeulen and Akker describe metamodernism as an oscillation between the modern and the postmodern, suggesting that it has come about as a result of the anxiety driven economy that we have entered into. Its primary conceptualisation is that there has been generated by anxiety a desire for improvement, a desire to return to modern ideals of authenticity, while at the same time there is an awareness of the certain failure to capture any sense of belonging or truth. This existence of paralysis, of being caught in an oscillation between the modern and the postmodern is the essential movement of the metamodern discourse. For Vermeulen and Akker, we are at this moment in time continuously attempting to abandon and challenge everything that we believe the postmodern to have stood for, in favour of a more enlightened existence, all the while accepting and having awareness for the fact that such a goal is forever unachievable. The oscillating movement is committed to with hope and engagement as we embrace the impossible. I will be addressing this problematic transformation from the postmodern into what has seemingly replaced it by examining metamodernism and relating it to *Remainder* and *The Dice Man*.

Concerning the postmodern, it is difficult to evaluate just exactly *when* it occurred, and equally difficult to define it as a 'period'. While it was not until the late 1970's and early 1980's when the

term 'postmodernism' had entered into the sphere of cultural debate in both the educational stratosphere and the socio-political arena, its aesthetic characteristics had already been observed long before. Its prominence as a concept perhaps became more widely understood with the publication of Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* in 1979. However, as Patricia Waugh has noted, "'postmodern' tendencies began to emerge from the sixties onwards with a variety of philosophical orientations."[2] What we at this point understand about the postmodern is that it is held in a space of opposition to modernism. It is essential that the postmodern is thought of not as a categorical progression which follows modernism temporally, but rather as an entity which opposes the values associated with the modern period, as Peter Barry makes clear, "they are not two successive stages in the history of the arts, but two opposed moods or attitudes"[3] Brian McHale perhaps best describes this locus of configuration as a branch of philosophy which "follows *from* modernism, in some sense, more than it follows *after* modernism"[4] (This may suggest that whatever follows postmodernism should be viewed as a following on *from* it rather than *after* it).

Of the tendencies which are usually associated with postmodernism, such as multiplicity, fragmentation, disassociation, disruption, unpresentability, simulation – the list goes on – it is important to note that these should not be thought of as specifically 'postmodern' as they have been thought of in many other branches of human investigation throughout the ages. T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* for example, has been observed by many as having both modern and postmodern characteristics, and could quite easily be found in either locale. Fragmentation is one of Eliot's primary agendas in this poem, and yet it is traditionally thought of as belonging to the modern 'period'.[5] The difference between fragmentation associated with modernism and that which has been discussed in relation to postmodernism is that while modernist texts such as *The Waste Land* focus upon the concept of origin, postmodernism details a critique for fragmentation without origin:

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[2] Patricia Waugh, *Postmodernism: A Reader* (London: Edward Arnold, 1994), p. 2.
[3] Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory*, 3rd edn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), p. 80.
[4] Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1987), p 5.
[5] Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, *An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*, 4th edn (London: Pearson Longman, 2009), p. 281.

…fragmentation in the postmodern does not depend on the possibility of an original 'unity' which has been lost. The Romantics and Modernists, by contrast, tend to figure fragmentation in terms of the loss of an original wholeness.[6]

Eliot's' use of fragmentation marks the destabilisation of something that was once formed and coherent, whereas on the contrary the postmodern regards reality as fragmented but not generated from any sense of an original unity.

The postmodern disassociation from a foundational origin is perhaps the most telling aspect through which it can be defined. For Bennett and Royle, the reality which is presented in postmodernism is a reality without origin.[7] This notion is centred upon the postmodern concern for simulation. Simulation, as Bennett and Royle make clear, is nothing new. It was a concern for Plato just as much as it is now, or then, for postmodernism. Hugh J. Silverman suggests that "Plato would never let anyone forget that reality is somewhere other than appearance, that what appears is radically different from reality."[8] This sounds altogether familiar to what is thought of in regards to a postmodern sense of simulation. However, postmodernism differs from a simple binary between what is real and what is not real. In postmodernism, the presentation of reality, the simulation of it, is not in fact based upon anything original at all; the image, that which is a fabrication, stands alone as an ideological construct and is therefore what Baudrillard terms the 'hyperreal'.[9] Baudrillard explains that:

> Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality; a hyperreal…Henceforth, it is the map that precedes the territory (Baudrillard 1988, 166).[10]

In postmodernism then, the real that we experience is not only not real, it is not real but based upon no sense of origin; in the postmodern world, our experience is that of a hyperreality, consisting of a

[6] Bennett and Royle, *Introduction to Literature*, p. 282.
[7] Bennett and Royle, *Introduction to Literature*, pp. 283-284.
[8] Hugh J. Silverman, 'Ereignisse of the Postmodern: Heidigger, Lyotard, and Gerhard Richter', in *Postmodernism. What Moment?*, ed. by Goulimari, pp. 39-49 (p. 43).
[9] Jean Baudrillard, 'Simulacra and Simulations', in *Selected Writings*, ed. by Mark Poster (Cambridge: Polity, 1988).
[10] Baudrillard, 'Simulacra and Simulations', *Selected Writings*, ed. Poster, p. 169.

simulated reality based on nothing. For Baudrillard, the world in which we live is an illusion of the real, so much so that the "desert" itself is not even a translation of the real 'origin' of the world, but a 'territory' in and of itself.

A further discussion of the postmodern will be provided in section one of this dissertation. I will refer to Fredric Jameson's account of the postmodern and its relationship with capitalist culture. Jameson's belief is that the postmodern 'period' grew out of a fast developing consumer society. My interest in Jameson's take on the postmodern is linked to the relationship between my chosen texts and the relationships which they have with capitalist culture. This will be discussed in contrast to Linda Hutcheon's concern for historiographic metafiction. Hutcheon asserts that postmodern fiction challenged modernist presentations of history by reflecting upon its failure to truly identify with historical inaccuracy. I will also be referring to Hutcheon's arguments concerning the paradox of postmodernism throughout this work, particularly in my discussion of Tom McCarthy's *Remainder*.

Following on from the first chapter I will go on to highlight some of the theories put forward regarding the apparent 'end' of postmodernism. Josh Toth's analysis of the demise of postmodernism is paralleled by the continuing existence of its ideological challenges in the contemporary world.[11] According to many theorists, despite the 'period' coming to an end as it were, the elements that we continue to insist belong to postmodernism appear to be widely in use in literature and the arts. I will then conclude this section by discussing the concept of metamodernism in more detail. Metamodernism is only one theory put forward concerning what has replaced postmodernism, and should not be thought of as the answer to what has, or is following postmodernism. It is my contention that metamodernism is as likely to be thought of as problematic as it is accurate for evaluating the contemporary landscape of uncertainty. However, it is perhaps the most accurate of several suggestions put forward as 'new' paradigms following on from postmodernism as it largely

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[11] Josh Toth, *The Passing of Postmodernism: A Spectroanalysis of the Contemporary* (Albany: State University of New York Press).

engages with the current state of the global landscape which is at this time in a position of abounding uncertainty.

Section two of this work is split into two sub-chapters. The first is concerned primarily with the topics of trauma theory and that of the sublime. Tom McCarthy's *Remainder* is widely associated with trauma or indeed the repercussions of traumatic injury and so an investigation into trauma theory is necessary. Due to the fact that metamodernism is thought by Vermeulen and Akker to be located upon a certain paradox, the difficulties of comprehending trauma are heavily linked to this theory. The same can be said of the study of the sublime, a study which has been a concern of philosophical thinkers throughout history, from Immanuel Kant to Lyotard. The postmodern, according to Lyotard, is intricately tied in with that of the sublime, and so I will demonstrate that there has occurred an evolutionary process of the sublime with the demise of postmodernism. The infinite nature of the sublime cannot be grasped by the faculties of the mind; however, its complexity can be portrayed through narrative fiction. Trauma and the sublime cannot necessarily be explained, but through narrative fiction an articulation of their aesthetics can be made.[12] It will be suggested that narrative can be used to present the impossibility of presentation. Because of the relationship that exists between trauma and that of the sublime, narrative fiction can be shown to portray the possibility of communicating the unpresentable. Narrative fiction then, appears to be the perfect vessel through which the contradictions of trauma and the sublime can be conveyed suitably.

Having discussed trauma theory and the study of the sublime, I will then provide an in depth analysis of *Remainder*. If metamodernism can be viewed as a likely replacement for postmodernism, then Tom McCarthy's novel could well be envisaged as an embodiment of this overall shift into the realm of the *post*-postmodern. It will be discussed here that *Remainder* captures the fundamental aspects of the metamodern drive, and it is in its narrative that the metamodern motivation for presenting the

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[12] Roger Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question* (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 80-3.

unpresentable can be plainly observed. In addition to this, a further suggestion can be made that *Remainder* puts forward to the reader a contemporary observation concerning the infinite and paradoxical nature of the sublime. The novel is found to be located upon an infinite loop, marking the impact of the study of the universe, where time and authenticity become ungraspable entities, always beyond the reach of human comprehension. McCarthy's work reflects the difficulties of comprehending trauma through the well-known coping mechanism of repetition, which his protagonist displays in the form of re-enactment. While it can be viewed as a postmodern novel, I will argue that *Remainder* challenges postmodern conceptions of inauthenticity as it searches for an elusive truth, marking it as a novel of the metamodern.

The final section of this work discusses an alternate way of viewing the oscillation of metamodernism. I will suggest that the use of chance in Rhineheart's *The Dice Man* incorporates both postmodernism and metamodernism in its philosophical aesthetic. As with *Remainder*'s protagonist, the 'dice man' is unfulfilled with his current existence in an artificial world. As a result, he allows the outcome of the die to dictate his every decision, relying on the notion of chance to decide his fate. Unlike McCarthy's character, he attempts to disconnect from selfhood in order to embrace all aspects of his personality which up until he picks up the dice have remained hidden or repressed. Chance, it can be said, can be used to identify these repressed selves and engage with the paradox of achieving a final articulation of wholeness.

The fiction that will be examined here appears to mirror the anxiety of the distorted identity in the contemporary social climate. However, the loss of memory and the subjectivity of history leads Marita Sturken to ask the question, "How does one narrate pain, in particular a pain that makes one feel abandoned in society?"[13] For these authors, pain is at the centre of their narrative as both are concerned with dislocation, albeit for different reasons. Further to this they seem to take on the

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[13] Marita Sturken, 'The Remembering of Forgetting: Recovered Memory', *Social Text*, 57 (1998), 103-125.

necessary yet impossible task of laying that pain to rest and in doing so resemble a metamodern condition, conveying a positive drive, a desire articulated through hope and enthusiasm. The concern of these authors is to expel the ghost of postmodernism in order to progress toward a more complete notion of selfhood during times of crisis.

Part I: Postmodernism.

I: History, Capitalism and the Postmodern Paradox.

This dissertation is concerned with the aftermath of postmodernism, or to be more precise, the position of contemporary fiction as it stands in relation to what has replaced the historical period of postmodernism in literary theory. It is necessary however, to return to the particulars of the postmodern critique before discussing its replacement. The importance of this relates to the on-going presence of postmodernism within contemporary fiction, in spite of its apparent conclusive demise. Capitalist culture, for instance, continues to be a topic that is dealt with in much contemporary fiction today, and it is this branch of theory which is of particular interest to Fredric Jameson.[14] Before discussing Jameson's essay in more detail, it is worth providing a brief outline of his argument concerning the relationship between postmodernism and a capitalist driven consumer society. Postmodernism in Jameson's terms:

> …is not just another word for the description of a particular style. It is also, at least in my use, a periodizing concept whose function is to correlate the emergence of new formal features in culture with the emergence of a new type of social life and new economic order – what is often euphemistically called modernization, postindustrial or consumer society, the society of the media or the spectacle, or multinational capitalism.[15]

For Jameson, postmodernism is a term through which the emergence of a rapidly changing social order can be reflected. This does not suggest that postmodernism is a reflection of consumerist society, instead, it is a gateway through which to observe "the inner truth of that newly emergent social order of late capitalism.[16]

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[14] Fredric Jameson, 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society', in *The Anti-Aesthetic* (Port Townsend, Wash.: Bay Press, 1983) in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, eds. By Vincent B. Leitch and others (London: Norton & Company, 2001).
[15] Jameson, 'Postmodernism', ed. by Leitch, p. 1962.
[16] Jameson, 'Postmodernism', ed. by Leitch, p. 1962.

Jameson's contention is that the postmodern can be defined as a period historically. In the same way that capitalism has developed periodically, the postmodern has followed on from modernism, and as such is a period in its own right. This is not an idea supported by Jean-Francois Lyotard, who regards the postmodern as "undoubtedly part of the modern"[17] and is therefore not a distinct period at all.

For Lyotard, the postmodern is something which exists during the modern period, a rupture during modernism rather than after it.[18] Both notions are of great importance when thinking about the contemporary situation in social theory. Jameson's account of the aesthetics of postmodernism can be applied to its on-going presence in culture today, and Lyotard's view that postmodernism exists as part of that continuing modernism is integral to the notion that whichever theory can be termed to govern *post*-postmodernism, is just another branch of theory bound by the continuation of the modern period. The thoughts of both Lyotard and Jameson on this subject are fundamentally important in the consideration of such a replacement for postmodernism.

Central to Jameson's account of postmodernism is that it is bound up and intertwined with that of a consumer capitalist society. It provides a framework for observation, for detailing the social order of capitalist consumption. At the end of his essay, Jameson leaves the question of emphasis open concerning the nature of postmodernism. Modernism, as Jameson makes clear, "functioned against its society", and postmodernism acts in a way which "replicates or reproduces – reinforces – the logic of consumer capitalism."[19] It is generally understood that there is a lack of resistance in postmodernism regarding its response to culture. Instead of contesting society, as with modernism, postmodernism loses the concern of resistance and instead works solidly and yet in a disengaging manner to report on the illusory images of capitalist society.[20] This question of emphasis is something which Jameson explores through the differences between modernist parody and postmodernist

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[17] Jean François Lyotard, 'Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?', in *Postmodernism*, ed. by Waugh, p. 123.
[18] See Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979).
[19] Jameson, 'Postmodernism', ed. by Leitch, p. 1974.
[20] While Jameson is of the opinion that postmodernism is apolitical, other theorists such as Linda Hutcheon denounce postmodernism as being apolitical.

pastiche. Parody, Jameson explains, is an imitation of an original concept or style.[21] He suggests that writers of the modern period are often "defined by the invention or production of rather unique styles."[22] These unique forms share the commonality, according to Jameson, of belonging to a group of 'unmistakable' styles, distinct from one another, but on the whole, part of one single group of normality. It is the imitation of these styles which constitutes parody:

> …the general effect of parody is – whether in sympathy or with malice – to cast ridicule on the private nature of these stylistic mannerisms and their excessiveness and eccentricity with respect to the way people normally speak or write.[23]

In order for parody to work, there must exist an original normality which can be ridiculed. With the postmodern however, where normality becomes a fabrication altogether, we are suddenly thrown into the realm of the pastiche.

Pastiche, as Jameson asserts, works in an almost identical way to parody, which is why the two are so often confused with one another:

> Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique style, the wearing of a stylistic mask, speech in a dead language: but it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without parody's ulterior motive, without the satirical impulse, without laughter, without that still latent feeling that there exists something *normal* compared to which what is being imitated is rather comic. Pastiche is blank parody, parody that has lost its sense of humour.[24]

Because postmodernism reflects upon the destabilisation of social normality, revealing the fragmented image of *truths*, pastiche has nothing to ridicule and so its imitation of style is not achieved with the desire contained within parody, to constitute an end result or produce meaning. It works in a way which quite simply lacks any degree of desire, imitates for the sake of imitation, or as Terry Eagleton suggests, postmodern art reveals the workings of a world bound by illusion:

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[21] Jameson, 'Postmodernism', ed. by Leitch, p. 1963.
[22] Jameson, 'Postmodernism', ed. by Leitch, p. 1962.
[23] Jameson, 'Postmodernism', ed. by Leitch, p. 1963.
[24] Jameson, 'Postmodernism', ed. by Leitch, p. 1963

> The aesthetics of postmodernism is a dark parody of such anti-representationalism: if art no longer reflects it is not because it seeks to change the world rather than mimic it, because there is in truth nothing there to be reflected, no reality which is not itself already an image, spectacle, simulacrum, gratuitous fiction.[25]

Eagleton's belief here is that postmodernism submits to a truth that there is nothing of the real world which is not conjured up, fabricated and displayed as a real entity. It reports on the illusion of reality, that what is shown and believed to be true is in fact merely a simulation altogether.

Linda Hutcheon takes issue with Jameson's use of the term pastiche, suggesting that he overlooks the paradoxical nature of postmodern parody. Hutcheon argues that what Jameson views as pastiche, the "imprisoning of the text in the past" should actually be thought of as postmodern parody, one which "both incorporates and challenges that which it parodies."[26] For Hutcheon, postmodern parody attempts to liberate the text from historical emancipation, while at the same time recognizes the "subjectivity" of historical 'accuracy', even in its own distorted portrayal of history. The postmodern in this sense does not attempt to rewrite the past; it suggests that history cannot be repeated in the text without becoming subjective. Thus, postmodernist texts which deal with parody are contradictory in nature. Looking briefly forward to the notion of what comes after postmodernism, it is clear that imitation is not disregarded in spite of the end of postmodernism; instead another alteration in emphasis becomes apparent. It will be suggested that for the metamodernist, imitation through parody *or* pastiche is not used in order to ridicule or to reveal that there is nothing there to ridicule, but instead in order to learn from history, work through the present and strive toward a desired future. Hutcheon's analysis of the paradox of the postmodern appears to continue on into the next epoch, however with a refocused emphasis which relies heavily on the desire to reach verisimilitude.

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[25] Terry Eagleton, 'Capitalism, Modernism and Postmodernism', in *Postmodernism*, ed. by Waugh, p. 152.
[26] Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of the Postmodern: History, Theory and Fiction* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 11.

Another feature of Jameson's essay and a well-known characteristic of the postmodern 'movement' is the death of the subject.[27] To a greater extent than his discussion of parody and pastiche, Jameson shows a more detailed difference between modernism and postmodernism. *The death of the subject*, as Jameson explains, is "the end of individualism".[28] What is meant by this is that for modernism proper, there was a huge emphasis on individuality, that what constituted art, literature and the world in general, were in fact formed on the basis of individual thought processes, distinct from one another, "as unmistakable as your fingerprint, as incomparable as your own body."[29] From a postmodern perspective, this unique or 'private' identity, in Jameson's terms, becomes absent, and that through this absence, the individual *subject* decays:

> Yet today, from any number of distinct perspectives, the social theorists, the psychoanalysts, even the linguists, not to speak of those who work in the area of culture and cultural and formal change, are all exploring the notion that that kind of individualism and personal identity is a thing of the past; that the old individual or individualist subject is 'dead'; and that one might even describe the concept of the unique individual and the theoretical basis of individualism as ideological.[30]

Jameson suggests here that there are two possibilities regarding the postmodern take on the death of the subject. From one perspective, modernist individuality was once rife but has now come to an end, a transition constituted by the movement from "competitive capitalism" to "corporate capitalism".[31] On the other hand, the modernist individual subject never actually existed, but was a mythological and ideological construct designed to give the illusion of the *subject*, of freedom, of uniqueness. The overall outcome of either of these two standpoints directs the postmodern period into a position of absence, the position that the *subject* does not exist. This leads on to Jameson's final point concerning the loss of history.

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[27] Jameson, 'Postmodernism', ed. by Leitch, p. 1964.
[28] Jameson, 'Postmodernism', ed. by Leitch, p. 1964.
[29] Jameson, 'Postmodernism', ed. by Leitch, p. 1964.
[30] Jameson, 'Postmodernism', ed. by Leitch, p. 1964.
[31] Jameson, 'Postmodernism', ed. by Leitch, p. 1964.

Jameson explains that postmodernism is able to reveal the workings of society, and that this can be shown through " the disappearance of a sense of history" For Jameson:

> …our entire contemporary social system has little by little begun to lose its capacity to retain its own past, has begun to live in a perpetual present and in a perpetual change that obliterates traditions of the kind all earlier social formations have had in one way or another to preserve.[32]

This 'perpetual present', without history and without future becomes the reality of postmodernism. If the old modernist values of individuality are consumed as something in the past, then there is nothing through which to evaluate our history. It is this sense of "historical amnesia" and the *death of the subject* that for Jameson embodies the postmodern 'period'. Hutcheon, who has discussed the relationship between history and the postmodern at great length, suggests that the postmodern concern for history is primarily focussed on textual inaccuracy, as opposed to observing the removal of history altogether through a capitalist state. Hutcheon once again takes a stance against Jameson and his account of historical loss, explaining that history is known to us in the present only through "textuality". "We cannot know the past except through *texts*".[33] Her argument is suggestive of the postmodern agenda which is to take issue with recalling the past historically but also to summon up to its audiences the "consequences" of this issue.[34] Hutcheon suggests that postmodernism problematizes the past, revealing its illusory nature and strives to abandon subjective tactics, which to a large extent it certainly manages to do. However, the problematic and contradictory nature of the postmodern sense of abandonment from a modernist discourse, which contests ideology and subjective authority, as Hutcheon makes clear, becomes itself an ideology. Much like the metamodern, which will be discussed in due course, the postmodern is centred upon a central paradox, which is aware of its own contradictory nature.

The contrasting opinions of Jameson, Lyotard, Hutcheon and Baudrillard are central to our understanding of how postmodernism has been viewed and discussed in recent years. Their theories of the postmodern are integral to my discussion of the postmodern, but more importantly, they lay the

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[32] Jameson, 'Postmodernism', ed. by Leitch, p. 1974.
[33] Hutcheon, *Poetics*, p. 16.
[34] Hutcheon, *Poetics*, p. 16.

foundations for my discussion of metamodernism. Due to the continued presence of postmodern tendencies, as will be examined, metamodernism can be seen to be governed by postmodern theory. Further to this, these varying accounts of postmodernism can and will be applied to my chosen texts. Both novels can be seen as embracing the postmodern conceptualisation of capitalist culture, and for *Remainder* in particular, Hutcheon's account of historical inaccuracy is of great importance when thinking about the transition from postmodernism to metamodernism in contemporary fiction.

II: The Demise of the Postmodern?

> The term "postmodernism" is still with us as a vague reference to French theory, historical meta-fiction, and eclectic hybrid forms in architecture and art. But the theoretical debate represented by "postmodernism" has, for better or worse, passed from the scene.
>
> John McGowan.[35]

McGowan's contradictory stance here is the overall opinion of many as to what has actually happened to the 'period' in question. It is generally assumed by most critical theorists that the postmodern is finished with, in fact, the very term itself has become increasingly unfashionable in recent years. Despite this, I believe that in order to understand the true nature of its so called replacement, again, if it has one, one must understand how postmodernism finally died out. Indeed, regarding this new period, Josh Toth suggests that "…this seemingly progressive move *out of* postmodernism is confronted at the outset by two pressing questions: has postmodernism, as Linda Hutcheon claims, finally "passed?"; and, if so, what is or can be *after* postmodernism?"[36]

Within the many different theories located around this topic of what has come after postmodernism there does seem to be a recurring agreement between them that although the postmodern period is at an end, many of its characteristics continue to live on. As Andrew Hoberek explains, "For one thing, postmodern techniques – even if they no longer play quite the dominant role they once did – have hardly disappeared from contemporary fiction."[37] Toth furthers this argument, suggesting that the very nature of the debate surrounding the move away from postmodernism, only works to show that it continues to exist; "while heralding the close of a moment in cultural and epistemological history, the

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[35] John McGowan, 'They might have been giants', in *Postmodernism. What Moment?*, ed. by Goulimari, pp. 92-101 (p. 92).

[36] Toth, *Passing*, p. 4.

[37] Andrew Hoberek, 'Introduction: After Postmodernism', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 53: 3, *After Postmodernism: Form and History in Contemporary American Fiction* (2007), pp. 233-247 (p. 236).

current discussion ironically highlights the inevitable *persistence* of postmodernism."[38] Hutcheon

furthers this line of thought arguing that the answer to the question, "is it dead or alive?" is "yes."[39]

The postmodern is both with us today, but at the same time is categorically over.

It is clear that although there is a general understanding that we are now in a period *after*

postmodernism, what becomes less clear is whether or not this is a distinct position in its own right, or

whether we are entering or have entered a space in time which correlates merely to a continuation, or

alteration of what postmodernism was, or what modernism was supposed to be in the first place. Both

Toth and Hoberek appear to be of the same opinion that this new period or 'epoch' in Toth's terms,

should not be viewed as a break away from postmodernism, a new concept altogether, but only a

transformation, or evolutionary process that signals a new emphasis in representation. For Gianni

Vattimo, this continuation, or "historical process of ageing" is the concern of the postmodern debate

more so now than ever before. Vattimo makes clear that there is in some sense a 'superseding' of the

postmodern which is now in many ways more postmodern altogether.[40] Much in the same way that

postmodernism has been viewed as having commonalities with modernism, postmodern

characteristics continue in that which follows it; however they are portrayed in different ways. With

this in mind, it appears as though a change in emphasis has occurred. Toth explains that:

> …an epoch remains understandably definable (or perhaps, to a certain degree, synchronically exclusive)
> while also remaining quite understandably partial, an inevitable continuation of the past. Each episteme
> break is always, or *only*, a reconfiguration because its formation is necessarily contingent upon the fact that
> something (a spectre) always and necessarily passes on.[41]

This continuation of the past suggests to the contemporary theorist that in order to understand the

position of the current state *after*-postmodernism, we must, as Hoberek argues, "look backward as

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[38] Toth, *Passing*, p 4.

[39] Hutcheon, 'Gone forever', in *Postmodernism. What Moment?*, ed. by Goulimari, p. 17.

[40] Gianni Vattimo, 'Postmodernity and (the end of) metaphysics', trans. by David Rose, in *Postmodernism. What Moment?,* ed. by Goulimari, pp. 32-38 (p32).

[41] Toth, *Passing*, p.5.

well as forward, to consider what might have been taking place under our noses the whole time."[42] It would be quite difficult however to understand any sense of present tense when there is such a chaotic and fragmented history through which to evaluate it from. As will be discussed, this is one of the primary concerns of metamodernism. If postmodernism is in fact a failed project, it is perhaps necessary to evaluate what went wrong for postmodernism that constituted this mutation or *shift* into the contemporary situation *after-* postmodernism. However, it is equally important to maintain an understanding of the on-going presence of postmodernism in contemporary culture.

Toth insinuates that the initial problem for postmodernism was the fact that it failed to escape the logocentric discourse that it was attempting to reveal in modernism, and essentially abandon in favour of a more transparent aesthetic. Toth makes clear:

> Because it was for the most part, a reaction to the dangers of logocentrism, to an increasingly hegemonic project of modernity, postmodernism was far more interested in exposing the absence of the real (or the signified, or the subject, or whatever) than it was in highlighting the need to identify such illusions as ineffaceable and essentially animating lures/possibilities.[43]

For Toth then, the original project of postmodernism should have been to report on the impossibility of escaping the illusions that were maintained through modernity, and accordingly would have led to a far more successful development of postmodernism in general. Toth points us once again in the direction of Hutcheon, who suggests the idea that whatever has taken the place of the postmodern becomes the true postmodernism that it was trying to become all along. But for what we thought was postmodernism there was in fact a replication of the logocentric values it was seeking to expose as purely false.

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[42] Hoberek, 'Introduction', p. 239-240.
[43] Toth, *Passing*, p. 83.

In identifying that there is no original truth or *logos* through which to follow, but failing to announce the impossibility of effacement from those illusions already set in place, it seems that the primary effect of the postmodern was the announcement of a new form of logocentricity. In doing so, Toth would suggest that postmodernism endorses modernist logocentric characteristics inadvertently:

> …postmodernism rarely abandons…*all* logocentric lures…postmodernism *employed* a logocentric mode of critique – albeit, in an increasingly ostentatious and unsustainable manner – as a way of deconstructing the logocentrism of modernity.[44]

The term 'postmodernism' then, simply becomes another ideology or critique, despite announcing a *truth* that there is no truth. It sets out to destroy logocentricity but ultimately absorbs it. As Toth makes clear, it uses this logocentric discourse in order to expose reality as false, and it is this mode of representation which he argues forces postmodernism into a "spectral return, a certain inevitable return of the repressed."[45] The 'repressed' in this case is not modernism proper that has returned, but the methodology by which modernism was governed. It is the spectre, 'the ghost' of modernism that returns through postmodern attempts to exorcise it. Because of this spectral return, there was a certain inevitability surrounding postmodernism that it was always going to become that which it was attempting to expose; an elitist mode of discourse; "It is, after all, the "elitism" of postmodernism that most critics identify as its most glaring failure."[46] Toth goes on to argue that in attempting to undermine fundamentalism, it becomes fundamentalist itself.[47]

Through a reading of Toth's *The Passing of Postmodernism*, it seems that for Toth, what caused the death of postmodernism was its own failure to become that which it was claiming to be announcing. Postmodernism's demise in this sense is routed in its own aesthetic failure to escape the spectre of modernism, and therefore, "it could never deny without descending into absolute silence."[48] In accordance with Toth's analysis, postmodernist thinkers made a foundational act of anti-foundational

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[44] Toth, *Passing*, p. 84.
[45] Toth, *Passing*, p. 84
[46] Toth, *Passing*, p. 112.
[47] Toth, *Passing*, p. 113.
[48] Toth, *Passing*, p. 111.

thinking. His argument is compelling, though not without disruptions. Although he does indeed cite Hutcheon's analysis that the postmodern returns as a reincarnation of what it was supposed to be all along, he takes issue with postmodern tendencies of 'falling silent' which constituted its demise, when it could be argued that it never intended to be coherent at all.[49] Hutcheon on the other hand, argues that the postmodern veered towards an 'end' with its institutionalization academically, through publishing, in art and in the world of the theatre.[50] It is likely that postmodernism was misunderstood throughout the 1990's, and therefore its downfall may have occurred because it was *made* into something that it wasn't. Mathewman and Hoey point out that postmodernism often acted as a proxy for other forms of communication, such as feminism for example.[51] As such, it is a term which no doubt became overused altogether. It is important to recognise here that Hutcheon deliberately separates her discussion of the postmodern from feminism as this would subvert the important political agenda of feminism in general, despite the fact that feminism certainly played its part in the direction of postmodern growth.[52] Nevertheless, for Toth at least, the failure of postmodernism allows for the rise of a period of 'renewalism' a term that can be compared and contrasted with that of metamodernism.

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[49] In *Passing*, Toth suggests that postmodern tendencies were to 'fall silent'.

[50] Hutcheon, 'Gone forever', in *Postmodernism. What Moment?,* ed. by Goulimari, p. 16.

[51] Steve Mathewman, and Douglas Hoey, 'What Happened to Postmodernism?', *Sociology*, 40 (2006), pp. 529-547.

[52] Hutcheon, Preface to *Poetics*, p. xii.

III: The Oscillation of Metamodernism.

With the general assumption that postmodernism is now at an end, there is an equally general assumption that its replacement requires definition. This requirement is of course open to debate. It was discussed in the introduction that definition is a likely requirement, or rather there seems to be an inevitable need to categorize. I seek here to explore one of the avenues that have been located in recent years. The phrase Metamodernism, discussed here in regards to the thoughts of Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker in 2010 is perhaps the most interesting of labels with which to apply the current position *post*-postmodernism.[53] The reason for this, they argue, is that metamodernism is a response to the current economical social predicament which is in a state of unease and uncertainty. However, alternative suggestions have also been put forward such as Alan Kirby's discussion of 'digimodernism', also known as 'pseudomodernism'[54] Kirby insists that what has taken the place of the postmodern has come about with the rapid emergence of technological advancements worldwide, a factor which should certainly be taken into consideration. Another possibility, suggested by Nicolas Bourriaud, is that following on from globalisation, we have now entered into a period which he refers to as 'altermodernism'.

According to Alan Kirby, digimodernism, or pseudomodernism is a term centred on the notion that the 'text' has evolved with the emergence of technology in recent years, most notably so with the vast increase of internet users throughout the world. Kirby suggests that in the cultural world of the pseudomodern landscape, consisting of a network of faceless participants, the text is no longer in a position to be merely observed. Instead, the text is located within the space of participation. The internet user creates the text, a website, a blog etc. with the click of a button, which can in turn be altered and modified by the next user, and so on and so forth. Kirby makes clear that the pseudomodern text is generated by those who interact with it, such as 'phone-in' shows like Big Brother, and shopping channels where the text functions only with the participation of the viewer. In

[53] Timotheus Velmeulan and Robin van den Akker, 'Notes on Metamodernism', *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture*, 2 (2010), pp. 1-14.
[54] Alan Kirby, 'The Death of Postmodernism and Beyond', *Philosophy Now*, 58 (2006)
<http://philosophynow.org/issues/58/The_Death_of_Postmodernism_And_Beyond> [accessed 17 December 2011].

addition to this, the cultural text that entertains the viewer in cinemas and on television, the film, is less and less like a novel with each passing year, as movies appear to mimic interactive computer games, thus creating the illusion of participation. Kirby's argument becomes increasingly more significant with the emergence of 3D films on the big screen and in our living rooms. Central to pseudomodernism, is the notion that the 'text' does not last for very long. As soon as it enters into the cultural landscape it is only a matter of time before it becomes obsolete. What this means for our culture, is that, as Kirby outlines, "A culture based on these things can have no memory…these are cultural actions in the present moment with no sense of either past or future."[55] The author is essentially a meaningless entity in the pseudomodern text and to a great extent, so too is the material.[56] Kirby's conception of the loss of authorship clearly resembles Barthes investigation into 'The Death of the Author'. The text is only there to be redefined at the moment of its creation and after that point it becomes completely residual. This is why Kirby suggests that the era that we are now in, the pseudomodern era, is a cultural desert which "*takes the world away*" and where the author always precedes the text.[57]

Nicolas Bourriaud's altermodern manifesto parallels and yet at the same time deviates entirely from Kirby's discussion of pseudomodernism. Bourriaud's presentation of the manifesto at the Tate gallery in London in 2009 portrays what he describes as a global altermodernity.[58] The essential meaning of the manifesto articulates not only the coming together of artists from worldwide cultures, but the expression of 'creolization', where art has manoeuvred away from postmodern projections of multiculturalism and identity to investigating the current landscape of globalisation. Bourriaud suggests that artists are no longer defining *their* existence based on cultural identity; instead, they are depicting "the contemporary traveller" who has a global accent, a global identity, and as such, the altermodern era is that of the journeyman who negotiates with all cultures, travelling through time and

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[55] Kirby, 'The Death of Postmodernism and Beyond', (para. 13 of 21).
[56] This idea mirrors the notion of Roland Barth's 'The Death of the Author' (1967). As the reader in a sense 'becomes' the text, he or she is supposedly free, when in reality, the reader is constrained and forced into a 'digi'-text that has been created for them.
[57] Kirby, 'The Death of Postmodernism and Beyond', (para. 21 of 21).
[58] Nicolas Bourriaud, 'Altermodern Explained: Manifesto', *Tate*< http://www.tate.org.uk > [accessed 21 Jan 2012].

space. Rather than focussing upon Western ideals of cultural history, the altermodern artist observes the multiplicity of the subject, who is no longer the voice of any specific cultural domain. As with pseudomodernism, the altermodern space is globalized, however, unlike it, altermodernism is less focussed on the notion of a 'cultural desert'. The landscape is altered, but with the announcement of global integration.

   Both altermodernsim and pseudomodernism are possible to imagine as prevailing concepts. The advancement in technology can certainly not be disputed. However, Kirby's impression of a digimodern world appears to reinforce postmodern tendencies rather than challenge them. The main obstacle for Bourriaud is the imagined world of a decentred Western ideology, which appears to be rather a radical observation in the aftermath of the fall of the World Trade Centre. Since 9/11, it can be argued, the contemporary situation is in a state of uncertainty, not a factor overlooked by Kirby, but perhaps more accurately made clear in Vermeulen and Akker's discussion of metamodernism.

Vermeulen and Akker dispel the suggestion that the metamodern or rather the end of the postmodern was a direct result of the terror attacks in New York on September 11th 2001. Their suggestion is that this event could only reinstate postmodern beliefs and assumptions. However, what seems to be the case when thinking about this new 'epoch' is that '9/11' altered perceptions of the world entirely. Akbar S. Ahmed reports that the terrorist attacks disrupted the postmodern movement resulting in a return to the Grand Narrative that constituted modernism.[59] Ahmed's contention here locates the temporal movement from modernism to postmodernism, and then back again, with the collapse of the Berlin wall in 1989, constituting the end of the Grand Narrative, and the fall of the twin towers, landing us back in the realm of the Grand Narrative. Ahmed's assessment here of the demise of the postmodern during 9/11 is certainly worth taking note of. With the fall of the Twin Towers, he argues, came a sudden return to an 'us versus them' mentality, driven by President Bush's 'grand narrative'

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[59] Akbar S. Ahmed, 'Postmodernism and Islam: where to after September 11?', in *Postmodernism. What Moment?*, ed. by Goulimari, pp. 140-145.

like retaliation: "Bush's "war on terrorism" became an expression of the Grand Narrative."[60] In contrast, there is at this time a reaffirmation of positivity with the presidency of Barack Obama and his widely known slogan, "Yes we can". Two differing opinions then; Vermeulen and Akker making clear that postmodernism did not end with the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and the suggestion by Ahmed that "postmodernism lay buried in the rubble on that fateful day."[61] Ultimately however, there was certainly a change which occurred during or around that date. For Vermeulen and Akker, the date did lead to the development of the metamodern, as it began the current state of worldwide uncertainty and unrest. The notion of global uncertainty is a factor which Douglas Kellner refers to as the "prevailing condition".[62] Kellner argues:

> In the contemporary moment, society, culture and identity are all undergoing a tremendous rethinking. They are all currently in a state of crisis and confusion…not only are numerous human beings reshaping their ethnic, gender, and political identities, but humanity as a species is starting to seriously rethink its status[63]

This degree of uncertainty, anxiety and ambiguous ferocity is ultimately the current state of the world in which we live post-9/11, although not necessarily because of it, and it is a factor which the metamodern 'epoch' will strive to overcome.

Concerning emphasis, the metamodern is a standpoint of reconfiguration of postmodern values, but for a completely new purpose. Where postmodernism worked simply to reveal ideological illusions, and as Jameson argued, existed in a 'perpetual present' as a direct response to consumer capitalism, the metamodern is a response to an 'uncontrollable', 'unstable', and 'uneven' global economy.[64] It strives towards a desired future, not with a melancholic aesthetic, as with postmodernism, but with hope and engagement.[65] However, and most importantly, the metamodernist is fully aware of the illusory nature of ideology, the very ideology that postmodernism sought to expose, and yet they

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[60] Ahmed, 'Postmodernism and Islam', in *Postmodernism. What Moment?,* ed. by Goulimari, p. 141.

[61] Ahmed, 'Postmodernism and Islam', in *Postmodernism. What Moment?*, ed. by Goulimari, p. 140.

[62] Douglas Kellner, 'Reappraising the Postmodern: novelties, mapping and historical narratives', in *Postmodernism. What Moment*?, ed. by Goulimari, pp. 102-126 (p. 117).

[63] Kellner, 'Reappraising the Postmodern', in *Postmodernism. What Moment?*, ed. by Goulimari, p. 117.

[64] Editorial, 'What is Metamodernism?', in *Notes on Metamodenism* <http://www.metamodernism.com> [accessed 17 February 2012].

[65] Velmeulen and Akker, 'Notes on Metamodernism', p. 5.

search for truth with hope and engagement in spite of this knowledge. Essentially, metamodernism is centred on a certain paradox, as Vermeulen and Akker make clear, "Inspired by a modern naïveté yet informed by postmodern scepticism, the metamodern discourse consciously commits itself to an impossible possibility."[66]

'Notes on Metamodernism', informs us that we have not entered into a new category of representation or social theory as an answer to postmodernism. Instead, it is postmodernism that has entered into a new space in time, as Vermeulen and Akker make clear, "…we do believe that many of them [postmodern tendencies][67] are taking another shape, and, more importantly, a new *sens*, a new meaning and direction."[68] As has already been suggested, the postmodern is not essentially over, but has reconfigured itself, or has been reconfigured by the global situation today. It is suggested by Vermeulen and Akker that in a categorical response to the uncertainties of the global economy, there has been a cultural 'transformation' which can be described as the metamodern period:

> Most significantly perhaps, the cultural industry has responded in kind, increasingly abandoning tactics such as pastiche and parataxis for strategies like myth and metaxis, melancholy for hope, and exhibitionism for engagement.[69]

In this sense, the very nature of postmodernism has changed, its landscape altered, and what we are now left with is desire and hope. Hope appears to be the central core of what constitutes the metamodern aesthetic; however, this is not structurally the point of the movement. It is simply the end product of the metamodern drive, which is to constantly persist towards *something*, a contrasting movement away from the melancholic agenda which became rooted in postmodernism. The metamodern artist, writer, architect and so on, intentionally persist, striving to reach a future, an "unknown goal" that appears to be well and truly forever out of reach. As Vermeulen and Akker

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[66] Velmeulen and Akker, 'Notes on Metamodernism', p. 5.
[67] My note.
[68] Velmeulen and Akker, 'Notes on Metamodernism', p. 4.
[69] Velmeulen and Akker, 'Notes on Metamodernism', p. 5.

explain, "Metamodernism moves for the sake of moving, attempts in spite of its inevitable failure."[70] In addition to this, the metamodern artist will make this effort deliberately, fully aware of their limitations. This awareness is the central point of metamodernism.

Observing Toth's suggestion that in order to locate the position of the contemporary, there needs to be a necessary 'looking back' as well as 'looking forward'. Metamodernism collaborates with this idea, observing that the present and the future can never truly be defined or understood by the past, as "history's purpose will never be fulfilled because it does not exist."[71] The concern of the metamodern to engage with historical truth is strongly linked to the postmodern conceptualisation of what Linda Hutcheon refers to as historiographic metafiction. This concept which grew out of the postmodern critique is essentially a call to arms against foundational claims to truth, or history. For Hutcheon, historiographic metafictional texts of the postmodern are concerned with challenging the notion that historical truth can be conveyed in fictional and literary writing. Postmodern texts such as Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* and J. M. Coetzee's *Foe* for example set out to confront the "historical", or historiographical, doing so "both thematically and formally".[72] Hutcheon explains that the agenda of this style of postmodern writing is to portray the impossibility of communicating past *truths* because as time presses on, history is altered through varying accounts of that particular past. Hutcheon concedes that the past is not necessarily re-laid as false, but that varying accounts and multiple *truths* blur the original location or events of that which is called into question.

Novels which are revealed to be part of this genre of historiographic metafiction, Hutcheon suggests, problematize "the very possibility of historical knowledge, because there is no reconciliation, no dialectic here – just unresolved contradiction."[73] This style of writing then does not make any such claim to truth telling, instead they contradict past novels which do, and they leave the reader inside

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[70] Velmeulen and Akker, 'Notes on Metamodernism', p. 5.
[71] Velmeulen and Akker, 'Notes on Metamodernism', p. 5.
[72] Hutcheon, *Poetics*, p.108.
[73] Hutcheon, *Poetics*, p.106.

this space of the unresolved. Where the metamodern differs from historiographic metafiction, is in its attempt to reinterpret the past in order to overcome this lack of resolution. It recognizes the position of postmodernism which Hutcheon speaks of here, accepts it and yet continues to challenge it. A metamodern novel, such as McCarthy's *Remainder* or Rhineheart's *The Dice Man*, seeks to find resolution in spite of the impossible contradiction of articulating the 'true' past. Essentially, history holds no meaning for the future, and history becomes altogether more problematic for the contemporary writer/ artist etc., as it can never be understood to be true in the first place.

The metamodern impulse to overcome can be observed in parallel with that of Hutcheon's discussion concerning the problematic conceptualisation of history in the text. Hutcheon regards postmodernism as a position which works "…to contest the very possibility of our ever being able to *know* the "ultimate objects" of the past."[74] Metamodernism on the other hand, having recognized the impossibility of the total recall of history, works to *know* the 'ultimate objects of the past' regardless of this impossibility. The metamodernist will willingly continue to pursue history's purpose which inevitably remains unobtainable.

In terms of its structure, metamodernism is described by Vermeulen and Akker as an 'oscillation' *between* modernism and postmodernism:

> Ontologically, metamodernism oscillates between the modern and the postmodern. It oscillates between a modern enthusiasm and a postmodern irony, between hope and melancholy, between naïveté and knowingness, empathy and apathy, unity and plurality, totality and fragmentation, purity and ambiguity. Indeed, by oscillating to and fro or back and forth, the metamodern negotiates between the modern and the postmodern.[75]

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[74] Hutchen, *Poetics*, p. 24.
[75] Velmeulen and Akker, 'Notes on Metamodernism', p. 6.

This oscillation between these two concepts concentrates the metamodern 'progression' of movement between the desire to achieve a central purpose and the very nature of limitation. In other words, it is between the possibility of modernism, and the infinite of postmodernism where metamodernism is situated, and the uncertainty of the oscillation between the two stances becomes the central drive of this movement.

Metamodernism then, is both modernism and postmodernism, and at the same time neither of the two, or is what Vermeulen and Akker term a form of "*metaxis*". Kellner has also suggested that "…it is best to envisage the prevailing condition in a zone between the modern and the postmodern."[76] For Kellner, this oscillation is perhaps the best available methodology through which to confront the uncertainties of the global situation, as it can "deploy a diversity of theories to attempt to capture the complexity and conflicts of the contemporary era."[77] For the theory of the metamodern however, this oscillation seems to be a consequence, rather than a method. The 'Meta' of metamodernism refers quite simply to a movement in between modernism and postmodernism, and yet is also a movement *into the beyond* of postmodernism, and "It is influenced by estimations of the past, imbued by experiences of the present, yet also inspired by expectations of the future."[78] The focus on future progression is a factor which became arguably lost with modernism and postmodernism, and metamodernism appears to grow out of a need for continuation, growth and improvement.

A factor that becomes of particular interest to this essay is the similarity between metamodernism and neoromanticism, also discussed by Vermeulen and Akker. Neoromanticism, like metamodernism, is an emergent form or a re-emerging period of romanticism in contemporary art, and as such will not be discussed here in any great detail. However, the comparison between the two forms of contemporary culture is the very oscillation between the finite and the infinite. As is explained in 'Notes on

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[76] Kellner, 'Reappraising the Postmodern', in *Postmodernism. What Moment?*, ed. by Goulimari, p. 117.
[77] Kellner, 'Reappraising the Postmodern', in *Postmodernism. What Moment?*, ed. by Goulimari, p. 116.
[78] Editorial, 'What Meta means and does not mean', in *Notes on Metamodernism* <http://www.metamodernism.com> [Accessed 19 December 2011].

Metamodernism', "the Romantic attitude can be defined precisely by its oscillation between these two poles."[79] Vermeulen and Akker explain that the Romantic is located somewhere between "attempt and failure":

> It is from this hesitation…that the Romantic inclination toward the tragic, the sublime, and the uncanny stem, aesthetic categories lingering between projection and perception, form and the unfathomable, coherence and chaos, corruption and innocence.[80]

For Romanticism, there is a desire to understand the sublime, and at the same time an understanding of the impossibility to be able to. Further to this, there is a continuing struggle to make sense of the chaotic, within the confined space of such impossibility. It is this very oscillation that is one of the primary concerns of my essay. That is, the difficulty of finding meaning in the chaotic and the sublime. Metamodernism strives to discover *meaning* in the *meaningless*, and it will be shown that in the aesthetics of contemporary fiction is located an oscillation between the incomprehensible and the desire to comprehend, or as Vermeulen and Akker suggest, the desire "to pursue a horizon that is forever receding."[81]

A further comparison can be made between metamodernism and what Toth describes as 'renewalism'. Toth investigates the failure of postmodernism and suggests that its demise is centred on an attempt to perform a "final act of narrative suicide."[82] By committing to finality, postmodernism 'falls silent' and ironically becomes the victim of its own ideological structure. According to Toth, this failure has led the way for a new period of renewalism, or neo-realism. This rise of renewalism is necessitated by its ability to do what postmodernism was unable to, that is its ability to "embrace both the possibility *and* the impossibility of the spectre of modernism."[83] Renewalism embraces the paradox of communication through the narrative act of realism:

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[79] I. Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 18, in Velmeulen and Akker, *Notes on Metamodernism*, p. 8.
[80] Velmeulen and Akker, Notes on Metamodernism, p. 8.
[81] Velmeulen and Akker, Notes on Metamodernism, p. 12.
[82] Toth, *Passing*, p. 118.
[83] Toth, *Passing*, p. 118

> This *return* to realism is, then, ultimately symptomatic of a broad epistemological renewal of faith – that is, faith in the promise of (mimesis, of communication, etc.) and the impossible possibility that it will be fulfilled.[84]

Renewalism then, is incorporated with Hutcheon's notion of the postmodern paradox, and is therefore a mode of discourse which continuously persists to become the final narrative act, while constantly deferring from that possibility. As such it can be seen as being in conjunction with a metamodernist oscillation. Essentially, there is no final narrative act, and yet renewalism endorses a continuous faith in the persistence of mimesis, knowing all the while that narrative form can never present truth without becoming just another "hegemonic ideal".[85]

Toth's observation of the impossible possibility of communication in a new epoch is quite accurate when placed alongside the theory of the metamodern, however what seems to be his weakness is his critical assessment of the postmodern. He portrays the postmodern as having inadvertently 'fallen silent' which ultimately led to its apparent end. What is arguably more accurate, as has been observed in the discussion of Hutcheon, postmodernism clearly had an agenda which was to 'fall silent', so as to disrupt communication. John Cage's *4'33''* (*Four minutes and thirty three seconds*) could be viewed as an example of postmodernism, in Toth's terms, 'falling silent', and is shown to be centred on the postmodern paradox to which Hutcheon refers. As Stephen Davies explains, "There are at least two very different ways to view *4'33''* – as consisting of a passage of absolute silence or as comprised of whatever sounds occur during that period."[86] It is at this point that I would like to suggest that where the metamodern discourse goes that step further than that of Toth's analysis of renewalism is through both its engagement with and challenge to the postmodern.

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[84] Toth, *Passing*, p. 119

[85] Toth, *Passing*, p. 124.

[86] Stephen Davies, 'John Cage's *4'33''*: Is it Music?', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 75: 4 (1997), pp. 448-462 (p.448).

One example of a metamodern discourse at work would be the contemporary presentation of the sublime. As will be shown in the following section, any attempt to deal with the sublime, understand it or indeed work through it proves to be quite simply an impossible task. In the same instance trauma, or a traumatic event can be shown to be bound up with the sublime and the desire to work through trauma in order to recover lost memory becomes problematic. Contemporary portrayals which deal with trauma and the sublime, such as McCarthy's work for example, focus on the impossible possibility of representation through narrative, and work in such a way which endorses the oscillation of metamodernism. Presenting the unpresentable in presentation itself is a postmodern concept, which as has been discussed can be found even further back in history in the writings of Plato for example. However, rather than simply exposing the 'real' as unpresentable, a metamodern text such as McCarthy's embraces it and attempts to overcome it, knowing that for all intents and purposes it will fail. It will be argued that *Remainder* is a postmodern novel which embraces the metamodern drive; it upholds postmodern values and at the same time attempts to challenge them.

Part 2. Trauma and the Sublime.

In the previous section I have investigated the concept of metamodernism put forward as a possible replacement for the postmodern period. It is at this point that I will now turn to the theory of trauma. In the aftermath of 9/11, trauma theory plays a large role in fiction today, and as such I will be discussion trauma in relation to Tom McCarthy's novel *Remainder*. It is necessary to highlight some of the key concepts concerned with trauma theory and it will be equally necessary to investigate the relationship between trauma and that of the sublime. I believe that trauma and the sublime are rooted together, as both fall into the category of the unpresentable, and by focusing on their structural forms, it will become clear that the theory of metamodernism engages with the paradoxical nature of each philosophy. Metamodernism seeks to challenge Lyotard's notion of the postmodern sublime. Lyotard makes clear, "We have an idea of the world (the totality of what it is), but we do not have the capacity to show an example of it."[87] This dilemma is recognised in the movement of metamodernism. However, metamodernism also seeks to challenge it, to 'present' the world in spite of its unpresentable nature. It works in such a way which has been described as an oscillation between modernism and postmodernism; it strives towards a sense of finality, fully aware of its own limitations doing so with hope, engagement and faith that a final articulation of truth can be achieved. It is this paradoxical movement which can be put forward in any attempt to understand or comprehend the nature of trauma and that of the sublime.

Tom McCarthy's *Remainder* is a novel which is heavily influenced by trauma or the impact of trauma upon the subject. With this in mind it is necessary here to investigate the problem of trauma before going on to discuss *Remainder*'s relationship with trauma and indeed that of the sublime. McCarthy's awareness of the unpresentability of trauma suggests that the novel can be viewed as embracing the oscillation of the metamodern movement.

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[87] Lyotard, 'What is Postmodernism?', in *Postmodernism*, ed. by Waugh, p. 122.

I: Trauma

There is a clear comparison to be made between the oscillation of metamodernism and the incomprehensibility of trauma. According to Jane Kilby, the study of trauma theory is "...characterised by its emphasis on the incomprehensibility of traumatic events…"[88] She asserts that "social injustices" such as "AIDS, Hiroshima, the Holocaust, sexual abuse, slavery and Vietnam" are examples which would constitute the study of trauma theory.[89] Trauma theory, then, is the study of the after-effects of social and political periods, or events which cannot be understood or comprehended.

For the trauma victim, the space of the traumatic event lies rooted in the past, or "later as a haunting presence"[90] and accessibility to such an event seems tied up with the incapacity to comprehend it. In the 'recalling' of a traumatic event, it remains distorted, portraying glimpses of the reality of the original occurrence. The memory of these events return only as spectral fragments; distorted and impeded by time. Ultimately, the actuality of trauma becomes as incomprehensible as that of the event that caused it. Further to this, according to Roger Luckhurst, memory is disrupted by trauma, particularly with those who suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and because of this the identity of the individual also becomes altered in some way.[91] The disorder of identity that stems from trauma is the result of a breakdown between what the individual considers to be his or her past memories and what constitutes their present state of mind:

> Trauma is a piercing or breach of a border that puts inside and outside into a strange communication. Trauma violently opens passageways between systems that were once discreet, making unforeseen connections that distress or confound. [92]

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[88] Jane Kilby, 'The Writing of Trauma: Trauma Theory and the Liberty of Writing', *New Formations: A Journal of Culture/ Theory/ Politics*, 47 (2007), pp. 217-230 (p.217).

[89] Kilby, 'The Writing of Trauma', p. 217.

[90] Kilby, 'The Writing of Trauma', p. 217.

[91] Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question*, p. 1.

[92] Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question*, p. 3.

Thus, as trauma occurs, the present self becomes disjointed due to the disruption of memory. Connections to the past become broken and what is left is the falsification of truth. This then leads to the paradox of understanding trauma to which Kilby refers, and as Cathy Caruth suggests, "...the most direct seeing of an event may occur as an absolute inability to know it."[93] In this sense, observing an event does not necessarily lead to an understanding of it, hence the central paradox of attempting to understand trauma. The implications of the nature of trauma distorts the identity of the self, and for Sigmund Freud, it is of the upmost importance to recall repressed memories in order to locate or reassemble one's own identity, as Marita Sturken explains, "the "true" nature of one's self is hidden though potentially accessible, and that it must be retrieved in order to produce wholeness."[94] For most victims of trauma, it seems that "the ability to recover the past is thus closely and paradoxically tied up, in trauma, with the inability to have access to it."[95] With this in mind, it is clear that the paradox of trauma can be linked directly to the movement of metamodernism. The desire to comprehend something which is incomprehensible mirrors the metamodern drive, which attempts to present truth despite an inevitable impossibility to do so.

Truth becomes the most relevant and troubling detail with which trauma is associated. The ability to report any truth is exposed as an uneven curve, a direction of thought which Luckhurst attributes to Caruth. He suggests that "For Caruth, trauma is… a crisis of representation, of history and truth, and of narrative time."[96] History can only be understood as inaccessible, in the very moment that it occurs.[97] The truth of the past is made problematic and lies completely out of reach through trauma and to bear witness to trauma is to bear witness to the incomplete truth about history. As an example, the paradox of trauma is acknowledged in the attempt to understand the catastrophic moment in history known as Auschwitz. Luckhurst suggests that the 'crisis of truth' is a point of concern for

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[93] Cathy Caruth, (1996.a) 'Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History' (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press), in *The Trauma Question*, ed. by Luckhurst, p. 3.
[94] Marita Sturken, 'The Remembering of Forgetting', p. 111.
[95] Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), p152.
[96] Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question*, p.5.
[97] Caruth (1991 a) 7, in Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question*, p. 4.

German philosopher Theodor W. Adorno, whose thoughts regarding Auschwitz detail the perplexing argument of this inaccessibility to the past:

> For Adorno, all Western Culture is at once contaminated by and complicit with Auschwitz, yet the denial of culture is equally barbaric. If silence is no option either, Adorno sets art and cultural criticism the severe, and paradoxical, imperative of finding ways of representing the unpresentable.[98]

In attempts to deal with life, truth, history etc., through mimicry and pastiche, the postmodern, as Toth suggests, falls into an abyss of silence. Therefore, it seems that the desire to convey truth, albeit only in the knowledge that truth cannot be fully promised, is recognised in metamodernism as an attempt to break through the silence which stems from the unreachable depths of trauma. It becomes necessary to embrace the unpresentable and not fall silent in the face of that which cannot be explained. Metamodernism sets out to be the embodiment of art and cultural criticism to which Luckhurst refers, and could be seen as the response to Adorno's challenge. Postmodernism seeks to present the unpresentable, and views silence, emptiness, nihilism and minimalism as the logical outcome. On the other hand, metamodernist art seeks to present the unpresentable without falling silent, knowing what it says will always fall short of the mark.

Trauma is undoubtedly tied up in the past and therefore in order to overcome and understand trauma, one must decidedly reach back into history, regardless of its inaccessibility. This, as will be examined, leads to the position and use of repetition as it stands in trauma theory. The constant repetition of past events has been regarded as a key element of dealing with trauma. Because traumatic events can never be comprehended in the moment of their occurrence, it is only in the future that the impact of their effects can be felt, as Caruth explains, "Trauma…does not simply serve as a record of the past but precisely registers the force of an experience that is not yet fully owned."[99] For an event to be regarded as traumatic, its impact can only be seen to be felt after it has occurred. For Caruth, the significance of traumatic influence on one individual, a group, or indeed an entire society cannot be

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[98] Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question*, p. 5.

[99] Caruth, *Trauma*, p. 151.

understood or reflected in a study of the event alone, as its manifestations return only as a haunting presence.[100]

The incomprehensibility of trauma is quite simply shown to be the embodiment of how we necessarily perceive history, as a distortion that cannot be grasped in its truest form:

> It is indeed this truth of traumatic experience that forms the centre of its pathology or symptoms; it is not a pathology, that is, of falsehood or displacement of meaning, but of history itself.[101]

History then, becomes as inaccessible as trauma; both are understood by many as complex and paradoxical, as they cannot be recognised coherently in a present state. Despite the problems that face trauma theorists, what is clear is the necessity to continue the study of trauma. The fact that trauma is so incomprehensible suggests just how powerful the effects which grow out of an event can be. The incomprehensibility of trauma reveals the reality of traumatic consequences, and the need to pursue historical understanding.[102] Traumatic reality must be understood if any attempt to recover a sense of history or identity is to be achieved. This necessity seems integral to the desire for progression that is central to the movement of metamodernism. To advance forward is the compelling attitude that inaugurates the contemporary social situation, and as will be suggested, Tom McCarthy's *Remainder* is an example of this pursuit.

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[100] Kilby, 'The Writing of Trauma', p. 220.
[101] Caruth, *Trauma*, p. 220.
[102] Kilby, 'The Writing of Trauma', p. 221-222.

II: The Sublime

The limited nature of the human capacity to understand and come to terms with trauma is mirrored in our attempts to comprehend the sublime. What the sublime actually is can be and has been debated throughout history. However, the general consensus concerning the existence of the sublime is that it is by nature incomprehensible. Immanuel Kant describes the sublime in terms of its sheer size, or "quantity", and that it "is *what* is large beyond all comprehension."[103] The sublime for Kant is an image of unimaginable proportions which the mind cannot visually locate. Further to this, the sublime can only be understood in terms of its negative attributes and is usually an image of the natural world:

> It is…in its chaos that nature most arouses our ideas of the sublime, or in its wildness and most ruleless disarray and devastation, provided it displays magnitude and might.[104]

Something which is sublime is usually a reflection of the natural world, for if it can be created by mankind then it has been imagined by mankind. The sublime therefore, is an estimation of what can only be described in terms of its infiniteness. However, what it becomes is not the image itself, but for Kant, the "mind of man as he responds to that world and to the feeling that it engenders."[105] It is this "response to the infinite" that is the very presentation of what is sublime and our own response to the incomprehensible.[106]

To a greater extent, for Kant at least, the sublime is a conflict of the mind; as the mind attempts to negotiate between levels of understanding and levels of incomprehension, it is forced into a struggle with infinity.[107] The mind is incapable of observing the infinite, and the sublime is the result of its continuing attempt to do so. This opinion however, is not absolute, as in Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry*, it is suggested that the sublime is not necessarily the response of the mind to

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[103] Immanuel Kant, 'Critique of Judgement' (1790; trans. 1987) in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, eds. By Leitch., and others, p 520-521.

[104] Kant, 'Critique', in *Norton*, ed. by Leitch, p. 521.

[105] Christine Battersby, 'Terror, Terrorism and the Sublime: Rethinking the Sublime after 1789 and 2001', *Postcolonial Studies*, 6: 1 (2005), pp, 67-89 (p, 75). Battersby is speaking here in regards to Kant's discussion of the sublime in his Critique of the Powers of Judgement (CPJ: 220).

[106] Battersby, 'Terror, Terrorism and the Sublime', p. 75.

[107] Battersby, 'Terror, Terrorism and the Sublime', p. 78.

something, instead, it is the object of the sublime itself, that as Battersby makes clear, 'robs' "the spectator of his powers as he was overtaken by the sublime experience."[108] Either way the sublime is essentially that which is incomprehensible, revealing a connection to the workings of trauma. Namely, the manifestation of trauma at a later date after the initial event can be compared with the conflict of the mind as it attempts to observe infinity. In both cases we are left with a conflict of the mind. If the sublime can only be deemed truly sublime in the negative sense, agreed upon by both Kant, Burke, and as Battersby suggests, Hegel, then a traumatic event can indeed be placed within the realm of the sublime. This idea problematizes the notion set out by Kant that the sublime is necessarily part of the natural world. Battersby's discussion of terror and the sublime make it clear that those events such as Auschwitz and that which took place in 2001, known as 9/11, can be argued to be sublime in nature.

It will be suggested that Tom McCarthy's *Remainder* portrays this attempt to comprehend the infinite nature of trauma, and in doing so, also reflects the failure to grasp the overwhelming sense of greatness that surrounds the sublime. According to Lyotard, presenting the unpresentable nature of the sublime is the agenda set out by postmodernisn, "The postmodern… puts forward the unpresentable in presentation itself".[109] In this sense, *Remainder* embodies the postmodern move to "be witness to the unpresentable",[110] and yet at the same time it also seeks to challenge the unpresentable, striving to achieve a sense of presentation, all the while aware of the impossibility of such a task.[111] However, if trauma theory can be shown to have a correlation with the sublime, (the mind attempting to comprehend that which is incomprehensible), then both can be understood in correlation with metamodernism. They both reflect a central drive to obtain an unreachable truth, a direction which is of crucial importance to the metamodern critique. As will be argued, one of the ways in which this paradox can be portrayed is through the use of narrative devices such as repetition. McCarthy's desire to embrace and in turn overcome the unpresentable shows both his affinity with postmodernism, and

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[108] Battersby, 'Terror, Terrorism and the Sublime', p. 78.

[109] Lyotard, 'What is Postmodernism', in *Postmodernism*, ed. by Waugh, p. 124.

[110] Lyotard, 'What is Postmodernism', in *Postmodernism*, ed. by Waugh, p. 125.

[111] For a fuller discussion of Lyotard's postmodern sublime see his *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime* (1991).

his challenge to it. In *Remainder*, the metamodern oscillation of presenting the unpresentable can be

viewed through its engagement with the impact of traumatic reality.

Part 3: Tom McCarthy's *Remainder*.

It was about history and time, simulation, questions of authenticity and, by extension, of our whole state of being-in-the-world. And it was about the world's state of being-in-the-universe as well: the world, matter, this shard left over from some unnameable violent disaster – a remainder.[112]

In this description of his novel, McCarthy describes *Remainder* as being a reflection of human existence in the current moment. For McCarthy, it seems that *Remainder* epitomises the postmodern condition of questioning previous articulations about the human predicament in a universe of unimaginable proportions. It challenges conceptions of reality, breaking them down into fragments and deploys postmodern strategies of exposing 'reality' as we know it as a set of human constructs. Further to this, *Remainder* is a novel which deals with the postmodern paradox of recalling history, and as such, could be viewed as a novel closely related to historiographic metafiction. Similarities between McCarthy's novel and Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* are there to be seen, such as a failure to articulate the recollection of historical, traumatic events. Concerning the postmodern text, Hutcheon argues that the "contradictions of postmodernism are not really meant to be resolved, but rather are to be held in an ironic tension."[113] While it does not identify with a specific event that we know of such as the Dresden bombings, it signifies the impossibility of articulating history through fiction, particularly in the aftermath of trauma.

> About the accident itself I can say very little. Almost nothing. It involved something falling from the sky. Technology. Parts, bits. That's it, really: all I can divulge. Not much I know.[114]

However, where Vonnegut cements the contradiction of recall in his novel, McCarthy strives to resolve contradiction, revealing *Remainder* to be a novel which challenges the postmodern paradox of

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[112] Mark Thwait, 'Tom McCarthy', *Ready Steady Book for Literature*, 18 December 2005 <http://www.readysteadybook.com/Article.aspx?page=tommccarthy>.
[113] Hutchen, *Poetics*, p. 47.
[114] Tom McCarthy, *Remainder* (Alma Books: London, 2011), p. 1.

communication. It could therefore be suggested that *Remainder* is an embodiment of the metamodern novel. Its relationship with irony locates it as a postmodern text; however, it also strives to overcome postmodern irresolution situating itself within the metamodern landscape of contemporary literature. The postmodern novel, such as *Slaughterhouse-Five* is concerned with inauthenticity and the loss of the real. *Remainder*'s protagonist, on the other hand, articulates a persistent need to return to a position of un-fabricated authenticity. Ironically, he chooses to construct, or reconstruct 'spaces' of the past so as to achieve this sense of connection to authenticity; "I wanted to reconstruct that space and enter it so I could feel real again."[115] Ultimately however, any degree of authenticity becomes impossible to hold on to, as *Remainder* oscillates to-and-fro between success and failure.

Remainder portrays the existence of an unnamed protagonist, an 'everyman' character who is suffering from the trauma of an unknown accident. This accident has left him in a state of physical and mental disruption, including the loss of his memory. His very sense of being has been dislodged from his previous identity, resulting in his current state of incapacitation. Compensated in the sum of eight and a half million pounds, but bound to silence by the settlement agreement, he spends the duration of the novel funding repeated attempts to reconnect to his lost reality. These attempts come in the form of repetition, or re-enactment, as he tries to rediscover his lost sense of self. At first he sets out to build a house that he has fragmented memories of residing in during his 'past life'. With the help of Nazrul Ram Vyas, a hired specialist from a company in the field of facilitation known simply as "Time Control UK", he moulds a large mansion in to the image of his remembered house. He then fills his building with hired actors or 'enactors' who remain on call to act out the various roles of the people from his memories. The narrator, or enactor,[116] as he comes to be, re-enacts several other staged situations, such as an oil leak from a car at a gas station, the murder of a black man on a bicycle and the recreation of a bank robbery.

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[115] McCarthy, *Remainder*, 62.
[116] Zadie Smith, 'Two Paths for the Novel', *The New York Review of Books,* 55: 18 (2008), 1-13 (p. 7).

I: Trauma and Repetition in *Remainder*.

McCarthy begins his work in the true spirit of ancient Greek literature, *in medias res*, and the only information the reader is given about the unknown event comes from the voice of the highly unreliable victim:

> I have vague images, half impressions: of being, or having been – or more precisely, being about to be – hit…But who's to say that these are genuine memories? Who's to say that my traumatized mind didn't just make them up, or pull them out from somewhere else…Minds are versatile and wily things. Real chancers.[117]

This "accident" is never described, and remains an unknown event that has occurred before the story begins. The reader is confronted from the start with the problem of absence, and as such the 'non-event' is emphasised in the text immediately. In this sense, *Remainder* is what LaCapra would call non-conventional, as it displays the event as "abstract" or "disembodied" completely from the plot.[118] It exists as subconscious; a sub-category for the carrying out of its consequences as the narrator omits the event due to the impact of trauma. PTSD is vividly conveyed in the characterisation of *Remainder*'s narrator, whose disjointed identity has come to be as a result of his catastrophe. On the other hand, it is possible that the terms of the settlement of his compensation fee prevent him from discussing the accident, even to the reader, as he does in fact admit; "…then there's the Requirement. The Clause. The terms of the Settlement…prohibiting me from discussing, in any public or recordable format…the nature and/ or details of the incident…"[119] From the outset, then, *Remainder* distances itself from historical accuracy, aligning itself with the postmodern approach to presenting the unpresentable. Clarity is questioned in the postmodern, as Hutcheon makes clear:

> In the postmodern writing of history – and fiction – there is a deliberate contamination of the historical with didactic and situational discursive elements, thereby challenging the implied assumptions of historical statements: objectivity, neutrality, impersonality, and transparency of representation."[120]

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[117] McCarthy, *Remainder*, p. 1.
[118] Dominick LaCapra, 'Trauma, Absence, Loss', *Critical Inquiry*, 25: 4 (1999), 696-727 (p.701).
[119] McCarthy, *Remainder*, p. 1.
[120] Hutcheon, *Poetics*, p. 92.

Transparency is never fulfilled in *Remainder* and as such, McCarthy's work clearly shows itself to be aware of and in league with the problematic concept of 're-telling' that Hutcheon associates with the postmodern.

In section one, it was suggested that PTSD is a side-effect of the traumatic experience, and according to Luckhurst, as memory becomes disrupted, the identity of the victim can take on a new form. In the novel, the narrator's memories have been rearranged, quite literally altering his perspective on life:

> After the accident I forgot everything. It was as though my memories were pigeons and the accident a big noise that had scared them off. They fluttered back eventually – but when they did, their hierarchy had changed, and some that had had crappy places before ended up with better ones: I remembered them more clearly; they seemed more important.[121]

The narrator's disordered memories represent the impact of the traumatic event, and as a result, his identity is relocated onto a new plateau of existence. Further to this, his rearranged identity is reflected in the text through narrative disruption and what Zadie Smith suggests is a "nervous breakdown' of the text, as the narrator constantly becomes confused in his descriptions of things and people.[122] Having described a conversation with a homeless man in a cafe, he then reveals that this conversation never actually took place. "The truth is, I've been making all this up – the stuff about the homeless person. He existed alright…but I didn't go across to him."[123] This narrative breakdown mirrors his overall view of the constructed world, and the "Usurpers" and "Frauds" within it.[124] As with most victims of trauma, it is through the process of repetition that McCarthy's narrator attempts to 'work through' his dislodged identity in order to reconnect to his lost sense of self.[125]. In parallel to the postmodern, the "repetition compulsion" also exists upon a resounding paradox, as Oliver makes clear, it allows the victim to tolerate their trauma, all the while "falsifying" the event, "which one tries

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[121] McCarthy, *Remainder*, p. 87.
[122] Smith, 'Two Paths for the Novel', p. 8.
[123] McCarthy, *Remainder*, p. 56.
[124] McCarthy, *Remainder*, p. 56.
[125] Sigmund Freud, 'Beyond the Pleasure Prinicple, *Standard Edition*, 18 (1920, a), in *The Trauma Question*, ed. by Roger Luckhurst, p. 9.

repeatedly to pin down, to nail, in language and image replay."[126] Repetition occurs as an attempt by the victim to comprehend the incomprehensible trauma and reassemble personal dislocation.[127]

The narrator's failure to disclose the nature of the event to the reader from within the fictional world, alongside the breakdown of the narration reveals McCarthy's intentions to mark the fictive space as imperfect for historical accuracy. This effort is paramount to the postmodern writing of historiographic metafiction, which questions traditional forms of narrating history through fiction, as Hutcheon explains:

> Historiographic metafiction… keeps distinct its formal auto-representation and its historical context, and in doing so problematizes the very possibility of historical knowledge, because there is no reconciliation, no dialectic here – just unresolved contradiction."[128]

Remainder is clearly located on this position of 'unresolved contradiction', however, in the same instance it also deviates from it. It is a novel which recognizes the paradox of postmodernism, and even goes so far as recapturing it, and yet it also attempts to dispel it.

McCarthy's protagonist is never content with irresolution, of falling into the 'unresolved contradiction' of the postmodern. Instead he seeks out "miracles" and desires to "triumph over matter".[129] He continuously attempts to reconnect with his past and return to a state of wholeness. In this sense, *Remainder* conveys to its reader the oscillation of the metamodern movement, constantly attempting to overcome that which can never be resolved. It encapsulates the ironic of the postmodern, but is determined to gravitate beyond it; a central paradox of the novel in which McCarthy displays an incessant need to articulate the reality of trauma, even if this is never

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[126] Bert Oliver, 'Trauma and Literature: Derrida, 9/11 and Hart's *The Reconstructionist*, *Journal of Literary Studies*, 24: 1 (2008), 32-57 (p. 38).
[127] Luckhurst, *The Trauma Question*, p.9.
[128] Hutcheon, *Poetics*, p. 106.
[129] McCarthy, *Remainder*, p.161.

possible.[130] Ultimately however, any sense of overcoming the narrator's trauma would be something of a false truth claim. Concerning Hutcheon's discussion of historiographic metafiction in postmodern novels, *Remainder* reveals itself to be in conjunction with this style of writing, and yet it also shows a desire to challenge the impossible nature of communication, doing so through the process of repetition.

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[130] Oliver suggests that in regards to trauma, one must attempt to articulate it to the best of one's own ability.

II: Making Connections.

Following on from the initial incident which leaves him in a comatose state, the unnamed anti-hero or "everyman"[131] is guided by his doctors to achieving recovery. His brain undergoes a process of "rerouting"[132] which involves a rewiring of his brain circuits that have been damaged in order to carry out even the most simplest of tasks, such as "lifting a carrot". This of course never enables him to recapture his original self, as what has replaced his state of existence before the accident has now become manufactured and unreal. He views the carrot as having more of a reality than he does; "The carrot, though, was more active than me: the way it bumped and wrinkled, how it crawled with grit. It was cold."[133] 'Rerouting' becomes the core of the text, as repeated attempts to feel are executed. Because his sense of being has been cut off from reality, he attempts to reconnect to his own identity through a series of re-enactments. Working as conduits for the repetition process, these re-enactments allow the protagonist his attempts to become real, to return to his lost place of authenticity. Repetition in *Remainder* then, becomes an attempt to retrieve what Gilles Deleuze refers to as "unknown knowledge". For Deleuze, it is the act of repetition itself which constitutes the unknown knowledge, and in order to understand this knowledge, the 'hero' of the play-world must act it out, "play it and repeat it until the acute moment that Aristotle called "recognition"".[134] Thus, McCarthy's enactor moulds spaces for himself, stage locations, in which he can 'act out' his 'unknown knowledge.'

His desire to achieve a connection to reality is first realised during a visit to the bathroom at a friend's party, where upon discovering a crack in the wall, he experiences a strong sensation of "déjà vu".[135] This sensation could be envisaged as an Aristotelian recognition of a memory prior to his accident, and up until this point, he has not recognised any moment from his pre-traumatic episode. The memory is of a house which he may or may not have inhabited at some point during his life, possibly in Paris. Although only a distorted memory, it is an instance of complete realisation, and an un-

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[131] Thwait, 'Tom McCarthy', *RSBL*.
[132] McCarthy, *Remainder*, p. 21.
[133] McCarthy, *Remainder*, p.21.
[134] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. by Paul Patton (London: Continuum, 2007), p. 17.
[135] McCarthy, *Remainder*, p.60.

fabricated connection to his reality. From this crack he is able to picture the very makeup of the building and the people inside it. More importantly however, he is able to recall "how all this had felt."[136] He remembers these feelings as being genuinely natural, not forced, such as the movements of his now altered self:

> Most of all I remembered this: that inside this remembered building, in the rooms and on the staircase, in the lobby and the large courtyard between it and the building facing with the red roofs with black cats on them – that in these spaces, all my movements had been fluid and unforced. Not awkward, acquired, second hand, but natural.[137]

During this memory or flashback, he finds joy in the notion that at this time his movements were 'seamless' and unimpeded by contemplation. He is able to see himself as he views Robert De Niro in *Mean Streets*, "Whether it was lighting up a cigarette or opening a fridge door…he seemed to execute the action perfectly…He's natural when he does things. Not artificial, like me."[138] It is at this moment of realisation where he makes the decision to invest his new found wealth into the reconstruction of this building, down to each and every minute detail. "I was going to recreate it: build it up again and live inside it".[139]

The connections which McCarthy's enactor makes in the novel, that connect him to what he believes to be his reality, are described several times throughout the novel as a "tingling" sensation, brought on by either having an actual memory from before his accident, or at the sight of a perfect, seamless moment. During the early stages of the novel, a memory of "just before the accident" provides him with this sensation. He remembers "…being buffeted by the wind. Remembering it sent a tingling from the top of my legs to my shoulders and right up into my neck."[140] He seeks this intense feeling through his re-enactments by confronting his 'neutral' existence. The "tingling" is a moment of perfection for him; "It lasted for just a moment, but while it did, I felt not-neutral. I felt different,

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[136] Ibid, p. 62.
[137] Ibid, p. 62.
[138] Ibid, p. 23.
[139] Ibid, p. 64.
[140] ibid, p. 10.

intense: both intense and serene at the same time."[141] On a symbolic level, these sensations act as moments of epiphany. Through these connections he is able to find himself outside, or above the pretension and the plastic substance that he now views as life, away from the "media types" and the "scene gays", whom he describes as "Theatrical, made up, the lot of them."[142]

The narrator's obsession with connecting to reality is later portrayed in his observation of workmen on a street laying wires. "They were connecting wires to one another: blue, red and green ones, making the connections. I watched them, fascinated."[143] The actions of making connections become for him the most important act in his now altered life. Everything he does revolve around authenticity and it is the perfection of this ironically mechanical function that drives him. Despite his resentment towards his physical and mental incapacitation, he is spurred on by becoming mechanically perfect, and as he watches the workmen making connections, he holds them on a pedestal, as gatekeepers to his desired place of perfect movement: "For me, they were Brahmins: top of the pile. More than Brahmins: Gods, laying down the wiring of the world, then covering it up – its routes, its joins."[144] He envies these 'Brahmins' for their supremacy, as he desires to be like them, a ruler over matter, as perfection becomes his one true goal.

His dissatisfaction with imperfection is made clear when he is told of the amount of money he will receive as compensation for his accident:

> I thought about the sum: eight and a half million. I pictured it in my mind, its shape. The eight was perfect, neat: a curved figure infinitely turning back into itself. But then the half. Why had they added the half? It seemed to me so messy, this half: a leftover fragment, a shard of detritus. When my knee-cap had set after being shattered in the accident, one tiny splinter had stayed loose. The doctors hadn't managed to fish it out, so it just floated around beside the ball, redundant, surplus to requirements…I remember the sum's leftover

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[141] Ibid, 10.
[142] Ibid, 51.
[143] Ibid, 97.
[144] Ibid, 98.

fraction, the half…picturing it as the splinter in my knee, and frowning, thinking: Eight alone would have been better.[145]

The dislodged fragment symbolises his displacement from reality after the accident. There are many examples within the text which can be said to be McCarthy's *Remainder*, and this "half" leftover is one of them. As Julia Jordan suggests, "The debris of the accident in McCarthy's novel – the remainder of *Remainder* itself – is described in the novel as 'like a shard', leaving its mark…"[146] By re-enacting lost memories, the narrator attempts to return to wholeness, to an existence of perfect, seamless movement.

The re-enactments which take place in the renovated Madlyn Mansions are focussed around the narrator's interactions with hired 'enactors' who portray the people of his possible past, such as his interaction with the liver lady on the fifth floor. His desire is to achieve the recreation of a past exchange with the original liver lady.

We'd spent ages practising this moment. I'd showed her exactly how to stoop: the inclination of her shoulders…the way her hand rested on her lower back above the hip, the middle finger pointing straight at the ground. We'd got all this down to a *t*…[147]

However, having rehearsed this interaction with her, going over each detail meticulously, the way she must stand, or hold her bag of rubbish as she opens her door, it is by chance that the unrehearsed words which pass between them fit perfectly into the overall recreation of this moment. The narrator is hit by a moment of euphoria as the liver lady describes the bag as, "Harder and harder to lift up."[148] As these words are uttered without meditation, without having been previously attempted or discussed, he feels his connection:

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[145] McCarthy, *Remainder*, p.9-10.
[146] Julia Jordan, ' 'To Mislead, Send Sideways, Lull, Jolt, Skid, Pull Back': Reading Tom McCarthy's Clinamen' (unpublished thesis), Birckbeck College, University of London, 22-23 July 2011, p. 8.
[147] McCarthy, *Remainder*, p. 134.
[148] Ibid, p. 135.

> For a few seconds, I felt weightless – or at least differently weighted: light but dense at the same time. My body seemed to glide fluently and effortlessly through the atmosphere around it – gracefully, slowly, like a dancer through water. It felt good. As I reached the third or fourth step of this new flight, though, this feeling dwindled. By the fifth or sixth it was gone.[149]

The connection does not last long, and ultimately, he is never able to achieve the same euphoric feeling again, despite continuous attempts to repeat this exact moment with the liver lady enactor; "I just felt like doing it again and again and again. Hundreds of times."[150] Something always happens to make the moment between them less than perfect, less than seamless.

However, as his addiction to this connection grows, his re-enactments become increasingly more severe; "I'd gone to these extraordinary lengths in order to be real."[151] In the recreation of the bank heist, the stage and reality become blended together. This re-enactment becomes more than just a stage to carry out a re-enactment; it becomes a reality, as one of the enactors involved discovers, "*It's real!*"[152] During this re-enactment, McCarthy portrays the true spectacle of the simulacrum, in Baudrillard's terms. Baudrillard asks the question, how does one simulate a fake heist of a bank robbery? The answer is simply that one cannot, as "…the web of artificial signs will be inextricably mixed up with real elements" and "you will unwittingly find yourself immediately in the real."[153] Rather than merely representing reality in the recreation of a robbery, an *actual* robbery is created, one that does not symbolize anything more than what it is. This re-enactment does not represent reality on a stage of inauthenticity; it becomes a reality which precedes representation, and as such displays the protagonist's fall into a world or existence without origin. It is at this point that he now functions in a hyperreality altogether, where the real and the imaginary are no longer distinct from one another. To a certain degree, this is exactly what he desires, to exist in a world unimpeded by fabrication. However, it is at this point that he is confronted with the paradox of the *real*, and

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[149] McCarthy, *Remainder*, p. 135.
[150] Ibid, p. 151.
[151] Ibid, p. 223.
[152] Ibid, p. 270.
[153] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulations*, trans. by Sheila Faria Glaser (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1994), p.15-16.

McCarthy here demonstrates what Baudrillard refers to as an "impossibility of isolating the process of simulation".[154] His reality is not a reality at all. Instead, it is a fabricated 'space', an illusion which continues to destabilise the further he enters into it. The simulated heist inevitably becomes real, but for the protagonist, there is no longer a distinction between what is real and what is simulation.

What of course becomes his main obstacle in the recreation of these events, is that the only times he is able to achieve the feeling of "zinging and intensity",[155] the connection to an elevated state, is when something happens by accident, and it becomes the perfection of the accident, the uncontrolled, that dominates and produces meaning for him. As Jordan suggests, *Remainder* is "saturated with accidents, collisions and arcing parabolas."[156] In *Remainder*, the narrator maintains a central drive to *make* things happen through repetition, thus deviating from the accidental world. McCarthy portrays an attempt to disrupt the tendencies of the accidental by taking control of unpredictability, as Jordan asserts, the actions, re-enactments of the protagonist "represent an attempt …to fundamentally cease these errant and disruptive movements."[157] These movements are the accidental, the unpredictable aspects of movement of space and time. The narrator is of course never able to fully acquire this control, as "the fold in the carpet, regardless of your accounting for it (or whether or not it exists) will always trip you up and make you fall."[158] The repetition of events, of the re-enactments, conveys to the reader the attempt to control his personal trauma, to escape it. However, as has been suggested, repetition does not necessarily lead to recovery. It is simply the process by which the trauma victim must proceed with, a compulsion, that is, to continuously attempt to comprehend and understand that which is incomprehensible. As will be discussed, this attempt can be seen as an attempt to comprehend the incomprehensible nature of the sublime.

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[154] Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulations*, p. 16.
[155] Ibid, p. 139.
[156] Jordan, 'Tom McCarthy's Clinamen', p. 11.
[157] Jordan, 'Tom McCarthy's Clinamen', p. 10.
[158] Jordan, 'Tom McCarthy's Clinamen', p. 15.

III: Masks, Perfection and Infinite Loops.

For McCarthy's novel, it is on the symbolic level that repetition is at its most powerful and it is worth discussing some of the symbolic elements in the novel which conjure up the feeling of perfection for the protagonist. An image of particular importance is the role of 'masks' in the novel. On the surface of the text, the use of the mask functions as a replacement for memory. For example, McCarthy's enactor is unable to remember the face of the concierge from his memory of the house, and so he places a mask on the face of her re-enactor:

> The concierge re-enactor was standing by in the lobby, while one of the costume people fiddled with the strappings of her face mask. Her face had never come to me – or, to be precise, it had come to me but only as a blank – so I decided she should wear a mask to blank it out. We'd got one of those masks that ice-hockey goaltenders wear: white and pocketed with little breathing holes.[159]

In addition to this image as a representation of a blank face, connotations of the stage are also invoked here. Discussing the use of masks in the novel, McCarthy himself insists, "I was thinking of Greek Tragedy."[160] The repetition on display in the pages of the text is in this case taking place on the stage or in a play. The narrator has created for himself a 'space', resembling that of a stage, one in which he may take control over and dominate, as he is able to move in and out of each space as he chooses, "I shall move throughout the space…as I see fit."[161] Concerning the process of repetition, Deleuze suggests that:

> When we say… that movement is repetition and that this is our true theatre, we are not speaking of the effort of the actor who "repeats" because he has not yet learned the part. We have in mind the theatrical space, and the manner in which it is filled and determined by the signs and masks through which the actor plays a role which plays other roles.[162]

The repetition portrayed in *Remainder* is done so on a fictional stage which the narrator creates for himself and which McCarthy creates for the reader.

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[159] McCarthy, *Remainder*, p. 128.
[160] Thwait, 'Tom McCarthy', RSBL.
[161] McCarthy, *Remainder*, p. 84.
[162] Deleuze, *Difference and repetition*, p. 11.

For Deleuze, repetition is not the embodiment of what has been forgotten or lost, it is the symbolic, the simulacra of knowledge about the unknown object.[163] Deleuze suggests that repetition is acted out unconsciously, or in the case of *Remainder*'s narrator, subconsciously. For him, what has been lost through traumatic injury can only be experienced once again through repeating and then re-repeating, inside a space which marks the place of recovery. The actual act of repetition set on this recreated stage, and the masks he fills it with, become a simulation of his desire to force a connection. The mask acts as a sign, a symbol of the unknown object, and the physical movement involved with *acting* portrays the mental attempt to comprehend it, or retrieve it, as Deleuze goes on to add:

> When the subconscious of knowledge or the working through of memory is missing, the knowledge in itself is the only repetition of its object: it is *played*, that is to say repeated, enacted instead of being known. Repetition here appears as the unconscious of the free concept, of knowledge or of memory, the unconscious of representation.[164]

Repetition in *Remainder* then, represents that which is unknown, and the unknown is therefore the narrator's lost knowledge. Because he cannot remember that which he has lost, his attempts to reconnect are *acted out*, quite literally on a stage which he creates, for the process of repetition.

However, repetition does not necessarily lead to recovery and as will be discussed here, it is the act of repetition which resembles the attempt to grasp at the incomprehensible nature of infinity in spite of the impossibility of fully comprehending it. This paradox of repetition is portrayed heavily in the symbolic elements of *Remainder*, and yet it is only by accident that a connection to knowledge can be made. In fact, it is arguable that the strongest connection in the novel is made when the narrator finds himself embracing the behaviour of a homeless person on the street:

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[163] Deleuze, *Difference and repetition*, p. 19.
[164] Deleuze, *Difference and repetition*, p. 16.

> I stood there static with my hands out, palms turned upwards, while commuters streamed past me. After a while I decided that I would ask them for change…I didn't need or want their change…I just wanted to be in that particular space, right then, doing that particular action. It made me feel so serene and intense that I felt almost real.[165]

McCarthy throws away all aspects of idealism here, conjuring up an 'almost' complete and perfect connection to reality. The narrator is down to the bare bones of simplicity, without any illusions of artificiality, for a few minutes at least. He takes on the form of a homeless person in the eyes of the *unreal* passers-by, and yet he feels a sensation of belonging to this space in time. It is the closest he comes to perfection, if only for a moment, and is the only space in the novel which he himself does not create which conjures up his connection to reality. *Remainder*'s association with the illusion of reality and the representation of the *real* in the constructed space positions it within the realm of the postmodern. However, its disassociation from the constructed space, presented in the accidental subverts the novel from postmodern tendencies, challenging the illusion of reality. In this sense, it is a novel which both embraces the paradox of representation and attempts to go against it. This challenge is presented in the enactor's connection to authenticity by way of chance happenings.

McCarthy's enactor in *Remainder* finds a sense of comfort in the idea of perfection. This comfort however becomes more and more heavily rooted in the text through his overwhelming addiction to making his connection. The narrator finds a sense of liberation in observing the methodical movements that occur throughout the novel, such as observing the workmen connecting wires. His obsession with rhythm and connecting movement is repeated in the way he observes his assembled team as they search for an appropriate house to stage his re-enactments. He comes to the conclusion that they will not find the house and yet he prefers them to keep looking anyway:

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[165] McCarthy, *Remainder*, p. 41-42.

> Why hadn't I called the search off, then? You might ask. Because I liked the process, liked the sense of pattern. There were people running through the same, repetitive acts – consulting their mobiles, walking up one street, down the next and up a third, stopping in front of buildings to make phone calls – in six different parts of town. Their burrowing would get inside the city's block and loosen it, start chiselling away at surplus matter: it would scare my building out, like beaters scaring pheasants out of bushes for a Lord to shoot – six beaters advancing in formation, beating to the same rhythms, their movement duplicating one another.[166]

His addiction to perfect rhythm and movement is clear in this extract, as is his drive for power, as he describes himself as a "Lord", a commander over his subjects. McCarthy places his narrator in a bird's eye position of power, observing movement being carried out across the city.

This observation is comparable to his enjoyment of the methodical search for truth in the aftermath of a murder; "Forensic procedure is an art form, nothing less. No, I'll go further: it's higher, more refined, than any art form. Why? Because it's real."[167] In describing this process he reveals his desire for complete perfection: "The whole process is extremely formal: you don't just go ahead and do it – you do it slowly, breaking down your movements into phases that have sections and sub-sections, each one governed by rigorous rules."[168] What started out as simply a desire to make connections becomes an addiction to control, as the narrator searches for perfection, to rid every factor of his life of any evidence of 'surplus matter'. On a symbolic level, he views everything as rotating on an infinite loop or axis. He compares this rotation to the chamber of a gun, "Guns aren't just history's props and agents: they're history itself, spinning alternate futures in their chamber, hurling the present from their barrel, casting aside the empty shells of the past."[169] He reveals his addiction to be a way of perfecting his control over time, an obsession of paradoxical impossibility.

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[166] McCarthy, *Remainder*, p. 91.
[167] Ibid, p. 173.
[168] Ibid, p. 174.
[169] McCarthy, *Remainder*, p. 178.

Just like his discomfort with the half a million pounds left over in his compensation settlement, he seeks the perfection of the infinite loop in the forensic procedure of the murder; "…if I were a head investigator, I'd plump for a figure of eight, and have each of my people crawl round the same area in an endlessly repeating circuit."[170] Once again, he imagines himself as this 'God-like' image observing *his* people crawling on all fours. What is important concerning this discussion is the loop of infinity, this "figure of eight" which remains ultimately the structure of the entire novel. The infinite is of impossible proportions and the narrator will never truly grasp its impossibility, and yet he continues his search for it. *Remainder*'s quest for finality, in spite of a knowing impossibility of capturing its perfection reveals its relationship with the metamodern. It is a novel which oscillates between enthusiasm and irony, hurling forward but forever turning back in on itself. *Remainder*'s concern for the image of the infinite loop, the figure of eight, reflects the metamodern movement.

The narrator's fascination with infinity is also portrayed throughout the novel in the symbolic image of the loyalty card which he uses when paying for coffee. Interestingly, McCarthy provides the reader with an image of a well-known example of Western consumerism in order to emphasise this repetitive movement:

> If I got all ten of its cups stamped then I'd get an extra cup – plus a new card with ten more cups on it. The idea excited me: clocking the counter, going right round through zero, starting again.[171]

The image of coffee cup stamps is used several times throughout the novel and acts as a kind of symbolic gesture, displaying the protagonist's desire for perfection. He is compelled by the movement of progression, the symmetry of its circular movement. It is something which he can control, thus enabling him to find meaning in spite of his own uncertainty. As previously discussed, this circular image reinforces the structure of *Remainder* and the constant loop of infinity which serves as the overall journey of the central character announces his fascination, or obsession, with the notion of perfection, or rather, his desire to embody the unattainable. Further to this, his satisfaction with the

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[170] Ibid, p. 175.
[171] Ibid, p. 49

coffee cup left over can be seen as being in stark contrast to his dissatisfaction with the terms of the settlement, thus reinforcing Smith's notion of the narrative breakdown of the text.

It can also be suggested that his desire for perfection in the novel mirrors the notion of comprehending the sublime. The narrator appears to embrace the paradoxical nature of the sublime in his quest for perfection. Discussing this paradox, Battersby refers to the Kantian notion of the sublime, which suggests that the pleasure the mind receives as it responds to the sublime is "generated by discord, through conflict…as man's senses, imagination and emotions function disharmoniously –trying to grasp an infinity or a power that is too great for comprehension."[172] McCarthy appears to portray the mind's response to the ungraspable entity of the paradoxical nature of the sublime. The repetitive acts on show in *Remainder*'s constructed spaces mimic the attempt to contemplate the "purposeless shape" of the sublime,[173] a shape which appears to resemble the 'figure of eight' loop of infinity.

McCarthy's novel initiates a concern for the unidentifiable, fully conscious of its own inadequacy or inability to present truth and it is this failure that Lyotard speaks of in regards to the postmodern presentation of the sublime. Lyotard observes that it "takes place…when the imagination fails to present an object which might, if only in principle, come to match a concept." He explains that:

> We can conceive the infinitely great, the infinitely powerful, but every presentation of an object destined to "make visible" this absolute greatness of power appears to us painfully inadequate. Those are ideas of which no presentation is possible.[174]

For Lyotard, the postmodern sublime can be summed up by a certain failure to portray reality, and must inevitably portray only an illusion of it. However, for the metamodernist, there is an embrace of this incapacity to comprehend the sublime, to continue to attempt to understand that which cannot be understood, in spite of a certain inevitable failure to be able to do so. In this sense, it can be suggested

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[172] Battersby, 'Terror, Terrorism and the Sublime', p.77.
[173] Battersby, 'Terror, Terrorism and the Sublime', p. 78.
[174] Jean François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 78.

that McCarthy's *Remainder* embraces the paradoxical nature of the sublime, embodying a metamodern portrayal of articulation which is ultimately destined to fail. Infinity for the narrator becomes an impossible goal, which he continuously seeks to obtain through the repetitive process of working through his personal trauma.

McCarthy illustrates the Freudian concept of 'working through' in the use of repetition in the novel, portraying his protagonist journeying through the text as a trauma patient under psychoanalytical treatment. As a patient, the narrator continuously repeats, revealing his attempt to remember what Deleuze refers to as lost knowledge. Freud explains that "As long as the patient is in the treatment he cannot escape from this compulsion to repeat; and in the end we understand that this is a way of remembering."[175] Unfortunately for the narrator, and indeed for the trauma victim, the act of repetition becomes paradoxical, as rather than allowing the patient to remember, repetition takes the place of remembering. Repetition initially occurs in order to remember, however it then becomes a replacement for recall, as Freud makes clear, "(repetition) replaces remembering."[176] In this sense, the narrator attempts to master his personal trauma through repetition, and yet he is confronted with each act of repetition by a central paradox; as he repeats, he is not remembering at all, instead he is creating a space of illusion where all his attempts to comprehend the incomprehensible nature of his personal trauma are isolated. As such, "remembering at once gives way to acting out".[177] The act of repetition is as Deleuze suggests symbolic.[178] It allows for the lived-in experience of trauma but only in a simulated state, and cannot be comparable to the real. Because of this, *Remainder*'s narrator is an embodiment of the metamodern hero, who commits to the impossible and is caught within a paradoxical loop of continuously striving to overcome the incomprehensible.

[175] Sigmund Freud, 'Further Recommendations on the technique of psychoanalysis ii', *Remembering, Repeating and Working Through*, p. 150 <http://www.hitory.uscb.edy/faculty/marcuse/classes/201/articles/1914FreudRemembering.pdf >.

[176] Freud, *Remembering, Repeating and Working Through*, p. 151.

[177] Freud, *Remembering, Repeating and Working Through*, p. 151.

[178] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, p.19.

In the final pages of the text, McCarthy merges his narrator's attempt to connect to reality by obtaining perfection with the notion of comprehending the impossible sublime. Following the bank robbery, that becomes more than just a re-enactment, the protagonist hijacks a plane, forcing it to fly "back and forth in mid-air."[179] As the novel concludes, the narrator seems to have finally made a lasting connection as the plane leaves a figure of eight trail of smoke in the sky; "Our trail would be visible from the ground: an eight, plus that bit where we'd first set off – fainter, drifted to the side by now, discarded, recidual, a remainder."[180] He is at last where he wishes to be, in a heightened position of control, embodying the very movement of the paradoxical infinite loop, moving forward and turning back, and he is hit once again by the intense "feeling of weightlessness".[181] Ultimately however, the reader knows that this cannot last, that in the end, the plane must return to the ground, returning the novel back in on itself, back to the start, with the falling of a large object from the sky, bringing to an end the narrator's perfectly seamless connection to the infinite nature of the sublime.

Through *Remainder*, McCarthy presents a contemporary depiction of the traumatic mind, as it searches for meaning in spite of an uncertain existence. His narrator is compelled forward by his desire to obtain a sense of meaning where there is no such thing, and his actions are presented in the form of repetition. Speaking in regards to the repetition compulsion after trauma, of multiple texts which continuously repeat in order to overcome trauma, Slavoj Žižek argues that:

> the endlessly repeated reenactments refer to the trauma of some impossible Real which forever resists its symbolization (all these different narratives are ultimately just so many failures to cope with this trauma, with the contingent abyssal occurrence of some catastrophic Real, like suicide, apropos of which no 'why' can ever serve as its sufficient explanation).[182]

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[179] McCarthy, *Remainder*, p. 283.
[180] Ibid, p. 283.
[181] Ibid, p. 283.
[182] Slavoj Žižek, The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime: On David Lunch's Lost Highway (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), in Toth, *Passing*, p. 90.

The re-enactments that occur throughout *Remainder* are displayed in the protagonist's attempt at working through trauma, in order to reach a state of recovery. McCarthy takes this a step further however, examining the paradoxical workings of the repetition process, revealing that trauma can never be wholly overcome. This notion is placed alongside the image of the infinite loop, as *Remainder* presents the mind's attempt to comprehend the incomprehensible nature of the sublime. It is in this way that *Remainder* can be said to embrace the paradox of repetition, and indeed that of the sublime, and in so doing, reveals its connection to the postmodern concern for the impossible.

McCarthy's desire to overcome this impossibility suggests however that the novel functions beyond the postmodern, as it navigates its way into the metamodern landscape. Despite the fact that trauma can never be overcome, the process of repetition, of continuously re-enacting in order to make a lasting connection to truth, reality and in order to overcome the unknown traumatic event, McCarthy's novel articulates the metamodern drive to embrace the impossible nature of traumatic reality. *Remainder* becomes a fragmented guide to the mind of mankind, its existence in a world of uncertainty, and the world's existence in a universe of unimaginable proportions; a "black hole" of space-time.[183] In addition to this, McCarthy produces a novel which plainly observes the unstable relationship between victim and reality. *Remainder* ultimately portrays an impossible attempt to grasp at or reconnect with a reality which no longer exists and it reveals itself to be a metamodern text which both encompasses and challenges postmodern values of presentational failure. Through *Remainder*, McCarthy presents the notion that an image of progressive movement forwards, towards a 'forever receding horizon'[184] cannot be controlled. It is only by accident, or chance, that his enactor ever truly gets close to making his final connection – an end as it were – and the function of chance in contemporary fiction, it will be discussed, can be said to be another tactic of the metamodern drive.

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[183] McCarthy, *Remainder*, p. 100.
[184] Vermeulen and Akker, *Note on Metamodernism*, p.12.

Part 4. Chance and Luke Rhineheart's *The Dice Man*.

In the previous chapter it was discussed that Tom McCarthy's *Remainder* can be viewed as an example of metamodernist fiction. It is a novel which captures the fundamental aspects of the metamodern drive, such as the desire for authenticity in an uncertain world. Luke Rhineheart's *The Dice Man* is another novel which embraces the paradoxical oscillation of metamodernism. This early 1970's novel operates around the notion of chance, as Rhineheart portrays the main protagonist, himself, playing out his life based upon the roll of the dice. It will be suggested in this chapter that Rhineheart's work can be included as a work of the metamodern alongside McCarthy's *Remainder*. I would like to argue here that chance, as it stands in the fictional world of Rhineheart's novel, is used and presented in a metamodern way. I would also like to make it clear at this point that when I use the term 'chance', I am not using it in regards to the accidental, as the two stand as separate categories in and of themselves. In *Remainder* for example, McCarthy puts forward the reaction of his protagonist to the accidental 'chance' happenings that were out of his control, and ultimately unpredictable only because he did not see them coming. In this sense, *Remainder* concerns itself with the notion of *pure* accident. In *The Dice Man* however, chance is used in a controlled manner by the protagonist and cannot be deemed to be seen as accidental. An object that falls from the sky which lands on a person causing traumatic repercussions can only be seen as accidental, unless of course it was done on purpose, whereas the fall of the dice from a player's hand is a deliberate submission to the powers of fate, a submission to the realm of *pure* chance.

In *The Dice Man* there is on show a certain desire to discover a sense of freedom, whether it be a physical freedom from the constraints of social normality, or a desire for moral freedom existentially. According to Gerda Reith, Rhineheart's main protagonist plays out the "ultimate existential fantasy

by surrendering his life's decisions to the role of the dice."[185]   The outcome of course is that this freedom cannot be attained once and for all, and so the novel appears to resemble the metamodern drive for freedom in spite of its overwhelming and unreachable distance. What is metamodern about the text is its oscillation between achieving a sense of personal progression (freedom) and its return to the space of confinement. *The Dice Man* reflects upon the paradox of existence, examining the uncertain notion of identity. What the reader is able to observe is the continuous strive to achieving the totality of self-hood, or self-expression, when ultimately, a true presentation of the self is forever unachievable.

Rhineheart's novel is a fictional portrayal which follows the life of one Dr Luke Rhineheart, a psychiatrist who decides to experiment with dice. In order to free himself from the confined existence of routine, implemented by the workforce, by modern society, and by the trivialities of marriage and family life, he takes it upon himself to leave every decision, every action of his life up to the fate of the dice. As the novel unfolds, his existence becomes one with the notion of fate. He becomes no longer in control of what he does or says, as he follows every order that the dice compels him to undertake. This of course leads to his displacement from the world of social normality, and he eventually becomes a fugitive on the run from the law. Already there is an obvious comparison to be made between the fictional Luke Rhineheart and *Remainder*'s protagonist, whom also delves into a world without consequences. Living by the dice is an experiment "to change human personality."[186]

For Rhineheart, and by Rhineheart I refer here to the fictional one alone, human personality is restricted by social expectations, and most of the true aspects of the self, of which of course there are indeed many, are kept in place below the surface of that which we see day to day. The true desires of the human mind are repressed, ideologically for the purposes of carrying out certain functions which maintain a continuous yet unchanging social workforce which does not stray from the repetitive,

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[185] Gerda Reith, *The Age of Chance: Gambling in Western Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 133.
[186] Luke Rhineheart, *The Dice Man* (Harper: London, 1999), p. 12.

ordered and most importantly controlled existence of life. For Rhineheart, man is controlled and his true desires, his true *selves* which are kept below the surface are repressed, resulting in an incomplete personality. Lakoff and Johnson explain that "The study of the self…concerns the structure of our inner lives, who we really are."[187] Dice Life is an attempt to experience who we really are, the chaotic and the random, all-encompassing and unidentifiable nature of the human mind. Rhineheart reveals that by embracing chance, or the gamble, one is able to commit to the impossible task of achieving true freedom. However, in the same instance, the protagonist is faced with the paradox of freedom through chance, as he becomes indoctrinated into the ideology of the die, the religion of it, and it is during this indoctrination that he becomes subject to its will.

Examples of these true desires to which Rhineheart refers to in the novel are not in any way easy to comprehend, such as the desire to rape, murder, or to commit suicide. For some at least, such as a psychiatrist's patients for example, these are desires of the hidden personalities of the mind, which are quite simply not allowed to be explored, or acted out in reality:

> Now the desire to kill oneself and to assassinate, poison, obliterate or rape others is generally considered in the psychiatric profession as 'unhealthy.' Bad. Evil. More accurately, *sin*. When you have the desire to kill yourself, you are supposed to 'accept it,' but *not*, for Christ's sake, to kill yourself. If you desire to have carnal knowledge for a helpless teeny-bopper, you are supposed to accept your lust, and not lay a finger on even her big toe. If you hate your father, fine – but don't slug the bastard with a bat. Understand yourself, accept yourself, but do not be yourself.[188]

The philosophy of the novel is to break free from the constraints of social normality, in essence, to rid oneself of the existence experienced by Kafka's Gregor Samsa.[189] The law of the Dice, to which Rhineheart indoctrinates himself, is essentially used in order to "give to men a sense of freedom, exhilaration, joy."[190] To live by the dice is ultimately to restore happiness to the personality, to fully

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[187] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), p. 267.
[188] Ibid, p. 13.
[189] Franz Kafka, *Metamorphosis* (1915).
[190] Ibid, p. 12.

appreciate all aspects of it, in order to live as a whole human being. In the throw of the dice, one's true desires are given a 'sporting chance' and it is this very sense of chance which illustrates the oscillation of the metamodern moment. Much like the pendulum described by Vermeulen and Akker, living by chance is to oscillate back and forth between the possibility of success and failure. However, in the novel it is not necessarily success and failure which are brought to light, instead, it is the possibility of allowing one's true *self*, or indeed *selves* to be identified and given a true and unrepressed sense of agency.

I: Freedom and the Self in *The Dice Man*.

Freedom, reader, is an awful thing: so Jean Paul Sartre, Eric Fromm, Albert Camus and dictators throughout the world continually tell us.[191]

Our understanding of the term 'chance' today varies entirely from its connotations throughout the ages. In a detailed account of the history of chance, Reith explains that chance has developed from an entity marked only by its relationship with the divine in classical texts "as a sacred sign of the Gods",[192] into a more scientific understanding of the term today. Chance's development can be summed up as a progression from the realm of "*Fortuna*" to that of "*Scientia*"[193] These contrasting notions are on show in Rhineheart's novel, as the protagonist reverses this trend, starting out as a man of psychoanalytical science and becoming a man who entrusts his own life to the powers of fate.

Broadly speaking, chance is still an area of philosophical thinking which troubles the critic. Chance is quite simply as we know it to be, random and unpredictable, and can be summed up by Jordan's discussion of the unpredictable movement of atoms. What Jordan suggests is that the creation of form is achieved through the unpredictability of falling atoms, "like raindrops". With the intervention of 'the clinamen', like a 'bolt of lightning' which disrupts the fall of raindrops, those atoms are forced into a new direction, taking on a new and unpredictable course, which ultimately creates the future event.[194]

Describing his passion, the protagonist of the novel compares the study of 'dice life' with the interruption of chance, which propels the assimilated adult back into their infancy, in an attempt to escape their ordered state of self. He explains that he wants "To restore to life the same shock of experience we have when bare toes first feel the earth at dawn and we see the sun split through the

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[191] Rhineheart, *The Dice Man*, p. 374

[192] Reith, '*The Idea of Chance' The Age of Chance*, p 13.

[193] Reith, *The Age of Chance*, p. 24.

[194] Jordan, 'Tom McCarthy's Clinamen', p. 3.

mountain trees like horizontal lightening." Thus, form and creation are created out of unpredictability and deviation and are, as Jordan explains, "due to the clinamen"[195] The clinamen here is as the die in Rhineheart's novel; like the lightening which pierces coherency 'horizontally'. The fall of the die will dictate his every move, resulting in an unpredictable set of events. In the preface to the novel, Rhineheart describes his work as "A cunning chaos" and he makes clear that "my style shall be random, with the wisdom of the Dice."[196] The fictional Rhineheart submits to the will of the falling dice, reflecting his engagement with the falling of unpredictable atoms.

The Dice Man portrays the removal of form and coherency and the embracement of the random and the chaotic, the unpredictable and the spasmodic. The protagonist is much like McCarthy's enactor who also moved to embrace the random in order to locate authenticity, "I needed to go irrational on the whole thing. Illogical."[197] From a metamodern perspective, this is a novel which resembles the paradox of communication perfectly. By embracing the unpredictability and randomness of chance, Rhineheart reveals a commitment to the impossible. The protagonist attempts to escape the restrictions placed on the self, or internally repressed *selves*, by going down the road of chance and in doing so, works towards achieving a sense of autonomy. It is a novel which is undoubtedly aware, and therefore akin to *Remainder* in style, of the impossibility of presenting freedom of the individual self. However, it seemingly embraces this impossibility, and in doing so, reveals itself to be oscillation back and forth between failure and the possibility of success. The goal of dismantling totality is aimed for, even though it is ultimately a forever unachievable task.

In *The Dice Man*, there is on show something of the autobiographical in the text's presentation. Alongside the fictional Rhineheart taking on the name of his author, or rather the author's pseudonym, he is also a literary representation of the genuine article, to some extent at least. George Cockroft, i.e. Luke Rhineheart was indeed a student and subsequent Doctor of Psychology before becoming a teacher and then fictional writer. Like his protagonist, he is also a father and husband. The novel itself

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[195] Jordan, 'Tom McCarthy's Clinamen', p. 3.
[196] Rhineheart, *The Dice Man*, p. 7.
[197] McCarthy, *Remainder*, p. 94.

was in fact inspired by Cockroft's own experimentation with dice. It seems somewhat appropriate then that it was indeed by chance, literally, that 'Dice Life' led to the creation of *The Dice Man*.

Distinct similarities can be made between the novel and the confessional texts of the Romantic period. *The Dice Man* navigates between first, second and third person, and the reader is often addressed by the protagonist, or as it were, the author himself. Speaking directly to the reader is a strategy used by the Romantic writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft or Jean-Jacques Rousseau, often for political purposes. Similarly, what we see in *The Dice Man* is a philosophical offering. The fictional Rhineheart, as has already been suggested, seeks to change the human personality for the better. His strange and unidentifiable behaviour is often questioned by his friends and colleagues in the text, as living by the die results in the chaotic transformation of his character, and at times causes harm to those around him. As has been discussed, rape, adultery, sexual experimentation are not excluded from the will of the dice, and so anything that the social order views as unhealthy behaviour is given the chance of experience in Dice Life. What he makes clear in his confessions, is that he seeks to disturb the foundations of unhappy humanity:

> And thus my eccentricities, inconsistencies, absurdities, and breakdowns of the last year have all been the logical consequences of a highly original but highly rational approach to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.[198]

It is made clear throughout the text that the point of Dice Life is to improve life, to create joy and to ascertain a 'free' personality. It is through chance, the rolling of dice and the gamble, that Rhineheart claims that true freedom of the soul is a possibility.

Freedom ascertained through gambling is an idea that can be identified in the writings of Plato, who believed the notion of *Play* to be a route to an improved existence, as Reith makes clear:

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[198] Rhineheart, *The Dice Man*, p. 301.

> For Plato, the faculty of play is the highest attribute of humanity, and we have a duty to live by its precepts; to spend our lives 'making our *play* as perfect as possible'. This is the key to a happy, peaceful and above all, divine existence.[199]

Rhineheart clearly draws on Platonic views about chance and the experience of play in order to build a world which deviates from social normality, and in doing so, questions the role and existence of man. For Rhineheart, the true nature and personality of man has been confined to obey the rules and structures of everyday life and Dice Life allows access to the hidden self or *selves* which are repressed; " 'Every personality is the sum total of accumulated suppressions of minorities.'"[200] Thus, by committing to chance, mankind is able to experience the many aspects of the hidden personality which are commonly never in use, and as such are able to experience their true desires, resulting in the experience and embodiment of true freedom.

Further to this, as Reith suggests, the idea of *play*, to embrace that which is no longer pre-determined, is to achieve a sense of freedom from the routine, and therefore one is able to experience new identities which would otherwise remain hidden:

> Just as the play world is animated by a different set of rules from those which govern everyday life, so players within it are animated by a different set of motivations from those of their everyday routines in which they are free to experiment with new roles and to temporarily adopt new identities.[201]

This is something which Rhineheart puts to use in *The Dice Man*. By following the commands of the dice, he is able to take on new ways of existing, which allow him to experience an apparent sense of freedom. He finds he is able to indulge in repressed desires and understand hidden aspects of the self which up until Dice Life were unexplored. When Rhineheart openly admits in the novel that he has "consciously created schizophrenia",[202] he means that he has liberated the repressed true identity of *his* individuality. He quite literally takes on multiple personalities at the command of chance.

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[199] Reith, *The Age of Chance*, p. 2.
[200] Rhineheart, *The Dice Man*, p. 315.
[201] Reith, *The Age of Chance*, p. 128.
[202] Rhineheart, *The Dice Man*, p. 301.

Happiness then, is an attribute which the fictional Rhineheart believes is missing from the personality. For this protagonist, selfhood as it stands in normality is restricted, bored and not at all a real presentation of the true identity of the personality. The choice to experiment with Dice in order to experience a heightened existence and completely random and unpredictable personae, is a result of the feeling of emptiness caused by his routinized lifestyle; "I hated myself and the world because I had failed to face and accept the limitations of my self and of life."[203] What becomes clear is his resentment towards the social order, which speaks of the freedom of humanity in a capitalist driven, Western world. The true self is repressed while the illusory self remains limited; "The assumption is that a limited and bored self is the unavoidable, all-embracing norm."[204]

Boredom plays a large part in Rhineheart's lead up to Dice Life, the start of which he satirically labels 'D-Day', and he draws the comparative line between success and limitation; "My life before D-Day was routine, humdrum, repetitious, trivial, compulsive, disordered, irritable – the life of a typically successful married man."[205] With this in mind, Dice Life can be viewed as an experiment of self-understanding, a way of attempting to fulfil hidden desires. As a psychiatrist, Rhineheart deviates from everything he 'knows' about the human mind, and embraces the world of chance in order to escape routine and boredom. His turning his back on psychiatry is presented in the symbolic turning of his portrait of Freud towards the wall. Rather than committing to the understanding of one self, as with the Freudian concept of psychology, he desires to draw out the multiplicity of the self, not just from in himself, but in the *selves* of others.

The investigation of human personality in *The Dice Man*, as we have observed, is played out through a central commitment to chance and chance, as gambling, allows for the alteration of identity. Chance in the novel portrays the escape from a 'normality' which the protagonist views as detrimental to the

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[203] Rhineheart, *The Dice Man*, p. 15.
[204] Ibid, p. 15.
[205] Ibid, p. 17.

true freedom of the self. Freedom for Rhineheart then appears to be the distinction drawn by Anthony Kenny between 'the concept of liberty of spontaneity and the concept of liberty of indifference'.[206] Kenny argues that the concept of liberty of spontaneity "approaches free will through the notion of desire or wanting" and goes on to suggest that the concept of liberty of indifference "approaches free will through the notion of ability of power."[207] What stands for Rhineheart in the novel as the restriction of one's true desires, one's true 'wants' is liberty of spontaneity. The use of chance, the giving over of one's self to the concept of *anything goes* allows for the transmutation into the liberty of indifference; "men must attempt to eliminate the error and develop in themselves and their children liberation from the sense of self."[208]

This sense of self stands for the unreal of the character or personality, and Dice Life leads to an engagement with the multiple self. Kenny makes clear that liberty of indifference "sees free will as essentially a capacity for alternative action; to act freely is to act in possession of the power to act otherwise."[209] To live by the 'rules' of chance, the rules of the gambler, is to embrace indifference, to ascertain the power of expression, to be able to 'act otherwise'. Rhineheart, defending his commitment to the embracement of chance suggests:

> I imagine a world in which each individual might be about to play the lover, the benefactor, the sponger, the attacker, the friend: and once known as one of those, the next day he might yet be anything.[210]

In the world of *The Dice Man*, definition acts as a prison for the self, as the self is not identifiable in truth. Dice Life and the use of chance removes meaning from that which is identifiable in the norm of society, making problematic any sense of definition of any individual. Rather than attempting to create personality, Dice Life is an attempt to make personality indefinable, which in fact it is. The reality of the human self is not as categorization would define it. It is fluid and chaotic, random and unpredictable. This is the message of *The Dice Man*.

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[206] Anthony Kenny, 'Freedom, Sponteneity and Indifference', in *Essays on Freedom of Action*, ed. by Ted Honderich (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), pp….(p. 90).
[207] Kenny, 'Freedom', pp. (p.90).
[208] Rhineheart, *The Dice man*, p. 147.
[209] Kenny, 'Freedom', pp. (p. 90).
[210] Rhineheart, *The Dice Man*, p. 150.

Rhineheart the protagonist is accused in the novel of acting differently once he commits to Dice Life, of taking on alternative personalities which are masking who he really is. However, what the author is proposing is the notion that chance allows for the actuality of identity to be experienced. The multiple personalities which Rhineheart embodies in the text are in this sense the true selves which are repressed socially. Deleuze suggests that "it is the masked, the disguise or the costumed which turns out to be the truth of the uncovered."[211] What appear as false aspects of the self once the die are thrown are in reality the true personalities of Rhineart's character, and the protagonist is acting out the true nature of the self through his engagement with chance. While the novel is concerned with the postmodern predicament of the incarceration of the *self* through imposed artificiality such as capitalism, or hyperreality for example, it attempts to embrace difference and the other in order to generate the emancipation of the *self* from its paradoxical relationship with authenticity.

It has thus far been discussed that Rhineheart's novel attempts to fathom the random nature of the human self, or the human mind. This is not to suggest however that it is Rhineheart's prerogative to remove logic from experience by way of chance. On the contrary, there is abounding in the text an exploration of logic. The novel's protagonist deliberately, and more importantly logically, rolls the dice in order to understand more about his *self*. The logic of dice rolling displayed in the text is to deviate, as has been suggested from the social norm, in order to quite literally become truthful. When he is questioned by a disciplinary panel concerning his recently strange and harmful behaviour, Rhineheart suggests, "Our society of today is based on conflicting lies."[212] Dice therapy stands for revealing the truth of the personality that it is, "by definition, unpredictable."[213] Therefore, there is a degree of planned randomness, or planned chaos in the throwing of dice. The outcome is random and specifically unpredictable, but the physical act of self-discovery through chance is done so methodically. With this in mind, what is on show in *The Dice Man* is a certain regard for what Julia

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[211] Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 27.
[212] Ibid, p. 319.
[213] Ibid, p. 321

Jordan would refer to as 'muddle'. Jordan, speaking in regards to the fiction of Iris Murdoch, suggests that "the notion of muddle and an ability to bear it…define a person."[214] She goes on to say that "An affinity with mess, with aspects of the natural world and its paradigm of formlessness, or with the accidental, are all consistently shown to be a path to the illusive good."[215] With this in mind, an "affinity with mess" can be seen in Luke Rhineheart's novel. The protagonist embraces the randomness of the self in order to establish a free and truthful sense of *being*, as Rhineheart explains, "Dice therapy alone acknowledges what we all know and choose to forget: man is multiple.'"[216]

Concerning the movement of metamodernism, *The Dice Man*'s use of chance works towards achieving this 'illusive good' to which Jordan refers. It portrays the progressive attempt to comprehend the self as imagined as something more *real*, outside the world of the illusory depiction of selfhood as outlined by trivial and banal commonality. To a large extent then, *The Dice Man* is a celebration of the chaos of selfhood, or multiple personality. For Rhineheart, the only way man can be free to act is through chance. By rolling the dice, he can access the chaotic nature of his *self*, and therefore experience reality in all its glory:

> "If a person can attain a strong confidence in his inconsistency and unreliability, a strong yea-saying sense of the impermanency of things and of an unintegrated, nonpatterned chaos of selves, he will be fully at home in a multivalent society – he will be joyous."[217]

Rhineheart, echoing the vocabulary of Nietzsche here seeks the multiplicity of the self, which is emancipated from the rules and structures which govern the self ideologically. This celebration of the chaotic is something described as positive by B. S Johnson. Johnson, according to Jordan, "situated himself among the avant garde tradition" and sought to discover the unpresentable reality in fiction. In regards to chaos, Johnson suggests, "[life is] really all chaos…let's celebrate the chaos. Let's

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[214] Julia Jordan, *Chance and the Modern British Novel: From Henry Green to Iris Murdoch* (London: Continuum, 2010), p.115.
[215] Jordan, *Chance*, p. 115.
[216] Rhineheart, *The Dice Man*, p. 320.
[217] Ibid, p. 318.

celebrate the accidental."[218] As suggested earlier, *The Dice Man* can be viewed as a postmodern text, and there is an obvious parallel which can be drawn between Johnson's thoughts here and those of Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition*. In terms of the aesthetic values of Rhineheart's novel however, there is a clear indication of his attempts to promote the random and chaotic nature of the personality, which of course is problematic due to the inconsistency which Rhineheart himself admits of the *self*. Therefore there seems to be at work in the novel an attempt to present the impossible. Rhineheart is aware of a certain impossibility of presenting chance through fiction, just as much as comprehending the infinitely chaotic personality of the human mind. As Jordan suggests, chance can only remain secondary to the demands of narrative story-telling and therefore, "pure chance can rarely be fully present in narrative."[219] Jordan goes on to say that "To embrace chance is to commit to those very subversive capabilities that eventually lead to the failure of its representation."[220] Rhineheart's committal to the infinite nature of pure representation resembles the oscillating paradox of metamodernism.

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[218] B. S. Johnson (1975), *Fat Man on a Beach*, in Jordan, *Chance*, p. 104.
[219] Jordan, *Chance*, p. 90.
[220] Jordan, *Chance*, p. 91.

II: The Limited Nature of Chance.

In *The Dice Man*, chance is portrayed in the form of the gamble. Dr Rhineheart places on the numbers of the die the opportunity for repressed desires to come in to play in his life. The initial use of this action of supposed freedom is brought about when he decides to take a chance on rape:

> If that die has a one face up, I thought, I'm going downstairs and rape Arlene. 'If it's a one, I'll rape Arlene,' kept blinking on and off in my mind like a huge neon light and my terror increased. But when I thought if it's not a one I'll go to bed, the terror was boiled away by a pleasant excitement and my mouth swelled into a gargantuan grin: a one means rape, the other numbers mean bed, the die is cast. Who am I to question the die?[221]

What follows is the eventual rape of Arlene once the die reveals a 'one'. The course of the novel is dictated by the continued use of this technique, as Rhineheart relies on fate to allow the hidden desires of repressed selves to be experienced randomly. For Rhineheart the protagonist, the decision to act out the demands of the die are in fact the acting out of true desires which without the constraints placed on them by societies' 'normalisation', would be given free rein.

For Rhineheart the author, the use of chance in narrative is a vessel through which the depiction of the random and chaotic personality can be presented to the reader. However, the failure of narrative to be able to present pure chance and Rhineheart's awareness of this failure allows the text to be viewed as metamodern, as *The Dice Man* reflects the paradox of presenting chance through fiction. By embracing the inevitable failure or portraying the workings of chance, Rhineheart commits to the impossible act of true representation, much like McCarthy does in *Remainder*. Further to this, if chance is as Jordan suggests incomprehensible in nature, then it takes on the form of the infinite and in *The Dice Man* there seems to be a strong connection between chance and the notion of infinity. By allowing for the occurrence of numerous possibilities through the throw of the dice, the protagonist delves into the world of infinity.

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[221] Rhineheart, *The Dice Man*, p. 69.

Rhinheart's reliance on the dice to decide the outcome of a number of possible futures, such as the possible rape of Arlene, spells out a strange yet interesting connection to Jorge Luis Borges' *The Garden of Forking Paths*. In *The Dice Man*, Rhineheart builds a set of outcomes for himself, eliminating all but one via the physical action of the gamble. However, in *The Garden of Forking Paths*, we are provided with the notion of potentiality, in which all paths both occur and don't occur:

> In all fictional works, each time a man is confronted with several alternatives, he chooses one and eliminates others; in the fiction of Ts'ui Pên, he chooses – simultaneously – all of them. He creates, in this way, diverse futures, diverse times which themselves also proliferate and fork.[222]

Rhineheart eliminates the possible outcomes which would prohibit him from raping Arlene, and yet the author displays an essential awareness of the philosophy of Borges. The eventual rape is not carried out as rape at all. The word rape is used to describe the event which occurs between the two characters, however what actually occurs is the mutual act of intercourse which the characters have presumably always desired but never acted upon. In this sense, rape both happens and at the same time does not. Chance here creates an infinity of action, where possible futures are played out simultaneously. Central to *The Dice Man* however is the impossibility of becoming completely free. Rhineheart plays with the notion of potentiality, as with Borges, and yet concludes that the infinite nature of selfhood, of self-expression and understanding can never be comprehended, or indeed expressed even through fiction. In this sense, the depiction of a failed articulation of all possible outcomes occurring marks out the metamodern aesthetic of the novel.

The most important observation to be made about the novel is its concern for removing structure, order and categorization from reality, in order to bring about the random and chaotic of the personality. Concerning the relationship between infinity and chance, Paulo Zellini explains that the

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[222] Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths: The Garden of Forking Paths* (London: Penguin, 1970) p. 51.

difference between that which is limited, or the limit, and that which is infinite, is the difference between structure, or logic, and the breakdown of form:

> Limit is what makes every object exist concretely, by constantly endowing it with its proper form and individuality. It is also what determines the logical order of events, by removing them as far as possible from pure chance.[223]

Zellini suggests here that form and order are the products of the limited space. He also brings to light the notion that chance can be compared with the unlimited, or "*apeiron*". Chance is an entity which suggests 'anything can happen', and therefore it relates to that which cannot be categorized; it remains disconnected from the limit, taking on the role of the incomprehensible or unlimited space. This is an idea which Rhineheart is undoubtedly making full use of in the novel, by showing the need for an expression of multiplicity.

Multiplicity is the embodiment in the novel of true experience, the portrayal and acting out of the unlimited capacity of the human soul, as the protagonist suggests, "our deepest desire is to be multiple: to play many roles."[224] Dr Rhineheart desires to deviate from what he considers to be a failing normality by embracing chaos and unpredictability and breaking down any sense of an ordered routine. Where limit provides order, Zellini also explains that "…the principle of *apeiron*…manifests itself both in the dissolution of forms and as an element of chance."[225] Chance then, can be used to convey the potential for the unlimited experience, as form is dissolved, and an all-embracing act of unpredictability is brought to the surface. The moral message of *The Dice Man* is that to embrace chance is to live in a world outside social normality.

Society is depicted in the text as a development which has failed the nature of the individual, by placing it in a metaphorical cage, a "prison", which has led to the travesties and devastation that we know and have come to expect of the current predicament of the world. Dr Rhineheart speaks of the

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[223] Paulo Zellini, *A Brief History of Infinity*, trans. by David Marsh (London: Penguin, 2005), p. 4.
[224] Rhineheart, *The Dice Man*, p. 315.
[225] Zellini, *Infinity*, p. 4.

contrast between what is deemed as normal and that which could be seen as a world lived in accordance with chance; "The social consequences of a nation of dicepeople are, by definition, unpredictable. The social consequences of a nation of normal personalities are obvious: misery, conflict, violence, war and a universal joylessness."[226] 'Dice therapy' is for the protagonist a possible answer to injustice, as it allows for the freedom of the personality, even if that means allowing the rapist, the murderer to roam free. This striking message has obvious negatives, which did lead to the banning of the text in several countries when it was first published.[227] It can be assumed that the author does not desire to commit rape or murder; he merely commits to chance, to the random in order to present freedom and recognizes that it can never actually be achieved in reality.

The author's awareness of this paradox reveals the novel's presentation of a metamodernist discourse. The notion that the human personality is infinitely random and chaotic suggests that it cannot be presented, as Zellini explains, "According to Aristotle…something which has no limit (*peras*) cannot be exhaustively represented in our thought, and is therefore unknowable."[228] Not only does a lack of comprehension about the human self imply that society's depiction of normality is an illusion, it is also indicative of the novel that the true self is 'unknowable'. In this recognition, he writes about the impossible goal of achieving true freedom, and as such, embraces the paradox of metamodernism.

The fact that *The Dice Man* is a text which identifies the illusions of reality and reports upon social categorisation for the purpose of normalisation is enough to consider it to be a postmodern text. However, its commitment to the impossible and its awareness of its own inadequacies propel it into the position of the metamodern. It is a novel which imagines a world of freedom of the individual, a notion which at this time appears to be like the 'horizon which is forever receding'.[229] Rhineheart presents freedom through the notion of the gamble, which, as Reith makes clear, allows the individual

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[226] Rhineheart, *The Dice Man*, p. 321.
[227] <http://www.h2g2.com/approved_entry/A509645> *Luke Rhineheart - Author* [accessed 22/01/2012].
[228] Zellini, *Infinity*, p. 5.
[229] Vermeulen and Akker, *NOM*, p. 12.

to feel a temporary connection to freedom, even though it is an imagined connection. In the "outside world", Reith suggests, freedom is something which doesn't exist, and yet through gambling, the gambler can experience "free rein".[230]

The paradox of locating freedom and ultimately failing is one that goes back to the thoughts of Sartre, as Mary Warnock suggests:

> Not only does he say that freedom is a case of all for nothing; one must be totally free or not at all; but he also seems to claim that it is intuitively obvious that man is free; indeed that the concept of human action entails the concept of freedom. And yet he regards men as bound, by an apparently ineluctable necessity, to aim at certain (gloomy impossible) ends.[231]

Sartre's view here is seemingly contradictory. First he reports on the 'one or the other' nature of freedom, suggesting that it is either there or it isn't, indicating that one person might have it, and another may not. He then envisages the paradox of a ""both-neither" dynamic" located in metamodernism.[232] Here the subject could be regarded as both free and yet at the same time not free at all. It is the latter concept that is on show in *The Dice Man*. The author regards freedom certainly in this existential manner, as something that is in humanity, something which humanity *should* be able to embrace once and for all. However, it also recognises the limitations of achieving true freedom. It portrays the struggle to gain freedom in spite of an inevitable failure to do so. For Jordan, freedom is bound up in the spontaneous nature of chance, just as, Zellini suggests, chance is bound up in the breaking down of order and logic, and Jordan makes clear that true spontaneity, true freedom is something to which we must aspire.[233] *The Dice Man* then, may seem to be a postmodern text, and yet it reveals the movement to achieve finality knowing full well that this is impossible, and in doing so, embraces the metamodern oscillation of moving forwards and forever turning back.

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[230] Reith, *The Age of Chance*, p. 134.
[231] Mary Warnock, 'Freedom in the Philosophy of J.-P Sartre', in *Essays on Freedom of Action*, ed. by Honderich, p. 3.
[232] Vermeulen and Akker, *Notes on Metamodernism*. p. 6.
[233] Jordan, *Chance*, p. 146.

Conclusion.

What's going on just now? What's happening to us? What is this world, this period, this precise moment in which we are living?

Michel Foucault.[234]

Michel Foucault's question is one which has been asked repeatedly throughout history and is one which can be applied to any given 'period', if indeed there is such a thing. It is a question which forever troubles those that ask it and confuses those who make any such attempt at answering it. It is a question which can be compared to 'what is the meaning of life?' or 'why are we here?' With this in mind there is a resounding consensus of discomfort surrounding such a question, marked purely by the notion that it is quite simply, unanswerable. Strictly speaking, we do set out to put forward numerous answers to Foucault's troublesome question through art, literature and theory. However, any degree of truth embedded in those answers is explicated in the moment they are uttered. This is due to the ever-changing and ever-shifting nature of the world in which we live. Because of this, truth becomes a constant mutation, unable to be captured or pinned down. This too becomes problematic however, due to the fact that as we progress temporally, our evolutionary understanding of what once was, locates the past in a position that is constantly open to reinterpretation. Nothing, in a sense, holds firm, and what becomes something 'defined' is always reassessed and observed in a new light and from different perspectives.

What this means for Foucault's question is that one cannot simply define 'this period'. Nor can a label be placed on "What's going on just now?"[235] This lack of resolution concerning such a philosophical,

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[234] Michel Foucault, 'The Subject and Power' (1982), in *Post-Modernism and the Ethical Subject*, eds. by Barbara Gabriel and Suzanne Ilcan (McGill-Queens University Press, 2004), 6.
[235] McKenzie Wark, 'Goodbye to all that', in *Postmodernism. What Moment?*, ed. by Pelagia Goulimari, pp. 146-153 (p.147).

political or moral investigation calls forth a new question; why define this moment at all? Fredric Jameson would answer, "one cannot not periodize."[236] Is it human nature then to categorize, label and ascertain definition of our current situation, be that in past times or in the present? Is the need for one specific truth of totality already built in? This may well be the case. It arguably was for modernist thinkers. For the postmodernists however, categorization was a pointless act, as ascribing to human nature any sense of definition would suggest that it is based upon a foundational past which could be captured and pinned down, as Gane and Gane suggest:

> postmodernism is about the pleasure of death (the death of the author, of universality, of meta-narratives, of absolute truth, of progress, and so on). It is about working into the unknown in the absence of all foundations.[237]

As such what we once defined as the postmodern is assumed to be a 'period' of disassociation from form and coherency.

It has been the concern of this dissertation to investigate the contemporary situation that we have now arrived at with the end of the postmodern 'period'. As stated in the introduction, suggesting that the postmodern is over proves to be problematic, as many if indeed not all of its formal features carry on in to the 'new' realm of theory. While there are many positions put forward through which to locate the contemporary situation 'post'-postmodernism, I have chosen to discuss the movement of metamodernism due to its primary concern for the uncertainties of our globalised world.

Concerning the movement from the postmodern through to the metamodern, where postmodern tendencies are thought to be continuing on into this arguably new epoch of theory and culture, it is clear to see that there are unquestionable similarities between the postmodern 'period' and that of an emerging period of metamodernism. Slavoj Žižek for example speaks of postmodern texts, usually associated with trauma, as being an endorsement of the infinite in presentation, which offer multiple

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[236] Jameson, 'Postmodernism', ed. by Leitch, p. 1962.
[237] Mike Gane and Nicholas Gane, 'The Postmodern: After the (non) Event', in *Postmodernism. What Moment?*, ed. by Goulimari, pp. 127 - 138 (p.128).

possibilities for articulating the impossible Real, while always maintaining that reality or truth is forever unpresentable.[238] On the surface it seems that there is no deviation between the postmodern in this sense and metamodernism, which also highlights the notion of the impossible Real. However, as I have argued, the focal difference between the two terms is a question of emphasis, as metamodernism appears to navigate away from the nihilistic form traditionally associated with the postmodern, gravitating instead *towards* the impossible Real. Metamodernism continues to pursue an infinite number of possible *truths* but with hope and engagement, all the while knowing that it will always be oscillating upon the postmodern paradox.

I have applied the theory of metamodernism to Tom McCarthy's *Remainder* and Luke Rhineheart's *The Dice Man*. While *Remainder* is a recent novel, and as such can easily be interpreted as belonging to a 'period' which has followed on from the postmodern, *The Dice Man*, it can be argued due to its date of publication, is likely to be viewed as nothing more than a novel belonging solely to the postmodern 'period'. This however, also proves to be problematic. It seems to be the case that while metamodernism can certainly be applied to the current predicament, it can also be applied to previous times and events. Vermeulen and Akker are of the opinion that although *9/11* did not necessarily lead to the development of metamodernism, it did occur after the event. However, there is no doubt that the theory of metamodernism can be found prior to *9/11*, just as the features of postmodernism can be located in contemporary fiction.

I have argued this by discussing both postmodernism and metamodernism in relation to two novels which were written prior to the *9/11* attacks. This goes to suggest that periodization is not necessarily chronological. Instead, it appears to be the case that there is a breakdown between theoretical boundaries, and that the postmodern cannot be confined to any particular time zone. Thus, the same can indeed be suggested of metamodernism. The desire for alterity, happiness, wholeness, authenticity

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[238] Toth on Žlžek in Toth, *Passing*, p. 90.

that is on show in a novel such as Rhineheart's is there to be observed in a recent novel like *Remainder*, making it quite clear that such human characteristics have always been with us. They feature in the works of Joyce, Woolf, Kafka, Eliot, Vonnegut, Barnes, and so on. However, there is clearly a manoeuvring of emphasis throughout modernism, postmodernism and now metamodernism, if it is to be taken as the 'new' epoch. Metamodernism highlights postmodernist assumptions about identity, history, ideology etc. but also challenges them, as it strives to move beyond the postmodern world. Although postmodern assumptions about the world and the subject cannot be abandoned completely, they can be confronted.

In this essay, I have outlined the characteristics of postmodernism, discussing the thoughts of Fredric Jameson, Jean-François Lyotard, Linda Hutcheon and Jean Baudrillard. These postmodern theorists engage with the postmodern condition with alternative perspectives and so are all vital to any discussion surrounding what comes after it. It was suggested that while Jameson envisages the postmodern as a distinct period which follows after modernism, Lyotard dispels any suggestion that the postmodern was a period at all. With this in mind, if the postmodern was as Lyotard suggests merely a rupture within modernity, as he makes clear in his *Postmodern Condition*, then perhaps the metamodern could be best described as a sealing up of that rupture. If this is indeed the case, then metamodernism, along with postmodernism is simply another tendency of the modern period. This could suggest that metamodernism does not follow on from postmodernism, and that we are not in a state of *post*-postmodernity. Instead, what we have possibly arrived at, or to be more precise returned to, is the on-going project of the modern period.

I have chosen to apply the theory of metamodernism, alongside the theories of trauma, the sublime and chance to two novels which I have concluded can be envisaged as belonging to the 'period' of metamodernism. By discussing *Remainder* and its relationship with trauma theory and that of the sublime, McCarthy's novel can be viewed as a piece of contemporary fiction which oscillates back

and forth between the philosophy of the postmodern and the doctrine of the modern, and as such enters into the metamodern position of the *post*-postmodern paradox. It searches out authenticity just as much as its own protagonist in its exploration of articulating reality, all the while maintaining an awareness that it can never be more than what it is, i.e. a piece of fiction, or words on a page. Linda Hutcheon's discussion of historiographic metafiction makes it clear that history can never truly be recalled through the text, however, and ironically, the only way we interpret history is through the text.[239] *Remainder* embraces this paradox, and strives to overcome it. Ultimately however, as the novel is itself aware, it is always destined to fail, and it is therefore in keeping with the movement of metamodernism, which persists in spite of an inevitable failure.

In *The Dice Man*, it has been argued, there is an attempt to 'rid' the subject of order and logic so as to promote all aspects of the hidden self into reality, thus enabling the protagonist to embody a complete and realistic existence. Rhineheart articulates this attempt through the novel's relationship with chance. Chance, as has been argued, functions in the novel as a method by which the internalisation of the self can be enhanced and therefore brought *out* to a position of freedom. There does seem to be a difference between the two novels. McCarthy shows an absolute awareness for the impossibility of achieving a lasting connection to a reality which is not constructed. On the other hand, there is certainly evidence to suggest that Rhineheart strongly believes in completely breaking down the boundary between reality and inauthenticity. In this sense, *The Dice Man* reveals itself to be *more* postmodern than *Remainder*. What is beyond a doubt is that both novels articulate a need for improvement in their cultural times and as such reflect upon the human condition which is to escape the confined space of constructed reality. They portray an incessant desire for improvement, are located upon a metamodern oscillation between success and failure, and depict the paradox of overcoming inauthenticity.

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[239] Hutcheon, *Poetics*.

The fact that presenting reality, or seeking authenticity is perhaps best described as impossible, does not suggest that contemporary authors should consign themselves to the postmodern position of ending in silence. Novels such as *Remainder* and *The Dice Man* articulate an aversion from collapse and are therefore what Kellner refers to as "Utopian maps".[240] Kellner suggests that:

> Utopian maps depart from the distinction between what is and what can be, between actuality and potentiality, as they envision the realization of possibilities for human freedom, charting the "not yet."[241]

My chosen novels propel themselves forward, imagining a world that is in the distance, where freedom *should* be grasped at. However, they also articulate the realisation that this freedom is at *this* moment out of reach. Kellner notes the importance of striving to continue theorizing about the human condition in order to overcome our current predicament. He suggests that "Without theory, interpretation, and critique we are as lost and hapless as Columbus on his first voyage."[242] Toth reinforces this suggestion, making clear that the illusions of reality and the loss of originality and history have led to a resounding outcry, a reason to "keep writing".[243] In the novels discussed here, this drive to become more than what we are, especially in *Remainder*, is repeated. Although there is the ever present notion that comprehension, as the postmodernists made clear, is impossible, we must continue to pursue, as the metamodernists are now doing, the 'forever receding horizon'.[244] This need for comprehension, Kellner asserts, is especially important in the uncertain situation that we now find ourselves:

> Since our social and cultural situation is difficult to grasp, especially in a hypercapitalist culture of spectacles, simulacra, and disinformation, we need to comprehend how our lives are being shaped and controlled.[245]

In the current climate of uncertainty, anxiety and tension, there is in the same instance a resolute and unifying stance as we attempt to grasp that unreachable distance. What is on show in *Remainder* and *The Dice Man* is a desire to comprehend the impossible, and at the same time a desire to overcome it.

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[240] Kellner, 'Reappraising the Postmodern', in *Postmodernism. What Moment?* ed. by Goulimari, p. 113.

[241] Kellner, 'Reappraising the Postmodern', ed. by Goulimari, p. 113.

[242] Kellner, 'Reappraising the Postmodern', ed. by Goulimari, p. 120.

[243] Toth, *Passing*, p. 128.

[244] Vermeulen and Akker, *Notes on Metamodernism*, p. 12.

[245] Kellner, 'Reappraising the Postmodern', ed. by Goulimari, p. 120.

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The primary discussed in this essay entitled *The Dice Man* was written by George Cockroft using the pseudonym Luke Rhineheart and has been referred to as such in this bibliography and throughout the duration of this work.

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