The Fiction of Anita Brookner: Persona, Reception, and Literary Value

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Declaration of Authenticity and Author's Rights

This thesis is the result of the author's original research. It has been composed by the author and has not been previously submitted for examination which has led to the award of a degree.

Signed:

Date: 7 April 2020

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Abstract

This thesis considers Anita Brookner's career in fiction from the perspective of three interdependent characteristics of the public author (persona, reception, and canon) in order to determine the author's place within contemporary literary history, as well as determine how and why this placement was so uncertain in her lifetime. To do so, theories of intertextuality – Gérard Genette's theory of transtextuality in particular – are applied to a number of Brookner's narratives, as well as a variety of paratexts, including her book covers, titles, and dedications.

Focussing first on her earliest novels, this thesis demonstrates the extent to which Brookner developed an ironic, self-reflexive persona with a sustained interest in explicit intertextualities. This is followed by a detailed reading of her most well-known novel *Hotel du Lac* that positions Brookner as writing self-pastiche, a complex mode of satire Genette describes in *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. Then, a comprehensive analysis of the 1984 Booker Prize ceremony proceedings – and the heightened publicity she received as a result of winning it – is conducted to show how a decontextualized reading of the novel was able to emerge. However, when the novel is read in context, it is suggested that Brookner, like Angela Carter, can be understood as writing in a tradition of 'postmodernism and feminism,' outside and between both categories. The thesis further considers the relationships between the author and canonicity, with an emphasis on how she was portrayed in educational materials that placed personality to the forefront, and in a film adaptation that deadened her irony.

The first extended study of Brookner's career in its entirety, this thesis also seeks to convey how fiction is produced and consumed in our contemporary era, with recurring reference to the publishing and bookselling industries, critical theory, and how our culture's ambivalent responses to death can figure in the life of the author.

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Mural, Herne Hill station, London, 8.xii.19. Photograph by Andrew Van der Vlies.

1. Introduction and Theoretical Framework

1.1 Division at its Centre

The divisiveness found in Anita Brookner's career in fiction is largely self-evident and unlikely to be contested by anyone who has followed it. To provide a few brief but exemplary contradictions: while her novel *Hotel du Lac* won the 1984 Booker Prize – the most important literary accolade in Britain in terms of book sales and impact on contemporary literary culture – there was and has continued to be, spanning several decades, a pervasive speculation that the novel was not deserving of it; while she produced a very large body of unambiguously literary fiction that remained in print for decades, only very recently can it be said that it is beginning to be considered as worthy of the thorough investigation that has often afforded to similar literary fiction writers of this distinction.[1]

[1] Wolfgang Iser, in his essay 'Interaction Between Text and Reader,' finds that the 'literary work' is defined by its relationship between author and reader. He writes, '…the literary work has two poles, which we might call the artistic and the aesthetic: the artistic pole is the author's text, the aesthetic is the realization accomplished by the reader.' (21) This is helpful to distinguish the literary work from any other text potentially created by those who we might deem authors but would not typically be considered as a part of their artistic corpus, a problem raised by Michel Foucault in his essay 'What is an author?' wherein he questions the distinctions which might govern, as an example, how aphorisms from a notebook might be interpreted versus the personal reminders of appointments scribbled in the margins. (118-119)

However, this still does not yet approach the concept of 'literariness,' typically a binary assertion made between varying works of fiction – all of which could be considered 'literary works' as defined in the paragraph above – that is typical in discourse on literature, especially in the context of the publishing industry. In *Consuming Fictions: the Booker Prize and Fiction in Britain Today,* Richard Todd develops the term 'serious literary fiction' to describe what he defines as 'self-consciously literary novels intended to appeal to the general reader: that is, a reasonably sophisticated, largely but not exclusively professional readership with an interest in, but not unlimited time for, the leisured consumption of full-length fiction.' (3) Even ignoring the evident issues here with regard to his imagined 'general reader' (what, for instance, does Todd actually mean by 'sophisticated,' 'professional,' or 'leisured' – terms so intrinsically imbued with assumptions about class, race, and gender?) within his definition of 'serious literary fiction' Todd has used the term 'literary,' depriving it of an independent meaning. However, it is still possible still to intuit the types of novels to which he refers, and that is perhaps the best way to think of literariness: an artistic/aesthetic conception

The thrust of this thesis is drawn from these cues of divisiveness and, addressing that gap of scholarship on Brookner and her novels, it seeks to provide the first comprehensive academic investigation of her career in fiction on the whole. In doing so, it posits that a decontextualized reading of her novels emerged in her lifetime which resulted from a lack of attention to the pervasive and multifaceted intertextuality she employs. This intertextuality will be analysed in regard to how it contributed to the creation of her literary persona, how it was received by critics and the public in the wake of her Booker Prize-win, and how the resulting decontextualization has continued to shape the discourse on Brookner as an author.

In the annotated bibliography of Jane P. Tompkins's edited collection *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, Tompkins summarises Jonathan Culler's work *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics, and the Study of*

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which is intuited rather than prescribed. As Potter Stewart, the United States Supreme Court Justice, famously said of the liminal space between obscenity and protected speech, 'I shall not today attempt further to define the kinds of material I understand to be embraced within that shorthand description [hard-core pornography], and perhaps I could never succeed in intelligibly doing so. But I know it when I see it…' (Jacobellis v. Ohio) It could be argued that this penumbral threshold is one of the fairest ways of considering what allows only some fiction to be considered what we call *literary* fiction. Indeed, works of literary fiction are the seemingly undefinable yet nonetheless keenly felt – usually stylistically – Booker-worthy novels that appear on its lists. In fact, it could even be said that the books which appear on prize lists do more to define the concept of 'literary fiction' than the term 'literary fiction' is capable of defining what books the judges are looking for. A comment from a Booker insider would seem to support this: one anonymous judge from 1983 was quoted as saying that the prize is given to the book 'best suited to winning the Booker Prize,' making this tautology become literal. (Atlas) But further clarification remains desirable.

Incorporating Todd's invocation of the 'self-consciously literary,' I propose, in the spirit of the theoretical framework governing this thesis, to bring in Gérard Genette's concept of hypertextuality, which is instructive in providing further definition to the 'literary.' In *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, Genette writes, '…there is no literary work that does not evoke (to some extent and according to how it is read) some other literary work, and in a sense, all works are hypertextual. But like George Orwell's "equals," some works are more so than others (or more visibly, massively, and explicitly so than others) …' (9) So too might this distinction be applied to the nature of the literary. All fictional works will necessarily operate within narrative planes of tradition, style, and aesthetic, but some will broadcast these concerns more directly and therefore demand greater attention to such detail or are richer works to the reader for doing so. Such is the nature of the literary. It is something that is felt as much as it is identified, not necessarily in an unambiguous manner, but nevertheless corresponding to the traditions of literature.

Literature, noting: '[It] focuses on the importance of constitutive conventions in literary study and calls for a criticism that investigates the way conventions work rather than analysing individual masterpieces.' (238) Though Culler's book clearly has a much wider focus than this thesis, that approach he takes which seeks to disentangle conventions of study (as well as conventions of transmission) is one which I have attempted to emulate. Indeed, as much as the purpose of this thesis is to shine light onto a critically under-considered author in contemporary British literature, its equal – if not greater – purpose is to use the study of that author to shine light onto the conventions of contemporary British literature in the *moment* of the author. As a result, the culture of the books in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries is as much under examination as Brookner's individual books themselves are.

Further, like Culler, this thesis uses the language of structuralism in its analysis of the production of literature, the word 'production' used here to invoke its every sense. Indeed, the framework relies heavily on the theories of Gérard Genette, a literary critic who has been invoked in relation to Brookner once before, as detailed further in section 1.3. Partly this is as a result of wishing to lean heavily into the spaces in which Brookner's career as a novelist already inhabits. Not only did the times of Brookner and Genette's lives overlap almost identically with only two years' difference, they were both firmly rooted in a continental approach to arts and philosophy. But, more so, it is because I am convinced that this kind of forensic approach to the 'grammar' of Brookner's novels – as structuralism has been said to seek – should be regarded as a necessary foundational analysis for any author.[2] Genette likened his approach to

[2] John Sturrock writes that '[Structuralism] seeks, agreed, to work out a "grammar" of literature, or set of rules which texts must exemplify either in the observance or violation if they are to be classed as literary; and this can only be achieved by abstraction from actual texts. This is Structuralism as Poetics, set on differentiating the literary examples with which it works from a formal point of view. But there is Structuralism of individual texts, which seeks to analyse them structurally; that is, to

literature to that of a doctor employing an X-ray to reveal the bones of a skeleton. This is the approach I seek to apply to Brookner's novels, with the added desire to use what can be learned from the resulting bones to address the society from which they grew.

I have also sought to put Genette's theory into practise by conducting several extensive (maybe exhaustive) moments of analysis on seemingly small aspects of Brookner's work, such as a book's three-word dedication or the etymological origins of a word in a book's title. In many instances, these smaller aspects are highly relevant to the 'grammar' of Brookner's career and how it has been interpreted thus far. In fact, I argue that they should be considered even more relevant than that which has often been the focus of narrative analysis, such as plot, language, or theme. These moments are also able to demonstrate the type of analysis Genette expected from the very close attention to the 'skeleton' of literature he prescribed and, in some cases, they push his framework further into the future than he was able in his lifetime, for instance by looking to the digital world and other contemporary cultural implications of his theories.

One result of this approach that is worth mentioning from the very start is that not as much consideration is given to the roles of gender or women's writing as might otherwise have been possible with a methodological basis more attuned to such perspectives. A study of Brookner with either as its focus would be an entirely valid way to read Brookner's career and I am confident that future studies will be able to address the areas more comprehensively than I have here. Having said that, in the fourth chapter I do place Brookner within a liminal tradition of 'postmodernism and feminism' which I believe offers a suitable starting position to this conversation which

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relate their parts to each other and to show how this particular text "works".' The methods of this thesis are closer to the latter but in use to draw conclusions about the former. (Sturrock 111)

has not been undertaken in any thorough manner as yet. Nevertheless, this decision is one which has been made thoughtfully and with due regard to the author and her novels. Brookner herself claimed to reject the notion that her gender was a prominent feature of her working life generally: to wit, in an interview with Shusha Guppy for the *Paris Review* in 1987, Guppy writes, 'When asked how it felt to work in the male-dominated atmosphere of Cambridge University in the sixties, [Brookner] answered, "Nobody looked all that male and I didn't look all that female."'[3] (Brookner and Guppy) Furthermore, though her novels very often feature female protagonists, a few do revolve around men, often in a seemingly interchangeable manner to her female protagonists, such that they have – for some critics – still fallen under the label 'Brooknerian heroine': a distinction to be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. Of course, inequality of gender is an indisputable fact of our literary culture and the recognition of this fact does feature explicitly in this thesis throughout. But it should also be acknowledged that the arguments contained are not all tackled from such a perspective in the main.

In the first instance, this introduction contains an overview of Brookner's life and work, the only of its kind, of which I am aware, that has been committed to academic text since her death in 2016. Though much of the basic information is readily found in her obituaries, it has been collected here to place Brookner within a demographic and literary context and to provide a basis for the discussions held in the

[3] Though in most areas of this thesis Brookner's own words are treated with greater sense of scepticism than here, this statement is consistent with a pattern of others made by Brookner in which she did not wish for herself or for her novels to have the gender of their author or characters emphasised. This is perhaps understandable given the extent to which reviews of her work and interview questions sought to do just this.

forthcoming chapters. It also corrects a few biographical mistakes which have been repeated in many newspapers.[4]

Following this discussion of Brookner's life and work is a similarly brief examination of the previous critical approaches to Brookner's work which are described to illustrate the limited range of considerations of her work that have already been expressed in the articles, books, and conference proceedings which prominently featured her and her novels. Because this thesis concerns itself more with how it might have come to be that there were so few considerations of her work during her lifetime, a robust consideration of the value of any of these approaches is not taken here.

Finally, the last two sections, and the bulk of this introduction, focus on the implications of the choice of Genette's transtextuality for examining Brookner's career in this thesis, as well as the finer workings of his methodology themselves in order to guide the discussions which are held in the later chapters, as well as to signpost the direction of the arguments made therein.

1.2 Life and Work

The following summary of Brookner's life has been compiled through publicly available sources and archives as well as personally obtained records, including her birth and death certificates, as well as award nomination files.

Anita Brookner was born on 16 July 1928 in Herne Hill, London to middle-class Polish Jewish parents who had immigrated following the First World War. Originally

[4] While academic consideration has been scant, obituaries of Brookner featured prominently in a wide array of international newspapers from Ireland to Singapore and others; this is another example of the above-described divisions in her career as well as of the general public's cultural divide from its academic subset.

born with the name Bruckner, Anita's name was changed to Brookner alongside the rest of her family in order to avoid anti-German sentiment that persisted in England.[5] Educated first at the independent James Allan's Girls' School, Brookner went on to study at King's College London while living at home amongst a large multigenerational family of grandparents, aunts and uncles, as well as her parents, whose health was often failing during her young adulthood.

Brookner pursued a general degree course of French, History, and then, Art History, which she found to be a passion, achieving a first in her finals. This success led her to crossing paths with the director of the Courtauld Institute, Anthony Blunt, who encouraged her to pursue an MA at the Courtauld where she wrote a dissertation on eighteenth-century French painter Jean Baptiste Greuze. For this study she spent a year in Paris, a highly significant point of time in her life to which she would later refer repeatedly in her fiction, biographical statements, and author interviews. When she returned, her dissertation was determined to be of such a quality that it was upgraded to a doctorate. This served as the jumping off point for her academic career in Art History which lasted for several years at multiple institution – first at the University of Reading, and then the Courtauld with a stopover at the University of Cambridge as the university's first female Slade Professor of Fine Art, before returning to the Courtauld where she became Reader in 1977.

Establishing herself as an expert in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French paintings, Brookner's first major published work was a monograph on the painter Jean-Antoine Watteau in 1968. This was followed by similar works on Jean-Baptiste Greuze

[5] It has been reported that Brookner's name was changed by her parents prior to her birth due to anti-German sentiment they experienced *during* the First World War. However, her birth certificate retains the name Bruckner for herself and her parents, suggesting it was in actual fact changed at a later date.

(based on her dissertation) and Jacques-Louis David, in 1972 and 1980 respectively, with a further two intermittent works on the French Romantic Period in 1971 and 2000, *The Genius of the Future* and *Romanticism and Its Discontents*.

She embarked on her career in fiction with her first novel *A Start in Life* (titled *The Debut* in the US) in 1981 at the age of fifty-three, after she had already established herself as an accomplished art historian. It was published in the UK by Jonathan Cape under the editorship of Liz Calder, who would go on to edit Brookner's first several novels at Cape, and she was represented by the literary agent Mark Hamilton throughout her career. She would continue to write nearly a novel a year until 2011 when her last work, a novella, *At the Hairdressers*, was released as an e-book only, totalling twenty-five works of fiction. She won the Booker Prize in 1984 for her novel *Hotel du Lac* (adapted to screen by the BBC in 1986) and was shortlisted for the James Tait Prize in 2009 for *Strangers*. In addition to two fellowships at Cambridge and honorary degrees from the University of Loughborough in England and Smith College in Massachusetts, she was awarded a CBE in 1990 for her contributions to art history and literature, having been nominated by Sir David Hancock who was serving in his official capacity as the head of the (no longer existent) Department of Education and Science.

On 10th March 2016, Anita Brookner died in her sleep at home in London, where she had lived all her life except for her one year in Paris; the cause of death was old age and possible renal malignancy. As per her requests, her body was cremated, and no funeral service was held. Her death notice in the *Telegraph* instead suggested that to pay respects donations could be made to Medicins Sans Frontiers (MSF UK).

Following her death, Brookner received wide obituary coverage across the world, and many of her novels were subsequently reissued by Penguin UK, several having previously fallen out of print in the past decades.

1.3 Previous Critical Approaches

Five monographs, of varying quality and reach, have been published which use Brookner's fiction as their main focus, with none published in the last fifteen years: *Twayne's English Authors Series: Anita Brookner* by Lynn Veach Sadler, 1990; *The Fictions of Anita Brookner: Illusions of Romance* by John Skinner, 1992; *The Plane of Uncreatedness: A Phenomenological Study of Anita Brookner's Late Fiction* by Inger Björkblom, 2001; *Understanding Anita Brookner* by Cheryl Alexander Malcolm, 2002; and *Art and Life in the Novels of Anita Brookner: Reading for Life, Subversive Re-Writing to Live* by Eileen Williams-Wanquet, 2004. In spring 2020, the first monograph on Brookner to be published by British academic press is due to arrive: *Misreading Anita Brookner: Aestheticism, Intertextuality and the Queer Nineteenth Century* by Peta Mayer for Liverpool University Press. Peer-reviewed academic articles on Brookner have included most notably the spring 2010 special issue of *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 'Anita Brookner in the World,' in which three perspectives are offered on factors which are said to influence Brookner's novels: the traditions of Edith Wharton and Henry James, especially with regard to Brookner's approach to morality; her other career as an art historian; and her Anglo-Jewish background.

Mayer, whose monograph detailed in the previous paragraph is forthcoming, previously published 'The Paratextual Construction of Anita Brookner: Chronotopic Conflict in the Book Review and Author Interview' in 2008 for *Women: A Cultural*

Review. This article, which also draws on Genette, suggests that the paratexts of Brookner's work – chiefly book reviews and author interviews – form the dominant reading formation of the current academic criticism on Brookner. Mayer argues that this is due to Brookner's novels resisting a straightforward alignment of text and context (through deliberate interplay of chronotopes in plot, character, gender, and behaviour) and that this has complicated approaches taken in book reviews and author interviews which then inform each other in an undesirably circular manner.[6] Furthermore, Mayer argues, because these have been used as the foundational texts in the existing academic criticism, the quality of the academic criticism itself has been diminished by the introduction of errors and assumptions.

This article is particularly relevant to this thesis in both its framework and argument. Drawing on Mayer's approach, I too employ Genette in my analysis of Brookner's output and share agreement in the deficiencies in the current landscape of scholarship on Brookner. However, while Mayer seeks to redress this issue by illustrating the manner in which the misreading has been transmitted, in this thesis I wish to analyse the deeper origins of what she has termed a 'misreading' and seek to provide a new analysis which can address the resulting deficiencies of the 'misreading' further.

[6] 'Chronotope,' a term which will be used later in the thesis, originates from the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin and refers to 'a unit of analysis for studying language according to the ratio and characteristics of the temporal and spatial categories represented in that language.' (Bakhtin 425)

1.4 The Methodological Approach

The methodological approach in this thesis can at its most broad be described as an investigation into Brookner's career through three major characteristics of any public author's career: persona, reception, and canon placement. With greater specificity, however, the approach might be best described as an in-depth investigation into these characteristics chiefly utilising a theoretical framework that places conceptions of intertextuality at the foreground, what French literary theorist Gérard Genette (and those who have followed him) have termed transtextuality. Transtextuality, or the 'textual transcendence of the text,' arises from a trilogy of works conducted over the course of his career: *The Architext: An Introduction*, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, and *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*.[7] These three works chart the development of the line of thinking that the texts of any work are inseparable from their myriad intertexts. As Graham Allen describes in the book *Intertextuality*:

> [To suggest] that the reader has a choice between reading a text *for itself* or in terms of its intertextual relations is a kind of bad faith. Such an approach divides up what is indivisible within the work, its textual structure and its intertextual relations. This is a division which can only be achieved by the reader performing a kind of negative forgetting of the intertextual dimension. (110)

It is precisely this intersection of the textual and intertextual dimensions that best illuminates Brookner's literary career and the divisiveness it attracted. In *Writing the Modern City: Literature, Architecture, Modernity*, Sarah Edwards writes that 'life-writings (biographies, autobiographies, diaries, letters) are fundamentally intertextual

[7] 'Textual transcendence of the text' is Genette's own clarification; Graham Allen in *Intertextuality* further clarifies this as 'intertextuality from the viewpoint of structural poetics'. (95)

and foreground the limitations and distortions of individual memories and the ways in which history is shaped into narratives which employ fictional devices.' (23) This is clearly evidenced in Brookner's case with her substantial writing of the self, as I go on to discuss in detail in the next chapter. But perhaps this line of thinking can be extended even further for my purposes here. These 'limitations and distortions' that Edwards describes might equally apply not just to the personal life-writings of an author, but the appraisals of a life/writing as well: by critics, and by general readership, as can be seen in journalistic reviews, academic writing, and reader ratings on sites like Amazon and Goodreads. I argue, as Genette does, that all must be viewed in relation to the text and the determinations of how that text's interpretation is then shaped. I further argue that they go on to coalesce and then reflect a determination of what might be thought of as a literary value.

Because transtextuality arises first from considerations of intertextuality, and because intertextuality can be used to multiple ends, Genette sought to delineate 'the entire set of general or transcendent categories – types of discourse, modes of enunciation, literary genres – from which emerges a single text…' In *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* he characterises this set as '…all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts.' (1) Undoubtedly, this is a far-reaching conception of how texts are able to relate to one another, but Genette determines that transtextuality incorporates five distinct subtypes which constitute all of the ways in which literature is able to embody an intertextual form.

The first of these subtypes is what he somewhat confusingly terms 'intertextuality,' which is to be thought of in a narrower usage of the word than in discussions of the theory of intertextuality generally. For Genette, intertextuality refers to 'the relationship of copresence between two texts or among several texts: that is to

say, eidetically and typically as the actual presence of one text within another.' This can range from the use of quotations, to plagiarism, to deliberate allusion. In other words, the overt incorporation of one or more texts into another one.[8] (1-2)

The second subtype, paratextuality, identifies the peripheral texts which are 'bound' to the literary work, in a literal or figurative fashion, which could include 'a title, subtitle, intertitles; prefaces, postfaces, notices, forwards, etc.; marginal, infrapaginal, terminal notes; epigraphs; illustrations; blurbs, book covers, dust jackets, and many other kinds of secondary signals, whether allographic or autographic.'[9] (3)

The third subtype, metatextuality, refers to texts that offer commentary on another text in a silent manner that does not overtly call to the other, which would more closely resemble intertextuality. Genette offers Hegel's *The Phenomenology of the Mind* as the prime example of this as it implicitly evokes Denis Diderot's *Neveu de Rameau* rather than offer itself as a direct comparator to it. (4) A more contemporary example might be Jonathan Lethem's essay 'The Ecstasy of Influence,' which, outside of its play on the title, and the acknowledgement of that play in a footnote, challenges Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence* through a collage of fragments by others

[8] Genette notes that his definition of intertextuality is more restricted than Michael Riffaterre's who defines the intertext as 'the perception, by the reader, of the relationship between a work and others that have either preceded or followed it.' Genette also notes, however, that there is a 'de facto restriction' in this definition because the relationships Riffaterre examines are 'semantic-semiotic microstructures' (such as a sentence or detail) rather than the textual structure on the whole, which Genette is more concerned with in his study. It is also my assertion that Riffaterre's definition is inadequate for its invocation of the reader's perception, which seems to imply that if intertextuality is not detected by a reader (or all readers, for that matter) then it must not exist, creating the philosophical 'if a tree falls in a forest' conundrum best avoided here for its inherent ontological limitations.

[9] In *Palimpsests*, Genette writes that he wishes paratexts to be understood in the ambiguous and contradictory sense that the term invokes ('paramilitary' is given as an example of a similar term, presumably because it can be read as oxymoronic) but this book is an antecedent to *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* wherein Genette goes into much more detail and clarification of the relationships between texts and their paratexts.

without any direct mention of Bloom or instruction that a comparison should be made between the texts.[10]

The fourth type of transtextuality is hypertextuality. Hypertextuality is present in 'any relationship uniting a text B to an earlier text A, upon which is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary [as seen in the previous subtype metatextuality].' Genette's example of the possible relationships between a hypertext (text B) and its hypotext (text A) is the *Odyssey* and two of its hypertexts, the *Aeneid* and *Ulysses*. Genette demonstrates that there is a 'simple or direct transformation' from the *Odyssey* to *Ulysses*, as the latter transposes 'the action of the *Odyssey* to twentieth-century Dublin,' while there is a more complex and less direct relationship between the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid*, as Virgil 'draw[s] inspiration from the generic – i.e., at once formal and thematic – model established by Homer in the *Odyssey* (and in fact also in the *Iliad*): that is, following the hallowed formula, by *imitating* Homer.'[11] In the first instance with Homer and Joyce, the same thing is told differently. In the second instance with Homer and Virgil, another thing is told similarly. (5-6)

Finally, the fifth type of transtextuality is architextuality, described by Genette as 'the most abstract and most implicit of all.' Architextuality involves a 'completely silent' relationship 'of a taxonomic nature' between a text and its potential classifications. Where this relationship does not appear silent (for instance, a novel which identifies on its cover as 'a novel') this is actually a paratext, as 'the text itself is

[10] Notably, Lethem's essay contained the subtitle 'A Plagiarism' when first published in *Harper's Magazine*, a clear, if still oblique, nod towards a text's inseparability from its intertexts.

[11] Genette acknowledges that it may be counter-intuitive to suggest that the *Aeneid* has a more complex relationship to its hypotext than *Ulysses*, given that the *Aeneid* appears closer in historic time to the *Odyssey*, and because *Ulysses* is a work that has been celebrated, in part, for its complexity. However, Genette is persuasive in demonstrating that imitating a text in this way requires a mastery (or at least a mastery in part) of its hypotext that is not always necessary in the transformation evident in the relationship between the *Odyssey* and *Ulysses*.

not supposed to know, and consequently not meant to declare, its generic quality.' And, while one might challenge whatever the paratexts might have declared for the text (Genette's example is that *The Romance of the Rose* is not a romance), one must still give due consideration to the implicit relationship of architextuality, as 'generic perception is known to guide and determine to a considerable degree the readers' expectations, and thus the reception of the work.' To return to the previous example of *Ulysses*: the works of modernism, Irish literature, or the novel generally could all be considered its architexts because each, however conceived, help to govern the implicit expectations of the reader when they confront the work. Architextuality therefore gets to the heart of how every work is inherently intertextual, though some may be more intertextual than others. (4-5)

Brookner's career will be discussed in these terms throughout the thesis but there are other supportive theoretical concepts which can extend or clarify some of the points which will be made. In 'Word, Dialogue and Novel,' Julia Kristeva invokes the idea that genres must be regarded as 'imperfect semiological systems.' (66) This is clarifying in relation to Genette's conception of the architext as any intertextualization must necessarily extend past its invocation of certain situations or conventions. If genres themselves are defined by their relationships to other genres they are therefore intertextual to one another. In terms of Brookner's novels, such conceptualisation of the role of the intertext in genre is welcome, as Brookner often straddles or defies any simple generic classification.

One more point about the choice of transtextuality as a theoretical framework should be made as well. In 'Semiology and Rhetoric' Paul De Man argues:

> On the one hand, literature cannot merely be received as a definite unit of referential meaning that can be decoded without leaving a residue... On the

> other hand – and this is the real mystery – no literary formalism, no matter how accurate and enriching in its analytic powers, is ever allowed to come into being without seeming reductive. (1366)

Cautioning against the application of strict models of interpretation, De Man wishes to collapse the distinctions between author and reader, literature and criticism, and thereby find in the interpretive process a resulting 'emotive reaction to the impossibility of knowing what [anything] might be up to.' (1378) This is a caution that one might apply towards the application of structuralists like Genette. However, De Man's argument here is not against the incorporation of models or theoretical concepts but rather in favour of the adoption of a variety of approaches. Such variety will be evident in this thesis as Genette's models are not strictly adhered to or ever applied in isolation. Genette himself warns against such practice: in his writing he was highly aware that his theories could not meet every authorial situation or text. Instead, close reading and a sociological approach to literature in the late twentieth century supplement all discussion. I also, rather than merely adopt Genette's thinking, seek to enact his rigorous analysis of text and paratext in order to give due consideration to what such analysis is able to reveal to the engaged reader and the role it can play in the interpretive process.

1.5 Choice of Methodological Approach

There is precedent for the adoption of such a framework in a doctoral thesis. Anne Marie White's *Text and Palimpsest: Hypertextuality in the Later Novels of Juan Marsé* and Daniel Gutierrez Trapaga's *Transtextuality in Sixteenth-Century Castilian Romances of Chivalry: Rewritings, Sequels, and Cycles* are but two examples which use transtextuality

to advance the arguments. In the former, White investigates the roles of intertextuality, and especially hypertextuality, in novels of a contemporary Spanish author. In the latter, Trapaga identifies the importance of intertextuality, and again, hypertextuality, in the Spanish Golden Age works that defined the genre and formed the basis for later novels such as *Don Quixote*. In each case, the scholars employ Genette's framework as a means of discussing one specific element of an author or movement's transtextuality; the role of intertextuality in the genre; and intertextuality's inherent reliance on the hypertext.[12]

There is also precedent for using this framework in application to Brookner. As previously stated, in 'The Paratextual Construction of Anita Brookner: Chronotopic Conflict in the Book Review and Author Interview,' Peta Mayer defines Brookner's author interviews as paratexts which informed the way in which her novels have been interpreted. Mayer is specifically interested in how these interviews destabilise the architextuality of Brookner's novels and in turn the academic considerations of those novels. While this identifies issues in Brookner scholarship, it does not seek to provide a better reading. Her forthcoming book *Misreading Anita Brookner* likely does. Nevertheless, Mayer makes an argument that aligns with mine in some respects.

My approach does differ from these, however, as I consider the transtextuality of Brookner's oeuvre on the whole, in the form of her literary career. There is precedence for this as well. Jakob Lothe's *Conrad's Narrative Method* considers Joseph Conrad in such a way, pulling a range of discussions together in order to consider the output of Conrad on the whole. While for Lothe this manifests itself in a book with each chapter focussing on a different work of Conrad, in this thesis I consider Brookner from

[12] It should be noted that – as in this thesis – neither incorporates Genette's framework wholesale.

the perspective of different characteristics of her career, with an especial attention to her early novels.

I also consider Brookner in the context of a changing literary culture that was highly responsive to book prizes and other interactions with the publishing and mass media industries. To do so, the discussions contained take into account the milieus described by James F. English in *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards, and the Circulation of Cultural Value* and Richard Todd in *Consuming Fictions: The Booker Prize and Fiction in Britain Today*. The former offers its own theoretical framework for discussing an era in which the symbolic capital of an arts prize can translate into the economical capital of increased book sales, while the latter discusses the Booker Prize during the period in which Brookner won in terms of its historical context.

1.6 The Structure of the Thesis

As mentioned, the structure of the thesis seeks to put to the forefront three discrete yet interdependent characteristics of the public author in order to display how they build upon one another to create what is then thought of as that author's literary value or reputation: persona, reception, and canon, with a chapter to focus on each. The main research questions it seeks to answer are:

- How was Brookner's literary persona developed across her wide body of work, and how did her first novels inform the way in which her future novels should be read? Further to this, what roles do intertextuality, genre, and serialisation play throughout her career as a novelist, and how are these roles made manifest not only in the main texts of her narratives but also in the supporting paratexts,

including marketing and design decisions made by publishers in the creation of the book object?

- How would her work go on to be interpreted, both before and after she received the Booker Prize for *Hotel du Lac*, and how did winning such a prestigious prize come to factor in the subsequent transmission of her literary persona in the media and academy in the form of a metatext? In particular, what were the roles of satire and romance in the novel and why were these not only so overlooked by so many, but also so able to destabilise how her past and future novels would be read?
- How might Brookner's differing places in various contemporary Anglophone canons be described and how have they changed over time? How have multiple media forms, including adaptations, book reviews, and educational supplementary editions of *Hotel du Lac* positioned her and her writing? What multiple literary traditions could Brookner's novels be said to occupy and why was this not always recognised in her time? Furthermore, how did Brookner's death change perceptions of her value as a novelist and what does corporeal death mean for the legacy of an author like Brookner?

After this introductory first chapter, the second chapter 'The Intertextual, Self-Reflexive Brand Brookner: The Development of a Literary Persona' considers how Brookner's deeply intertextual and self-reflexive persona is developed in her narratives; how this persona is further reflected in the material objects of her books; and how it was apprehended by the media and critical classes to create the idea of her as an author. The chapter conducts close readings of Brookner's first three novels, *A Start in Life*, *Providence*, and *Look at Me* in order to display the different facets of Brookner's authorial persona and to advance the notion that Brookner's corpus needs to be read syntactically with each book in relation to one another, as well as in relation

to her own self, in order for its significant interplay with intertextuality and self-reflexivity to be revealed. This is further supplemented by: a close reading of her fourteenth novel to show how these trends continued long into her career; analysis of the 'sameness' and 'addictions' present in Brookner's novels; and the marketing approaches taken by her publishers in their dissemination of her narratives.

The third chapter, 'Criticisms of "a semipersonal kind": *Hotel du Lac*, the 1984 Booker Prize, and the Metatext,' makes the argument that much of the reception Brookner received over her career was as a result of the under-consideration of the textual aspects of her novels as discussed in the previous chapter that should have signalled her as an author working extensively and experimentally in intertextualities and the writing of the self. To this end, this chapter engages in a close reading and analysis of Brookner's fourth and most well-known novel *Hotel du Lac*, as well as its Booker Prize-win ceremony and resulting publicity, in order to demonstrate how the novel was perceived and transmitted by critical and media classes in this moment. The chapter further makes the argument that, due in part to the spectacle of the Booker Prize, the decontextualized manner in which *Hotel du Lac* is read by such figures in fact becomes a metatext to the interpretation of the novel and to Brookner herself as an author which goes on to dominate how Brookner would continue to be represented for the rest of her career. This discussion is further supplemented by the analysis of satire and parody, literary prizes, and how a novel's paratexts can (mis)direct the main texts that they support, as interpreted by its readers.

The fourth chapter of the thesis, '"Still Looking for Justice": Canon, Death, and the Changing of a Literary Reputation,' charts the uncertain canon placement that Brookner held in her lifetime, first discussed in relation to the ambiguity of 'the canon' itself, and then further in terms of the ambiguities of her engagement with genre and

literary tradition which resist easy classification. The chapter then demonstrates the experimental aspects of Brookner's methods and how they can place her alongside a more widely celebrated author such as Angela Carter for their shared concerns with dismantling the metanarratives associated with the Enlightenment, realism/naturalism, and modernism. This chapter then conducts analysis of study texts produced for the novel *Hotel du Lac* as well as its 1986 film adaptation in order to demonstrate the forms' bearings on perceptions of her and her novels. With a detailed analysis of Henri Lefebvre's writings on death, the chapter concludes with an address to how death can function as renewal in our literary landscape and a discussion of what this tells us about the canon in contemporary literature, the celebrity author, and the possible impacts of new media forms.

The fifth chapter concludes the thesis with a summation of findings and a consideration of Brookner, prizes, and literary culture in the present moment with an eye towards the future and especially its challenged economic foregrounds. It is followed by three appendices: a series of images of book covers to provide a visual reference to the discussion of paratexts in second chapter; a full transcription of the 1984 Booker Prize ceremony that is excerpted in the third chapter but committed to formal text here for the first time in any scholarship; and a selection from Lefebvre's *A Critique of Daily Life, Volume III* which guide the discussions held at the end of the fourth chapter.

1.7 Why Brookner

My interest in Brookner was initiated a decade ago when I first read *A Start in Life* and saw something in her writing that struck me as significantly complex. Yet when I

mentioned that appraisal to others in academic circles it was difficult to predict the kind of reaction it would receive. This struck me as unusual for an author who had won one of the biggest book prizes in the world and whose books had remained in print for several decades, all the while writing unabashedly erudite and psychological novels. I wanted to better understand the polarization that seemed to accompany mentions of her, and the more I read the more surprised I was by the extent of some of the negativity expressed given her extensive uses of self-referentiality and intertextualization with celebrated works of classic literature, characteristics of literary fiction which can usually confer a positive response from the literati.

Eventually, though, as I closed in on her twenty-five novels, I reached the saturation point that seemed to be a subtext to many of the negative opinions of her and recognised a unique sense of déjà vu previously unexperienced in reading. Unlike for some, however, I did not find this sense to be necessarily indicative of 'bad writing,' or, for that matter, that the effect was somehow unworthy of consideration. Rather, my interest was all the more piqued for its distinctiveness. Furthermore, and to a greater extent, I realised that if one had only read *Hotel du Lac* or was familiar mainly with the fallout of her Booker Prize-win, a very different opinion of her career would be held than by someone who had engaged with multiple novels or was not aware of the fallout from the prize-win at all. Learning that few scholarly works had been written on Brookner from any angle, let alone that centre her career and place in the culture, only heightened the desire to pursue research that could tell us something new about the books we like and the books we dislike. Therefore, what follows is the first full-length study to consider Brookner from such a perspective. It is this author's hope that it might play a role in provoking more studies on Brookner and, perhaps to a larger degree, contribute to our knowledge of how contemporary literature was produced and consumed in this period and today.

2. The Intertextual, Self-Reflexive Brand Brookner: The Development of a Literary Persona

2.1 Introduction

Anita Brookner published her first novel at age fifty-three, during at the latter half of an already distinguished career in art history. Then a Reader at the Courtauld Institute, she had the year prior published a biography of painter Jacques-Louis David for the general reader, which was reviewed by outlets such as *The New York Times* and the nascent *London Review of Books*. While this thesis looks specifically at her literary career, as will be demonstrated this naturally involves her former career as well. In fact, her literary career does not 'involve' her former career so much as subsume it.

This chapter focusses on that subsumption and the resulting literary persona that Brookner crafted and maintained throughout her career in fiction. As will be shown, Brookner's persona was derived from a highly self-reflexive nature and extended beyond the reach of the texts of her individual novels to extra-textual layers, including everything from the jackets of the books to the collective text of her oeuvre read as a whole. This chapter also, in effect, conducts the deep analysis of the material object of the book outside of its main text that Genette argues in his work *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* is not only possible but necessary to any rigorous interpretive process of a work.

The literary persona can be a nebulous concept, but it is no less important for that. Direct work on the literary persona has been sporadic over the years, but there is nevertheless an existent theoretical background that should be acknowledge in a discussion of it. For Robert C. Elliott, the literary persona is 'a relation between persona and author, [whereby the] mask and wearer becom[e] almost indistinguishable at

times.' (18) Elliott questions the extent to which any self could be said to a 'true' self and posits that the literary persona is rather a literary device that reflects this: an element of the interpretive process that may or may not be emphasised by the author.[13] This follows Carl Jung's psychological theories on the self, as well as George T. Wright's theories on the modernist poets.[14] [15] More recently, Jerrold Levinson – chiefly a scholar in philosophy and music – has also found that the persona is only one of several highly relevant pieces to the puzzle of interpreting a text.[16]

In *Theory of the Lyric*, Jonathan Culler argues that the interpretation of the text should neither revolve entirely around the reader's perception of the poet's subjective experience, nor around a rejection of the poet having anything to do with the poem's fictional speaker. This ambiguous space between an author's 'authentic' attempt at rendering a subjective experience and the 'inauthentic' distancing effect that the author creates when producing a text which is demonstrably unrelated to the author is where the literary persona most comfortably resides. It is of the author, but it is not the

[13] Through examinations of confessional poetry and satire, Elliott illustrates varying relationships: those in which the text relies on the assumption that a work is autobiographical in nature (as in confessional poetry) and those in which the text appears to ally itself with its speaker but in fact sides with those it ostensibly scourges (as in satire). As will be demonstrated, Brookner's employment of persona is situated in the middle, as her texts play upon a reflection of herself but are resolutely ambiguous in their moral allegiance.

[14] From Jung: 'There is little hope of our ever being able to reach even approximate consciousness of the self, since however much we may make conscious there will always exist an indeterminate and indeterminable amount of unconscious material which belongs to the totality of the self.' (177)

[15] In *The Poet in the Poem: The Personae of Eliot, Yeats, and Pound*, Wright finds that an author's persona is a stylistic creation that approximates the human experience and a characteristic of a text that is deployed self-consciously to the reader. He writes, 'the poet's point of view is always larger than that of his "I."' (19)

[16] Levinson suggests in *The Pleasures of Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays* that literary meaning 'will be a function of and constrained by ... the potentialities of the text per se together with the generative matrix provided by its issuing forth from individual A, with public persona B, at time C, against cultural background D, in light of predecessors E, in the shadow of contemporary events F, in relation to the remainder of A's artistic oeuvre G, and so on.' This matrix he describes is one that reflects what he terms 'hypothetical intentionalism' that draws inspiration from axiology. (184)

author. It *is* a literary device, but it is *not only* a literary device. In the case of Brookner, it becomes clear that in many ways the manner in which her persona has been received is much less bookish than this, precisely because her literary persona was so self-reflexive that many have thought it did not exist at all. However, it is for this reason that it should be scrutinised all the more closely and with even greater precision. The derivation of this line of thinking is two-fold: on the one hand it is influenced by the phenomenologists who posited that what seems most apparent in our world is that most in need of reconsideration; on the other it is reflective of my own refusal to accept the received wisdom on an author who I believe engages in something far more complex than that for which she was given credit in her lifetime.[17]

In this chapter I will demonstrate how this self-reflexive literary persona of Brookner's is established at the outset of her literary career with her first novel *A Start in Life*, and is then bolstered by her second novel *Providence,* which expands on the themes introduced in the first novel, and then becomes foregrounded most explicitly at this early stage of her career with her third novel *Look at Me*, Brookner's first novel to centre on the life of a writer. In addition, connections will be made to Brookner's later novels as well in order to demonstrate just how far-reaching this persona was. These discussions establish a backdrop for discussing how Brookner's career was received by the press and the reading public, leading into the next chapter which will focus on her satirical (and self-satirical) fourth novel *Hotel du Lac* alongside the proceedings of its Booker Prize-win.

Finally, it is important to note that this thesis – and this chapter in particular – focusses on drawing broad concepts from Brookner's career as a whole with a heavy

[17] *The Phenomenology of Spirit* by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, for example, questions many aspects of humanity he considered taken for granted in his time, such as consciousness, knowledge, and the human character.

emphasis on her earlier novels, and therefore necessarily results in less discussion of her later ones. This course of action has been chosen in order to give the most amount of space to the analysis of how the tropes of interpreting Brookner's novels were first made manifest. Indeed, rather than demonstrate how those tropes recur again and again, as I think this is evidenced in my discussions of her career as a matter of course, this thesis seeks to provide a jumping-off point for applying or testing any of the ideas it contains within for any future scholar who might wish to engage with Brookner's work from a similar perspective on the novels which have not been dealt with extensively here.

2.2 *A Start in Life* or a Start in Literature?

As previously noted, by the time Brookner's first novel *A Start in Life* was published in 1981, she had already established herself as a public figure through her engagement with the environments of art history and academia. With two books of art history that were pitched towards a general audience and already released by well-regarded publishing houses at home and abroad, a highly publicised Cambridge professorship that had been bequeathed with the express purpose of holding lectures for the public, and regular articles in *The Burlington*, a top fine art magazine, Brookner was firmly inaugurated into her new literary career as a well-known art historian who had also written a novel. Her publisher Jonathan Cape, in an unsigned and undated press release on the publisher's headed stationery, states: 'Having already achieved eminence as an art historian, most recently with her highly acclaimed *Jacques-Louis David*, Ms Brookner has embarked on her new literary career with real brilliance.' Further, the press release describes her as 'an international authority on eighteenth and nineteenth century painting.' (University of Reading JC/349/4/2)

This is not the typical path in contemporary literature for those with literary aspirations.[18] Most authors achieve whatever recognition they receive initially as a result of their literary output and are therefore accepted by the public as authors first. This difference cannot be overlooked, or overstated, in analysis of the start of Brookner's literary career, and indeed, it is clear that it was not overlooked at the time, least of all by Brookner herself. In fact, she took full advantage of it in order to establish her self-reflexive literary persona, which transcends the page and forces the reader to confront it head-on.

A Start in Life opens with the protagonist, the academic Dr Ruth Weiss, considering the past events of her life: 'Dr Weiss, at forty, knew that her life had been ruined by literature.' (7) Within only the four pages that comprise this first chapter, dual layers of self-consciousness and reflexivity are already apparent. In the first instance, the protagonist herself is immediately identified as sharing with Brookner a Germanic name, as well as being middle-aged. Even more striking perhaps is the very first word of the first sentence, 'Dr.' (Brookner 5). By giving her protagonist the precise professional title that she herself holds, and indeed privileging it in the text in this way, Brookner forces the reader from the very outset to confront the conflation of herself as an author, as a novel's protagonist, and as a literary persona created between the text and the life of the author.

Despite the supposed 'death of the author,' it is perhaps understandable that readers would make an identification between the author, narrator, and protagonist of any text – even one that is presented in a third-person, supposedly neutral manner –

[18] Established British celebrities have released novels, but these have typically been imbued with very different aspirations from Brookner's novels. For example, model, singer, and media personality Katie Price, also known as Jordan, was one of the top hundred selling authors in the UK from 2000-2009 with a gamut of autobiographies, novels, and children's books, any of which might hold appeal for her already existent fanbase but unlikely for anyone outside of it. (MacArthur)

regardless of the other clues that Brookner leaves which tie these threads of her novel together. As Susan Snaider Lanser writes in her book *The Narrative Act: Point of View in Prose Fiction,* '[merely] a female name on the title page signals a female narrative voice, in the absence of markings to the contrary.' (167) There are undoubtedly several exceptions where the text alone could show that this is improbable; and it must be acknowledged that it possibly reflects a reductive way to read or interpret a text, not least for its adherence to a binary understanding of gender.[19] However, this academic discussion of a supposedly correct manner in which to read and interpret gender in a text is unlikely to make much difference to the actual reading practices of the public and their formulations of the literary persona that they are receiving through that text. It is safer to assume that most would follow the convention as Lanser describes – as would Brookner in employing such conventions in conveying her persona.

The second layer of self-consciousness and reflexivity in this opening chapter is Ruth's insistence on the importance of literature in her life, with its capacity to ruin her. More than leaving this to a sense of the abstract as in that first sentence, for Ruth it is made literal as well. The chapter continues to elucidate: three times a week she holds seminars with her students; regularly publishes critical volumes on Balzac; and invites her publisher over to dinner every six months to discuss such volumes. To go further, not only is her life ruined by literature, as directly expressed in the first sentence, but her appearance as well: 'Dr Weiss also blamed her looks on literature. She aimed,

[19] Jonathan Culler, for instance, calls this point of Lanser's into question. He notes the opening line from *Pride and Prejudice* ('It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.') and doubts that it necessarily would or should be read from a female perspective. Having said that, Culler nonetheless recognises the convention and the value of attention to it. His point is to challenge the convention rather than reinforce it, which it could be read that Lanser seems to suggest. (5)

instinctively, at an old-fashioned effect.' (Brookner 8) And yet, at the same time, all of her life is 'the stuff of literature.' (10)

Should such interpretation of intentional conflation between the author and protagonist appear unduly rash, consider that Ruth's present life as an academic constitutes a tiny fraction of the book. Indeed, it consists of solely the short first chapter and the novel's final paragraph. Given such a minor role in the construction of the narrative, the function of these bookending plot points is purely one of reflexivity and narrative positioning. And while it has been suggested (by the plot summary on the back of the first edition of the novel's dustjacket, for instance) that the contemporaneous Ruth of the novel, in reliving her memories, eventually comes to recognise that 'once again she must make a start in life', (hence the title) this not actually borne out by the text at all. The novel, rather, ends with Ruth writing another letter to her publisher inviting him to dinner to discuss her present work on Balzac, thus is it suggested does life go on. She is not invigorated at all by the memories which have been recalled in the narrative but instead finds herself compelled to further retread her familiar path, one that has only brought disappointment; to retreat ever further inward into that disillusionment that her memories have so dispiritingly prompted.

In addition to existing to serve, like her protagonist's academic expertise does, as another explicit form of intertextualisation with Balzac, who had previously entitled a novel *A Start in Life* (*Un début dans la vie*, as translated into English), the title of the novel must therefore also be read as ironic. This irony is doubly true in the US edition

of the novel which bears the title *The Debut*.[20] [21] Maintaining the intertextualisation with Balzac by bringing the borrowed French term from his title into her US edition, the shortened title heightens the irony by emphasising the term, forcing the reader to determine the extent to which it bears out with its accompanying text. A close reader would identify that Ruth has not actually made a debut at all but instead looked at an opportunity to make a debut and, most likely due to previous disappointments in her life, demurred. The aforementioned bookending scenes from her present life as an academic further work to create a circular effect that plays upon the vicious circle of ineffectual self-remonstration that Ruth exhibited in her early life: a need to escape but a self-conscious awareness of that need to escape versus her filial duty which resulted only in her continuing a prolonged state of inaction. The story from Ruth's youth is in fact a metaphor for her present, with its ruminative circularity, or indeed self-propelling self-reflexivity. This is not a debut at all. A debut is a beginning which necessarily has an end, and circles of course do not have beginnings or indeed ends, instead continuing on as they do *ad inifinitum*.[22]

[20] Joni Evans (the Editor-in-Chief at The Linden Press / Simon and Schuster, the US publishers of the novel) seems to have picked up on this as well. She wrote to Brookner after it was decided to publish the novel but requested that the its title be changed from *A Start in Life* because it is 'not only not accurate for this book but [it] lacks the book's wonderful distinction and delicacy.' Evans went on to suggest *The Debut*, acknowledging that she was also 'borrowing from Balzac' and that this would be 'an ironic and sad title.' That Brookner would not have chosen *The Debut* for herself makes little difference in this case: she agreed to go along with the choice and there would be no way for the reader to be aware of the US publisher's intervention. (University of Reading JC 349/4/1)

[21] Ironically, even on Amazon.co.uk's website as of 2019, when checking a preview of an edition of the novel before buying, instead of the text of Brookner's *A Start in Life* popping up as it should, in fact the work of the same title by Balzac does, creating an intriguing digital feedback loop between the two novels for the online book browser.

[22] Brookner is also playing upon the closed nature of novels here. Any novel can be read again and again and will never change. This mirrors Ruth's predicament, who longs to break free of her formal confines but is unable. Thus, Ruth has not just been ruined by literature because of morals derived from their stories, as she suggests in her own story, but has also been ruined by the very nature of literature itself, with its fixed forms and godlike authors.

However, this is not so true of Brookner herself for whom the novel *is* actually a debut of sorts: it is the debut of her literary career. Though the novel is of course, as stated, clearly calling to mind the French translation of the Balzac work, there is little doubt that anyone would have been keenly aware of that particular usage with the term 'debut'. In fact, the word 'debut' has been used in English to describe the first novel of an author since at least 1930 and is recorded as having been used many times before even then to indicate the first performance of a musical or theatre act.[23] By the publication of Brookner's novel, therefore, the term 'debut novel' would have entered common parlance, especially in America, which of course is where the title of Brookner's novel that played upon the term most prominently appeared.

There are also the French etymological underpinnings of the term 'debut' which again is clearly foregrounded in the US title but is also embedded in the UK title through its intertextualisation with Balzac to inscribe that 'start'. The roots of the term further call to mind the ironic spirit of the title which both challenges a straightforward and unironic interpretation of the title and text, as well as calls to mind the author of text as being entwined with that text. To begin with, the word *début* is a derivative form of the verb *débuter* meaning 'to start.' This may not appear particularly remarkable as it does not deviate significantly from our borrowed English term. However, when further broken down, the term reveals more elements of a debut that may or may not be inaugurated inside of and within the novel. For, while *dé-* acts simply as an antonymic prefix, *but* is a term that signifies a goal. This creates a tension within the word, because how can something that goes *against* a goal be said to conjure what we think of today in English as a debut, which is itself the realisation of a goal? This tension within the term mirrors the tension which is created by Brookner's use of the title for her text which

[23] American Library Association (1930). A.L.A. Booklist, Volume 27. Publishing Board, League of Library Commissions (U.S.) pg. 423, 'A debut novel, mature as to style and composition…'

does signify a new work of literature but one which inscribes the false start of its protagonist. Furthermore, *but* has its roots in an Old French term in which the word could also mean 'end' or 'target.' Thus, a start might also be conceived as an ending for what has been and now becoming born anew (bringing to mind again the closed circuit of the novel), and both starts and ends might be recognised as targets for a kind of progression, if not necessarily conceived as human-set targets, then the targets of nature or the divine. By initiating her literary debut, Brookner is also establishing herself as a kind of 'target' for the reader and critics. A target that is held in the mind throughout the text by way of her self-reflexivity which draws alongside itself a profound sense of irony, tension, and humour.

How these multiple layers of intertextuality – on the one hand with Balzac, on the other with herself – function is to make inescapable for the reader the reflexive nature of both the narrative that is being read and the author who created it. By foregrounding elements of her own background, as well as the indelible powers of literature, Brookner creates in the reader the experience of a heightened awareness of the book in hand and the significance of its author's name on the cover.[24] The reflexivity then flows into the plot and is met with gratification for doing so, creating a feedback loop waiting to be discovered, as it is readily apparent and satisfying to the engaged

[24] In 'What Is an author?' Michel Foucault places emphasis on the use of the name of the author on texts, discussing the characteristics that distinguish it from the use of a proper name in other contexts. He writes, 'It is more than a gesture, a finger pointed at someone; it is, to a certain extent, the equivalent of a description.' He goes on to say that the name of the author 'remains at the contours of texts – separating one from the other, defining their form, and characterising their mode of existence.' While this may be true of many authors, for Brookner, because of the described self-reflexive nature of her persona, Foucault's description of a proper name is perhaps more apt in terms of its functions on the cover of her novels: '[it] move[s] from the interior of a discourse to the real person outside who produced it.' (122-124) In any case, for Foucault the named author has a significant function in the role of text, and this would be doubly true for an author such as Brookner whose texts in part rely upon a considered acknowledgment and appraisal of the author who has produced them. It is notable as well that Foucault uses Balzac's name as an example given Brookner's invocation of Balzac as well.

reader. Ruth goes to Paris to conduct research for her degree; Brookner is a renowned authority on French artwork and also conducted research in Paris as a student. Ruth is forced to take care of her parents in their old age; Brookner took care of her parents in their old age, as was described in contemporaneous interviews. It is in this way that an idea of Brookner as an author is developed and conveyed in a literary persona to the readers of her novels.

2.3 La Tragédie humaine

To push further on the expansiveness of this engagement with intertextuality, it is important to probe the choice of Balzac as intertextual foil for Brookner's first novel. In *Contemporary Women's Writing: From* The Golden Notebook *to* The Color Purple, Maroula Joannou incorporates *A Start in Life* into her study of a period of change in which the representations of women over the course of twenty years in British and American societies grappled with civil rights and women's movements. Of the novel she writes:

> *A Start in Life* is a *Bildungsroman* inspired by Balzac's *Un début dans la vie*. The book is in effect an extended dialogue with Brookner's mentor, Balzac – Ruth Weiss, the plain and bookish heroine of *A Start in Life* writes her doctoral thesis on vice and virtue in Balzac's novels. Ruth decides that she has no wish to live as virtuously as Balzac's Eugénie Grandet: 'She would rather be like the lady who spells death to Eugénue Grandet's hopes, a beauty glimpsed in Paris with feathers in her hair. Better a bad winner than a good loser. Balzac had taught her that too.' Manipulative powers, according to Balzac, distinguish the villains

> from the virtuous, but Ruth is too disingenuous to have manipulative powers. *A Start in Life* is a series of object lessons. (98)

Joannou is correct to foreground the intertextuality with Balzac in the novel, and indeed her analysis here corresponds astutely with her aims in her book. However, she does something quite revealing here which illuminates the extent to which Brookner is establishing an intertextual centrality to her persona as author. Joannou is right to describe *A Start in Life* as connected to Balzac's *Un début dans la vie*, and she is right to bring in the protagonist's research on Balzac's character Eugénie Grandet. However, the manner in which she has done this seems to imply that Eugénie Grandet is a character from Balzac's *Un début dans la vie*; and yet this is not the case in fact. *Un début dans la vie* and *Eugénie Grandet*, in which Eugénie Grandet is the titular protagonist, are discrete novels, though they both fall within *La Comédie humaine*, Balzac's massive intertextual and interlinking novel sequence that spans nearly one hundred volumes. This is significant because on the one hand Joannou's collapsing of these distinctions is understandable, but on the other hand it is also illustrative of the mode of intertextuality in which Brookner's novels operate. That is to say, Brookner's invoking of Balzac should not be underestimated: she too is undertaking a gargantuan intertextual project that could easily be overlooked or mistaken for being less than it actually is.

The scale of this project will become clearer as Brookner's succeeding novels are discussed in this thesis. However, it is important to take notice here of the importance of *Eugénie Grandet* within *La Comédie humaine* in order to demonstrate why Brookner might have sought to have her protagonist focus on that novel in particular for her thesis in *A Start in Life* while also drawing *Un début dans la vie* into the mix through the novel's title, disturbing what otherwise would be a more

straightforward intertextualisation through a one-to-one engagement with a hypertext, and therefore risk a potential confusion of Balzacian references on the reader's part, as Joannou seems to experience in her analysis.

While Balzac had written a large number of novels prior to *Eugénie Grandet*, as indicated in his letters from the period to Madame Hanska, it was not until the writing and then publication of *Eugénie Grandet* that he decided to start coalescing several of his works into a subseries called *Scènes de la vie de province* that would eventually form into the aforementioned novel sequence *La Comédie humaine*, inaugurating new explicit forms of intertextuality within his own oeuvre. (Balzac 85) In the case of *Eugénie Grandet*, this involved renaming some of the characters in the second edition so that they would become recurring characters that had featured in previous works and would feature again in future works. This is significant because Brookner opens her own novel sequence of sorts with *A Start in Life*, creating an intertextualisation with Balzac not only on an individual-work level but a career-wide one as well.

Indeed, there are many similarities between *La Comédie humaine* and Brookner's novels when taken as a whole. In fact, such was Brookner's awareness of *La Comédie humaine*'s influence on her as an author that, in response to Joni Evan's suggestion of a new title for the US publication described in a previous footnote, Brookner offered two suggestions herself before agreeing to go along with *The Debut*: namely, *Notes from the Human Comedy* and *A Human Comedy*. While in *La Comédie humaine* Balzac incorporates distinct recurring characters in a concerted and explicit manner that Brookner clearly does not, Brookner's oeuvre nevertheless does take on the strong sense of a series or novel sequence that portrays a fictional London-centric universe populated by the lonely and the assiduous who are constantly besieged by the bold and the heedless. Brookner's literary persona is indelibly interlaced with Balzac's

universe: it is in fact a *La* Tragédie *humaine* that consists of twenty-five novels – though not as long as Balzac's, still an unusually large number of novels for contemporary literary fiction to be produced by a single author, regardless of whether one were to consider them within a sequence or series.[25]

After *A Start in Life*, Brookner the very next year proceeds to *Providence*, a novel that elaborates on many of the themes that were first established in her debut and introduces new ones that also point to a self-reflexive style, drawing again on her own background which is intertextualized in the novel even more extensively than in her first. This new mode of intertextualization sits alongside an intertextualization of *A Start in Life*, initiating that sense of the novel sequence or series that was previously described and will be shown to have flowed throughout her body of work.

2.4 Providential Progressions

Brookner's second novel *Providence* carries over several explicit characteristics and concerns from its predecessor, and features its own dual layering, slightly modified, of self-consciousness. Brookner's protagonist this time is Kitty Maule, also of Central European extraction, and also holding a career in academia. Coming only a year after *A Start in Life*, this sense of sequencing or of the novels belonging to a serial corresponds not only with the intertextualisation with Balzac's own series but also in the way it concretizes, and heightens, the self-reflexivity of the literary persona that Brookner initiated in her first book.

[25] Eileen Williams-Wanquet argues in *Art and Life in the Novels of Anita Brookner: Reading for Life, Subversive Re-Writing to Live* that Brookner's body of work should be thought of as 'one monolithic fiction,' a label which could equally be applied to Balzac's. (10)

In fact, the very timing of releases could be read as part of the self-reflexive nature. Brookner publishing her second novel only a year after her first is not common in contemporary literary fiction, to say nothing of how it inaugurates an annual pattern of publication which follows throughout most of Brookner's career. This, of course, mirrors Balzac's prolific output and can be said to intertextualize those works further in that way. Additionally, both Brookner and Balzac seek to not only present portraits of the individual and their discrete life events but also to paint a vast and detailed mural of humanity, differing though Balzac and Brookner may actually be in outlook. However, it must also be said that there is something about this very prolificness/prolixity that calls the texts back to Brookner the author.

In the first place, the contemporary literary publishing industry has long shown more palpable excitement towards authors who publish their works of fiction sporadically over those who publish more regularly, as in the febrile media responses to the sporadic releases of authors such as Donna Tartt or Arundhati Roy, which have over a decade between them, or in Roy's case, two decades.[26] Whether this is in fact a compensatory attitude deployed by industry or media players to maintain the assertion that the author remains relevant despite having not been in the public eye for some time rather than genuine expectation that the novel will be better because it has been gestating for longer, it is unclear. However, what is clear in the wake of those media blitzes which can occur during an author's re-debut is the suggestion that *good* literary fiction takes a significant amount of time to write, and that the longer it takes to write one, the better the work is likely to be. As such, there is something to acknowledge

[26] These stories very often focus specifically on this length of time that elapsed between the books and the author's fans' heightened expectations, such as *Town & Country's* splash, 'Slow burn: since publishing *The Secret History* in 1992, Donna Tartt has produced just one novel per decade, leaving her torch-carrying fans perpetually yearning for more. With her third and most ambitious book, *The Goldfinch*, she pours new fuel onto the fire,' and the New York Times's more restrained article, 'After 20 Years, a Novel From Arundhati Roy.' (Doyle)

about Brookner eschewing such a convention of leaving a polite amount of time between her works, considering they originate from a literary tradition that seems to favour a longer time of gestation. What is carried alongside this eschewal of convention appears to be the belief that the reason why Brookner does not need so much time of gestation for her novels is that because its fictional elements are slighter that that of others. Though readers may not fully appreciate Brookner bucking such convention on an intellectual level at only her second novel (even if reviewers do begin to explicitly suggest as much as her body of work grows), they will hold alongside their reading of the novel their internalised experiences of the book publishing media and with it the possibility that Brookner is, perhaps, fictionalising events closer to memoir than the stuff of 'pure' creation, or even simply transcribing the events of her own life.

Because I see this pattern of publication instead from the point of view of Brookner being an author employing a concerted effort towards a significant intertextualisation with Balzac and her own works, and because I am subscribing here to Culler's notion of the author in the text as existing in an ambiguous space that is neither truth or artifice, as previously referenced, I push back against any suggestion that Brookner is best read as merely a stenographer of her own memories or subjective experiences. However, it is not at all clear that either way this would significantly alter the extent to which her persona is based on in its own self-reflexive nature. She may be incorporating an intertextualisation with Balzac, as well as her own works, in a deliberate and conscious manner. Conversely, perhaps she is indeed deficient in imaginative capacity, as some of critics have sought to portray her.[27] I believe a close

[27] It was rumoured in the press that Brookner was 'snubbed' for an honorary doctorate from Oxford University – despite significant lobbying from supporters – on the basis that 'she has simply written the same novel over and over again and is not as worthwhile as someone like Doris Lessing.' (The Evening Standard)

reading of the novels can reveal precisely the opposite, but in either case the self-reflexive nature of the literary persona remains intact and produces a unique result, even if the result could be described as unique sameness. In *Imagining a Self: Autobiography and Novel in Eighteenth Century England* Patricia Meyer Spacks writes:

> It can be argued that all fiction (and poetry and philosophy and painting) ultimately constitutes autobiography, the artist inventing whatever the purported aim of his creation, only a series of metaphors for the self. Conversely, one can maintain that all autobiography is a fiction, the imposition of form and the discovery of meaning automatically converting life into its imitation. (33)

Spacks is picking up here on an ambivalent character of narrative in general, elucidating the immense space of grey in which any work of fiction (or even autobiography) must inhabit. If the difference between what is classified as fiction and non-fiction is not natural to the creation of the text but is in fact but one that can distinguish modes of interpretation, then it is critical that that mode is clarified in the interpretive process. However, with Brookner's body of work this is still not so easy, given that her literary persona is one that seeks to exist in both camps: drawing the reader to its autobiographical content but always maintaining its fictional cover.[28] Again, this is the unique characteristic of Brookner which points to her literary persona's self-reflexive nature. The persona is a persona that announces itself as a

[28] One key indicator of this is found in the paratextual material across all of Brookner's novels, many of which will be discussed further in this thesis. None of the original UK publications include the common subheading for literary novels, 'a novel.' There could be a number of reasons for why this is so, but the point would remain that the novels do not announce themselves as fiction on their covers as many others might do.

persona, an unusual narratorial construction and one that I argue should be at the heart of any interpretations of her texts.[29]

Therefore, in addition to the grand connections that can be drawn to *La Comédie humaine* from the rate of publication that is inaugurated with Brookner's second novel, there is also the diaristic quality which draws the reader further away from the fantasy of narrative to interpreting the text as something much more closely felt.

Indeed, this autobiographical nature is a prominent feature of *Providence*, especially in the course of its presentation of its protagonist's interrogation of her own identity. The novel memorably opens with the line 'Kitty Maule was difficult to place,' foregrounding in the very first instance a profound conflict of identity. Not only do the words directly state this conflict, which can be read in the colloquial sense as well as literal, but the protagonist's full name is also given first priority in the narrative. There are several treatments of identity at work within this short sentence. It should first be noted that though the narrative voice generously provides Kitty with her preferred name, it is not, in fact, the name with which she was christened, Catherine Joséphine Théresè. Two pages later it is revealed: '[Her grandparents] called her Therésè, the name she resumed when she went back to them. Away from them, she was Kitty. And most of the time she felt like Kitty. Not all the time, but most of it.' (Brookner 7) That no one in her family refers to her as such, there is a nomenclatural rigidity of form from which Kitty mentally and in practice deviates whenever it suits her. Most painfully, when Kitty denies the name Théresè, she denies the memory of her late mother, Marie-

[29] Elliott touches on this when he writes that '[all] selves are real, but some are more real than others.' (165) There is no objective ability to discern the 'actual' from 'personal'; therefore, all aspects of an author must be read through the lens of a persona as it is not possible to distinctly separate any one from any other.

Théresè, a figure who otherwise provokes grief and longing in her. There is also the name itself. On the surface is a contradiction in terms – a conflict of place, you might say – for Kitty's first name invokes an infant housecat (a standard pet to keep in England, of course) and her second name invokes a method of attack typically ascribed only to adult big cats found outside of the British Isles, a mauling. In addition, while 'Kitty' is a suitably 'English' name that a woman concerned with her own Englishness might choose for herself, 'Maule,' with its vowel-consonant-vowel ending, belies a foreignness with its suggestion of a term that might come from the French language, though it does not. (5)

The discussion of identity in *Providence* – here, as well as throughout the novel – calls to mind Brookner's first novel *A Start in Life*. In the first place there is again the privileging of the protagonist's name in the narrative. Identity is at the forefront of *Providence* and refers back to a previous novel that itself refers to its own autobiographical nature. This is the cyclical nature of Brookner's persona and the one that is revealed as a singular whole when viewed from a wider angle, much in the same way that a multi-coloured or patterned pinwheel can portray one distinct visual when spun quickly. The pinwheel is still held together at its axle when at rest despite its jutting angles, but in motion coalesces as one concentric image, or series of images.

Furthermore, if Kitty Maule is taken to be a sequenced or redoubled version of Ruth Weiss – who is herself portrayed as a playful extension of or avatar for the author – the line 'Kitty Maule was difficult to place,' can take on a new meaning as well. Kitty Maule is difficult to place because Anita Brookner as author is difficult to place, for all the reasons previously discussed. Once again, the title serves to play at this blurring of lines, to tease knowingly at the text's ultimate puppet master. Any 'providence' that guides Brookner's characters can surely only be that of Brookner herself.

In addition, little details that pepper the narrative with Brookner's own background are scattered throughout the text, creating more substantial forms of intertextualisation with herself. The protagonist of *Providence* teaches at a red brick university in a suburban area within commuting distance of London; Brookner taught at the University of Reading from 1959-1964. At the fictional university, in the protagonist's department, is the stationed 'Roger Fry Professor,' a title given to a character that alludes to a professorship in the name of the painter and critic; Roger Fry was in fact one of the founders of *The Burlington Magazine* where Brookner had published many articles of art criticism.

This calls further attention to the formal intertextualisations that exist between *Providence* and *A Start in Life*. The novels both present academics of literature working on a French author in the nineteenth century. Indeed, *Providence* makes an extended and explicit intertextual move with Benjamin Constant's *Adolphe* in much the same manner as *A Start in Life* does with Balzac's *Eugénie Grandet*, thus intertextualising *Providence* with *A Start in Life* through their shared invocations of formal intertextualisation. The novels are of similar length, perspectives, and plots as well. They draw similar tensions from romantic situations, and the intersections of life and literature are explored with a similar sense of psychological precision and clarity.

There can be no doubt as to the similarities that the novels offer to the engaged reader. To the extent that this is desirable from an author is not presently relevant to the discussion of her literary persona, but it is important to note that the similarities are of such a significant nature that they should be read as agents of interpretation in her work that are cogent and thoughtful, provocatively so, even, as they disrupt typical notions of 'creativity.' In fact, sameness is a defining characteristic itself alongside the

self-reflexive literary persona, working in tandem with it as it does, interdependent as well as mutually supportive.

2.5 The Anatomy of a Brookner Novel: 'extra-erotic, extra-epistemic desire' and addiction/serialisation

To discuss Brookner's oeuvre, it is important to deeply consider the origins of the feeling of sameness in the experience of reading her books and the effects this feeling can have on the interpretations of Brookner's literary persona. The suggestion of sameness has not only been utilised as an aspersion in the service of vituperative critics with an axe to grind – as with V.S. Naipaul as he bemoaned the repetitive quality to Brookner's work in the *New Yorker* – but has also been brought in by more measured theorists and critics seeking to describe where and how the sameness appears, including Mayer, Malcolm, and Williams-Wanquet.[30]

These considerations track with overviews of her works that have been conducted as well, as in *The Oxford Companion to Twentieth-Century Literature in English* which finds in her oeuvre the predominant feature of a 'Brooknerian heroine' who serves as the focal point in all of her novels. The Brooknerian heroine is thought to be so firmly established as a recurring motif in the Brookner oeuvre that the editor Jenny Stringer makes mention that this heroine can even be a man, as in Brookner's *Lewis Percy* with its titular male protagonist or the novels *A Private View* or *The Next*

[30] In his book column for the *New Yorker*, James Wood recounted a lunch with Naipaul in 1994 in which Naipaul asked if it was true that Brookner writes, 'exactly the same novel every year.' Wood relates that he offered only the simple phrase, 'It is true,' which prompted from Naipaul the aggrandised elegy, 'How awful, how awful.' (Wood) The critic's agreement here is worth considering as he is acting as the arbiter to Naipaul's wonderment, confirming his suspicions. Further, this conversation coincides neatly with Blake Morrison's interview with Brookner for the *Independent* in which Morrison makes a similar claim, which suggests that this may be what prompted Naipaul's comments in the first place. (Morrison)

Big Thing, both of which also feature male protagonists. Stringer deliberately leaves intact the gendered term 'heroine' here, further highlighting a thematic rigidity to Brookner's works, specifically their thematic concerns in terms of plot and character motivations, with what was thought of in this period of publication as the makings of uniquely feminine literary concern: the romantic ideal and marriage. (Stringer) Similar overviews, such as Lynn Veach Sadler's entry on Brookner for the Twayne's English Authors Series, have found much the same, focusing on the 'heroines' of the novels, with Sadler also looking to Brookner's portrayal of the romantic ideal and marriage but with emphasis on the conflicts that the romantic ideal and marriage can meet in the face of educated, intelligent women who are prepared for life professionally but perhaps not yet personally or spiritually. (16) However, little attention has been paid to how this sameness actually functions in the texts and the interpretations of them.

As previously described, this sameness is established at the start of Brookner's oeuvre with *A Start in Life* and its insistent quality is heightened by the regularity of the publications of her novels. From 1981 to 1999, Brookner published a new novel each year, turning their release into an annual event for the reading public and the critical class, an event that finds in its mirror image the repetitive and ruminative lives of Brookner's characters. However, remarking upon her prolific output, Brookner said, 'I don't like writing fiction much; it's like being on the end of a bad telephone line – but it's addictive.' (McNay)

It may seem an offbeat choice for analysis of Brookner given the complete absence in her novels of 'hard drugs,' or other narcotic or otherwise therapeutic symbols which are often conjured in any discussion of addiction, but, in fact, it is within the discourse of addiction that the sameness Brookner's novels can be unloaded and

unpacked to investigate the peculiar textual and paratextual qualities they exhibit and how they relate to her literary persona and how it has often been received.

In *Crack Wars: Literature Addiction Mania*, Avital Ronell makes the case that a 'drug culture' is at the centre of all culture and argues that it must extend far beyond what we typically term as 'drugs,' or for that matter any other commonly accepted substances such as alcohol or pharmaceuticals; for instance, Ronell writes that societal reliance on gasoline, the contemporary romance novel, and even art itself, can all offer drug-like experiences in their conscience-changing and addictive qualities. Indeed, she posits that the experience of addiction need not necessarily cohere only with its medical definition at all. To exemplify this, Ronell approaches *Madame Bovary* by Gustave Flaubert – himself notably a major literary influence upon Brookner – employing what she terms a 'narcoanalysis,' which is to say, an analysis that uses the language of drugs and addiction in order to reveal the unsettling and the intoxicating natures which can be found at the heart of the realist novel. Looking to Brookner, this approach can be similarly revealing; not only is the language useful in describing Brookner's works (or, indeed, to approaching an idea of their cohesive yet individually distinct 'anatomy') but also to probing the literary persona she develops as well as the intertextual universe which it inhabits, that phenomenological space in which Brookner's literary persona is consumed.

Indeed, it is Martin Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology that Ronell incorporates into her argument which is particularly relevant here. Brookner has previously been approached in a phenomenological manner, and it could be said that

Brookner's texts are uniquely suited to such a framework due to their significant, often explicit, considerations of the nature of being, time, and the subjective experience.[31] [32]

It is also helpful in this regard to draw comparisons to one of the cultural critiques by the Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre in his wide-ranging series of analytical approaches to a staggering number of topics over the course of his career; in this case, his consideration of the topic of contemporary authorship. In *A Critique of Daily Life, Volume III* – this volume notably published in 1981, the year in which Brookner inaugurated her career as a novelist – Lefebvre discusses what he sees as a new cultural paradigm in the modern era in which:

> The author called himself into question and counterposed himself to a reality in which he could not put down roots or aspire to a status. He became a case, and it was from this unique case that he drew inspiration. …Exasperation of the morbid is the one thing that allows the creator to rise above the everyday, if only to understand it and to show it. (Lefebvre 768)

The connections within this passage to Ronell's theory of addiction as a method of reading and analysing literature, as well as to the Brookner corpus itself, are manifold. In the first place there are the connotational relationships between Lefebvre's choice of terminology and common perceptions of drug culture. He is presenting the modern author as a layabout or waster, a stereotypical image in the popular imagination of someone caught in the midst of addiction. Further, invoking the author as a 'case' calls

[31] In *The Plane of Uncreatedness: A Phenomenological Study of Anita Brookner's Late Fiction*, Inger Björkblom uses Michael Henry's Eckhartian distinction between 'the created' and 'the uncreated' to uncover a 'autonomous region of auto-affective experience' in Brookner's novels. (ii)

[32] One can find what Heidegger calls 'thrownness' (the core concept of his 'being-in-the-world') at the centre of the conflicts that most of Brookner's protagonists face in her novels. Their pasts are often indelibly connected to their presents and create for them a conflict of ambivalence, ambition and desire – an alienation that leaves them at an impasse when faced with the potential to choose a course of action that could promise that new and long hoped for sense of freedom which they seek.

to mind instances of disease, or someone being a 'sad case,' as well as invoking the legal system with its 'case files.' In a similar manner to an author, the user needs drugs to 'rise above the everyday,' and few things are as capable of producing such morbidity and confrontation against one's own mortality than the ingesting of a mind-altering substance.

With regard to the works of Brookner, her desire to intertexualise her novels with her public identity is her own 'exasperation of the morbid' and method of 'ris[ing] above,' manifested through a relentless need to write Sisyphean characters who resemble herself and who (even worse than Sisyphus) are capable of seeing what they need to escape their prisons (whether it is a happy marriage, thrilling romance, or some more vague quality of personal, acquisitive selfishness) but are unable to successfully acquire them. This intertextualisaion shows her to be a 'case' of an author that Lefebvre would argue is using her writing in order to rebel against the ravages of contemporary daily life. This is made starker through this relentlessness of her oeuvre which rarely deviates in theme or mood, and which the reader contributes to themselves through their own relentless reading of her works, a commonplace feature of the devoted Brookner following who devour her corpus in whole batches.

Indeed, Brookner's 'addiction' to writing her novels is satisfied by the reader's addiction to reading them, for they are of course only published if they continue to sell. For Heidegger, addiction is that which is close 'to willing and to writing,' an experience of urge, and of unfulfilled wishfulness. Brookner's novels are the consumable products, packaged in a consistent manner, which promise a unique 'hit,' the Brooknerian jolt to the sensoria offering a temporary escape from one's own unfulfilled wishfulness through the vicarious experience of another's, all of which is heightened by the novel's repetitiousness in other ways: not only by way of their intertextual engagements but in

their routine subject matter, too. Indeed, it is clear that the addictive quality that is manifested by these qualities is further manifested by Brookner's characters for whom addiction (to the promise of love, to the romantic ideal, to their own highly disciplined ways of living) is at the core of their being, the materialization of their thrownness or unfulfilled desire.[33] [34] The literary persona that Brookner inhabits is as disciplined as her characters: each year in the publication of her novels she produces a new protagonist for whom love and marriage are the external substances thought to potentially validate or enhance the protagonist's interior life. By creating a series, a novel sequence, a fictional universe of metatexts and hypertexts that correspond to each other in this way – which in turn display the 'toxic drive' of the texts' author – Brookner creates a literary persona that is self-reflexive not just from each to her, but each to each other, and each to itself, forming multiple layers of recognition, repetition, and *déjà vu* in the reading process. This multi-layered intertextuality can be seen at its most explicit in Brookner's third novel *Look at Me* and fourteenth novel *A Private View*.

[33] It is also worth noting that Brookner's protagonists invariably display what we would think of as a more literal addiction as well: to caffeine. The act of taking a coffee break as a way to kill time features in nearly every one of her novels and her characters rarely acknowledge its physiological effects despite often having drank multiple coffees in a single day. This would suggest a fairly high tolerance for the substance itself but in addition to this displays a dependence on *the ritual* of preparing coffee, or the act of stopping in a café to take a break. This neatly dovetails with Brookner's explicit uses of intertextuality as Balzac himself was an infamous coffee addict. Using a recurring motif such as this across her oeuvre can also suggest another kind of addiction on the author's part: the addiction to writing characters who drink frequent amounts of coffee. It could also be argued that there are yet further addictions on display in her novels with her protagonists often needing to take very long walks regularly in order to remain calm and sanguine, and to generally lead highly regimented and scheduled lives.

[34] In *Arts & Desire: A Study in the Aesthetics of Fiction*, Brian Rosebury offers a theory of fiction which proposes that its 'nature and function' is 'simultaneously to quicken and order desire,' which he defines as 'stimulation without satisfaction.' Such a theory is able to receive Brookner's fiction easily. Her characters are presented with situations in which their quickening and ordering of this kind of desire is paramount, and her novels go on to instil these feelings in her readers through the metabolising of their plots with the readers' own satisfaction still being rejected at the end through their circularity and constant withholding of gratifying resolution. (xi)

2.6 Look at Her

In *Look at Me*, Brookner – rather than intertextualize with a specific author or work in her previous two novels – intertextualizes the predicament that the protagonist finds herself in with the act of writing itself, a self-evidentially self-reflexive attribute to incorporate into a novel that is consistent with Brookner's most explicitly self-reflexive novel. The protagonist is portrayed in a first-person narration for the first time in Brookner's work, and again the protagonist's identity is placed at the foreground. In the second paragraph of the novel, the protagonist proclaims, 'My name is Frances Hinton and I do not like to be called Fanny.' (5) Much like the opening line of *Providence* this is not just identity itself being foregrounded but a conflict of identity. She has both a name and an un-name, two sides to the same coin of individuality as well as an acknowledgement that she is not always perceived as she wishes to be or feels herself (or, indeed, her self) to be.

Alongside the procedure of the plot of the novel is a treatise on the desire to write, specifically that the desire to write arises from a place of dissatisfaction with one's own life. When the reader takes the title, text, and literary persona together, the 'cry for help' (one cannot help but borrow from the language of addiction again) that is encoded within the novel is unmistakeable. Brookner herself would later claim to have been made uncomfortable by this. Reflecting on its publication, Brookner said it was the only novel that she regretted having written, and that a friend of her mother's had taken her aside at the time and told her, 'You are getting yourself a bad reputation as a lonely woman,' and that Brookner should 'stop it at once.' (Haffenden 59) This anecdote should lay bare the extent to which Brookner's literary persona was interpreted as self-reflexive by her readers.

2.7 A Public View into the Archetypical Brookner Novel

By the time her 1994 novel *A Private View* was published, Brookner had published a novel every single year, a remarkable feat for any author to sustain over the course of a decade. It was these which would give cause to Naipaul to make his comments to Wood, also in 1994. However, Brookner's response to any charge that she repeats forms, motifs, or characters would seem to have been only to double down on the accusation and to produce a work that even more comprehensively intertextualizes the novels that came before, in ways more readily identifiable than any prior. By looking at a novel from ten years beyond her Booker Prize-winning novel, this section demonstrates that the pattern of self-referential intertextuality Brookner established with her early work continued long into her career.

As in *A Start in Life*, it is declared that George Bland – the protagonist of *A Private View* – has had his mindset negatively affected by the literature of his youth. A friend says to him, 'You're a romantic. An adolescent. Grown men don't want to suffer. It all comes from reading, you know. If we didn't have the books to go on, we shouldn't put up half such a show. At least you wouldn't.' (A Private View 203) This directly mirrors the opening lines from *A Start in Life* in which Ruth Weiss has been 'ruined by literature.' Indeed, early in the novel, before Bland has had to confront the predicament of his ennui head on in the form of the young Katy Gibb who moves into the flat across from him, it is said that 'he went to libraries and museums as others might go to church.' (23) This gives the impression that he holds such a strong fidelity to the myths and histories that he encounters there that they have the capacity to make him or to break him, in some kind of Manichaean grip of the heaven or hell dichotomy.[35]

[35] In the course of the narrative, George mentions his reading of François Mauriac at several intervals. It seems likely that he has been reading Mauriac's *Thérèse Desqueyroux*, a novel about a

Even through an examination of the character names, there are some repetitions to be found. For instance, George's surname, Bland, announces much of the character's struggle – that he has been too dull and cautious in life – in way that is similar to the struggles that both Kitty in *Providence* and Frances in *Look at Me* exhibit in their wishes to rebel against the identities that they associate with their own names. It could be said that Kitty and Frances are perhaps more conscious of the implications of their nomenclature than George is: Kitty is aware of how she becomes a different person when she is with her family who call her by a different name and Frances directly states that she rejects the nickname that a friend has given her. And yet, it is very much evident to the reader that Brookner has given her (outwardly) bland character the name 'Bland,' which – as will be seen in discussions of Brookner's fourth novel *Hotel du Lac* in the next chapter – directly plays on some of the media criticism that Brookner's work was too dull to have been rightly awarded the Booker Prize.

Similarly, the conflict that George faces in *A Private View* mirrors the conflict that is at the centre of *Hotel du Lac*: namely in its way of questioning the value of entering into a loveless relationship with someone who could possibly add excitement and (paradoxically) spiritual stability to your life. George is a single man at retirement who is shocked by the death of his best friend and he considers the possibility of wilfully entangling himself with a young woman who does not love him in order to give his life a sense of purpose and passion. It could even be said that *A Private View* presents an alternate history to *Hotel du Lac*, a book discussed in-depth in the next chapter: one in which the narrative is replayed from the perspective of the male

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woman experiencing a profound ennui who, in a manner similar to George, wishes to 'to start her education over again "from the beginning"'. (107) A connection can also be drawn to Brookner's body of work on the whole. It is said of the protagonist, 'There was nothing she detested more in novels that the delineation of extraordinary people who had no resemblance to anyone whom one met in normal life.' (53) Brookner's oeuvre, steeped in the lives of ordinary people, would surely pass muster in this respect.

romantic interest who is given the sympathetic treatment in *A Private View* that is denied to the same figure in *Hotel du Lac*. Indeed, in *Hotel du Lac* the protagonist is propositioned by a man who does not love her. This is considered, but in the end refused as the offer of money and freedom to pursue her own desires if married appears calculated and cynical; in *A Private View* the narrative follows a similar pattern as George fantasises extensively about extending much the same offer to a woman he does not love which he deems would be pragmatic and mutually beneficial. The two taken together, the reader is made to see the desperation on both sides: neither can make a success of a proposal that is ultimately impossible to realise, but nor can either help but be tempted.

A Private View is also significantly more literal in its treatment of themes that Brookner had previously explored in her novels. At several points in the narrative, George ruminates very directly about the values of selfishness and the freedom he supposes it would be able to provide one: themes which may have been dealt with more obliquely in Brookner's previous novels, but spoken of very candidly about them by the author in her interviews. In a similar manner to Brookner's other 'heroines', George also carries with him the same senses of inevitability and predestination about his 'years of obedience,' as he calls them, which he believes stunted his growth before he was ever able to achieve a bold adulthood. (199) Like many protagonists in Brookner novels before him, George grew up with odd, distant parents whose behaviour dictated that he become the adult in the room, even as a child, and whom he had to care for in young adulthood. In the same memory of a conversation with his friend that George gives significant weight to in the narrative, his friend says to him, 'You are what your destiny made you. We all are,' to which George replies, 'I keep feeling I've done something wrong, as if I'd been locked out of something by my own fault,' with his friend crushingly retorting, 'You probably have.' (202) Such a dialogue

mirrors Brookner's responses in her interview in *The Paris Review*'s series 'The Art of Fiction' wherein she states, 'I now feel that all good fortune is a gift of the gods, and that you don't win the favour of the ancient gods by being good, but by being bold.' (Brookner and Guppy)

A Private View can also be said to have embedded within it something of the ghost of the future for Brookner's corpus. At one point, the narration states, 'There was no cruelty in this fantasy, or perhaps just a little: there would be no physical damage, no undue influence.' (164) In fact, *Undue Influence* becomes the title of Brookner's nineteenth novel, not published until five years later. Further, that novel itself has several similarities to *A Private View*, thematically, of course, but also – despite featuring a protagonist who is female and several decades younger than George – a narrator equally prone to obsession about a potential partner and someone who every so often sneaks abroad for discreet, if ultimately unsatisfying, sexual encounters.

The description of this novel should make clear the extent to which Brookner was creating intertextualities among her works, and how far into her oeuvre it reached. Farther still, her last work of fiction, the novella *At the Hairdressers* contains similar overtures, presenting a 'passive' elderly woman looking back on her life, details of which include: like Ruth, being rid of a 'frail, unstable family;' like Kitty, taking comfort in 'the old books with a moral and resolution;' like Frances, working as a librarian at a college; as well as conducts an explicit intertextualization with Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus*. (Brookner ch. 1 and 2) However, there were other materials released alongside Brookner's narratives that would also draw the connections between author, text, and intertexts closer still: the paratexts.

2.8 'BOOKER PRIZE WINNING AUTHOR'

There is another manner through which the Brookner persona is conveyed by her novels, but which resides outside of her narrative texts: the promotional content and designs of her books themselves, what Genette described as paratextual material essential to the interpretation of any text.

Though e-reading may be commonplace now, and the posthumous release of Brookner's novels has included e-books, it was not a factor throughout the vast majority of her career. And though her final publication was, surprisingly, released only as an e-book – likely due to its diminished size at only eleven thousand words – that e-book's very existence actually discourages the inclusion of e-books from this discussion, as it received only a standardised and unilluminating design treatment afforded to most 'Penguin Specials' releases. It cannot therefore be said to contribute to any unique understanding of Brookner's persona. Thus, all discussion of 'books' refer to the physical objects throughout.

In her article 'On Telling/Selling a Book by Its Cover,' anthropologist Corrine A. Kratz discusses the manifold ways in which a book cover can be conceived, used, and interpreted. In particular, Kratz highlights the many roles that a cover can play in relation to the work it contains: it can act as an allegorical analogue to the work; it can categorise the work into genre or status; and it can give the work an identity which is used to entice the prospective reader. (180-188)

As might be expected from an author's first book – published during the singular time in their career that exists before significant investments have been made in their identity or brand as an author, and thus when a publisher would find it safer and easier to remain close to the text rather than opt for something more interpretive,

requiring a level of deduction or tolerance for abstraction by the potential reader – the cover of Brookner's *A Start in Life*, published by Jonathan Cape, serves as a largely literal representation of the novel. (See Appendix 1) Drawn in the foreground is a depiction of the protagonist in the time during which the main narrative takes place as a young woman, sporting the haircut and clothes of this very particular period in her life when she has gone to France, and in the background are depictions of the protagonist's parents, also essential characters to the narrative arc of the story. This design follows onto the spine and back cover as well, featuring details prominent in the novel, such as cigarettes, medicine, and her parents' bed, heightening the sense of literalness in the pictorial representation.

However, there is still something about the design that feels atemporal. Though from the text it can be inferred that the protagonist in the telling of her own narrative refers mainly to a period set in the 1960s from a distance of twenty or so years, the parents appear on the cover as more youthful versions of themselves than the ones that would be contemporaneous to the cover's depiction which suggests the protagonist is in her twenties or thirties, by which point in the text they are quite frail. They also appear to be dressed from an earlier era, dragging the feel of the cover even further back in time, to the preceding art deco style. This creates the impression from the very start that the novel resides within an unsettled chronotope, or, as Mayer has argued of Brookner's narratives in her analysis of interviews with Brookner, multiple chronotopes. (Mayer)

The chronotope, a term first developed by the theorist M.M. Bakhtin, is a foundation of the novel which 'provides the ground essential for the showing forth, the representability of events… It serves as the primary point from which "scenes" in the novel unfold… functioning as the primary means for materializing time in space,

emerg[ing] as a centre for concretizing representation, as a force giving body to the entire novel.' (Bakhtin 205) In other words, it is the guiding, dominant situational grounding that gives the reader an understanding of where and when the narrative is taking place. As an extension of Bakhtin, however, I propose here that through the use of images and design, the cover of a book, or other paratextual material, similarly can be said to engage with chronotope.

This use of an unsettled chronotope, or indeed multiple chronotopes, is in keeping with many of Brookner's subsequent publications. The first edition of *Providence*, Brookner's second novel, for instance, tracks a very similar design to *A Start in Life*, portraying, again, a woman who can also be said to represent the protagonist, also in a slightly atemporal feel. And it is necessary to point out that Brookner's *Hotel du Lac*, which takes its cover from a commissioned painting by contemporary artist Susan Moxley, does not seem to give the impression of unsettled chronotope (though that is a unique case, to be discussed at length in the next chapter of the thesis.)[36]

However, it is from this here on that the covers of Brookner's novels on the whole could be said to dispense with the present pretty much entirely; the next nine novels published by Jonathan Cape each use discordantly non-contemporaneous works of art as their covers, despite the novels' ostensibly contemporaneous settings. Brookner's paperback re-publications by Grafton in the UK in this period follow suit, with separate but still distinctly non-contemporaneous artworks as well. In fact, these paperbacks go even further to play with the chronotope of Brookner's works. *A Start in*

[36]The cover art to *Look at Me*, Brookner's third novel does not resist a settled chronotope, following a minimalist trend more associable with the 1980s, with the author name and title written in large, stylised fonts, without any other figures, but it should be looked at as an exception that proves the rule, given how drastically different it is from every future publication.

Life, *Providence*, *Look at Me*, *Family and Friends*, *A Misalliance*, and *A Friend from England*, published by Grafton, each show a close-up detail of a woman from an artwork that that is thoroughly anachronistic to the novel, creating an atemporal avatar for Brookner's female protagonists. The exceptions are, as previously mentioned, *Hotel du Lac* which uses the same Moxley painting that the hardcover did and *Latecomers*, which does not feature a female protagonist, though its cover is similarly anachronistic, employing a detail from *Basket of Flowers* by eighteenth-century painter Jan van Huysum. The novels that follow from that point until Brookner's death may not all be as explicitly anachronistic as, for instance, Jonathan Cape's publication of *A Friend from England* which features a painting from Giorgione that dates to the 16th century, but not one of them emphasises modernity at all. With its unfailing cohesion and pervasiveness, this must be understood as a concerted marketing strategy for Brookner's work by the publisher, regardless of a current lack documentary of evidence to prove so conclusively.[37]

Like the previous discussion on her textual persona, there is a significant level of self-reflexivity at play here as well. For, in addition to heightening the sense of an unsettled chronotope, this use of artwork must call back to Brookner's other career as an art historian. This facet of her life is not left for the potential reader to intuit either, or to need to approach with prior knowledge. Indeed, this information is very much privileged in the author biographical statements to the books mentioned above – indeed, it is even privileged over details about where she is from or any mention of her other novels. For instance, the author's biographical statement accompanying the

[37] Records to support this may exist in the Archives of Random House publishers at the University of Reading. Due to a cataloguing error on my visit I was only able to access the files relating to her first novel and therefore cannot prove the deployment of an explicit strategy.

paperback edition to *Providence*, which features a detail from 1933 painting *Kiki de Montparnasse* by Moise Kisling, reads:

> Anita Brookner, who is an international authority on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century painting, teaches at the Courtauld Institute of Art. In 1968 she was Slade Professor at Cambridge, the first woman ever to hold this position. She is the author of *Watteau, The Genius of the Future*; *Greuze*, and *Jacques-Louis David*. She has written four novels: *A Start in Life*, *Providence*, *Look at Me*, and *Hotel du Lac*, which won the Booker Prize in 1984. (Brookner 1985)

This organisation of information about Brookner, which gives more space to the career of Brookner's that the prospective reader is *not* considering participating in, rather than the one that the reader actively *is*, combined with the choice of works of art for covers, as discussed above, supports Brookner's literary persona through paratextual material that emphasises Brookner's role in academia as a historian of art. In a similar fashion to her literary persona, which often invokes details that are within the potential realm of autobiography, this is highly self-reflexive, but that is not to say that it sits entirely at ease with her other personae.

In a 1991 interview with Nigel Forde for BBC Radio 4's Bookshelf programme to promote her new novel *Brief Lives*, Brookner was asked about the relationship between her two careers and replied rather testily, as can be seen from the following excerpt:

> FORDE: Does your study of art reflect at all on the way that you write?
>
> BROOKNER: No, I don't think there's any overlap at all.
>
> FORDE: But you have been described as a painterly novelist, haven't you…

sharp intake of breath by BROOKNER

FORDE: *Hotel du Lac*, for instance was… was it called pointillist by somebody?

BROOKNER: Well that's inaccurate anyway.

BROOKNER laughs

BROOKNER: Um. No. I don't think I'm a particularly painterly novelist, no. I think most of my landscapes are interior landscapes, anyway.

(Forde)

Six years prior, Brookner gave a similar answer to Haffenden.

Do you see any connection between your work as an art historian and the act of writing novels? Is there any natural engagement between one and the other?

The awful thing is that I see no connection at all. It's a sort of schizophrenic activity as far as I'm concerned. The only connection is that I do it in the same place, in my office.

(Haffenden 64-65)

There is an inherent tension here: Brookner claims to see no connection between her career as an art historian and as a novelist, and yet a trenchant connection is very much at the forefront of the marketing strategy of her novels. This serves to have two distinct impressions on the reader. The first and most forceful impression is that there *must* be some connection between the careers (Brookner's protestations in a couple of publications are unlikely to make as much of an impression as the books themselves) and the second, more ancillary impression to be drawn, at least to those privy to her remarks and thus other aspects of her persona, is that Brookner evidences a degree of unreasonableness or wilfulness in her denial of a connection that most would assume must exist in some way. The covers, then, function to comment upon both Brookner's texts and her own persona. It cannot be said that these effects arise

only from the marketing strategy either. Brookner's novels do in fact draw on her knowledge of art history, drawing further doubt from the reader about her insistence on a separation between her careers. There are many instances of reference to works of art, whether through narratorial description or the physical presence of them in front of a character, and many of the novels use specific works or exhibits as motifs. *A Misalliance* in particular deploys works at the National Gallery in London as a recurring allegorical representation of human nature that her protagonist Blanche dwells upon throughout the novel:

> And in order to remind herself that these things still existed…she had begun her visits to the National Gallery, to be met there only with the austere visions of saints, the dolorous lives of virgins and martyrs, and, most singularly, the knowing and impervious smiles of the nymphs, who, she began to see, had more of an equivalence in ordinary life, as it is lived by certain women, than she had ever expected. (89)

But even within such a novel, this aspect is not so integral to the work that it could not be marketed in any other way. Yet, the first edition of *A Misalliance* offers one of the starkest uses of non-chronotypical art imagery in her works which serves only to bring further attention to Brookner's art history background, so incongruent would the reader find the image to any other events that take place in the novel.

This marketing strategy also fulfils the other two functions of book covers: that they can categorise the work and can give the work an identity. It first categorises the novels as existing on an erudite plain; the covers make quite clear that it is literary fiction which is contained within. In terms of identity, because the novels are given such a distinct visual style, it can further be said that the identity is 'Brand Brookner™' above all else, though there are certainly elements of romance, and perhaps old-

fashionedness, or even that grappling with chronotope, if the prospective reader is able to parse the divergence between the period represented on the cover and the period described within while browsing the bookshelf.

There is a further marker of identity located on the first editions of Brookner's books published after 1984 and one that can be found on many future editions of her works, including every paperback edition published by Grafton: a blurb strapline declaring Brookner as a winner of the Booker Prize. As Elizabeth Webby makes clear in her chapter 'Book Marketing and the Booker Prize' for the book *Judging a Book by Its Cover: Fans, Publishers, Designers, and the Marketing Fiction*, an author receiving the Booker Prize is a veritable boon for a publisher and can have a staggering effect on book sales. This no doubt results in the reassurance to the reader that even if they are not reading the actual book that won the Booker Prize, they can take comfort in knowing that they will at least be reading a Booker Prize-winning *author*. Indeed, the Grafton editions do no more than declare, in bright red strap along the corners of the book, 'BOOKER PRIZE-WINNING AUTHOR,' as if that alone could act as a kind of seal of goodness; the literary equivalent of, 'AS SEEN ON TV!' And on the prize-winning novel itself, a large white circle with red writing overlays the cover as if the circle is some kind of stamp or removable sticker of authenticity: 'WINNER OF THE BOOKER PRIZE.' One is not necessarily expected to know when or why or by whom; the word Booker is thought to convey enough to the prospective reader, or at least the publisher hopes so.[38]

[38] This marketing practice continues to play out across genres and can reach even greater levels of ambiguity with smaller publishers. London Wall Publishing's romance author Hannah Fielding (not to be confused with Helen Fielding, author of *Bridget Jones's Diary*) emblazons each of her books with simply, 'Award-Winning Author of…' without giving any specification to the actual award her book in fact won. And, indeed, the awards which have been won are invariably those which are industry-driven and -derived with the express purposes of increasing visibility for independent publishers. This is a perhaps less sophisticated operation than the Booker Prize, but it makes quite clear the

A final marker of identity is the sense of bleakness that the designs of the books convey. It is not only the anachronicity of the artworks alone that binds them together but also their depictions of ambivalence and desolation. In the Grafton paperback editions, the details of the women depicted are unsmiling and pensive. The hardback Jonathan Cape editions following *Hotel du Lac* are not much different, though they do not make the same attempt at the creation of an avatar, instead choosing to employ muted scenes and colours. The first edition of Brookner's 1991 *A Closed Eye* is a prime example of this. The cover features a detail from John William Inchbold's *Above Montreux* and has a definitively sorrowful tone. This effect comes not only from the painting itself but also from the manner in which it has been detailed: it has been cut to focus on a simple farmhouse on arid land looking out upon a still, grey body of water, with only a hint of sun peeking out from behind a mountain in the background. However, when viewed in its fullest proportion, the original work is far more expansive, showing a much greener foreground, complete with a neighbouring house, boats on the water, and a much greater contrast of light, with a significant amount of sun visible. Emphasising the farmhouse and taking away these other attributes makes the detail chosen much bleaker than it would have otherwise been, even with the same painting selected. Other elements of the design play up to this feeling as well. Brookner's name in black partially obscures the small amount of sun that is actually visible in the painting, and the title in white across the water with letters widespread from one another enhances the feeling of stillness, of absence, and exposure. The back cover is a dull lilac that displays four brief blurbs written in very small font. The lilac

perceived commercial value of awards for publishers in the literary marketplace. Further to this, the bottom of Fielding's website actually contains the graphic of a medal for one such industry award, a method which seems to seek to reify the award so as to make it appear physical and in that sense tangible and therefore more 'real' or legitimate. The anxiety of the industry, awarding body, publisher, and/or author is keenly felt here and the form of redress seems to be to double-down on its display of self-worth and declare firmly, 'It *is* an award.'

clashes with the binding of the book itself, which is a different shade of dull lilac, resisting even the comfort of matching shades.

With that exception of *Hotel du Lac*, featuring a colour photograph by Peer Lindgreen which seems totally incongruent to the novel in every way, the posthumous editions of Brookner's books currently published by Penguin present a cohesive set of thematically bleak images. Using Elliott Erwitt's black and white photography, the photos chosen are invariably of distant shots of people facing away from the camera. In this way it is almost as if Brookner's books from the beginning have been marketed as if they are part of a series. Thinking again to Kratz, if a prospective reader were to browse a bookshop's shelves and see *A Closed Eye*, and if that reader was a savvy shopper of books, they could quite naturally discern if the book was to their liking, so well are the novels categorised and given an identity to use to lure consumers. But, of course, a lure by nature will also, always, exclude.

3. Criticisms of 'a semipersonal kind': *Hotel du Lac*, the 1984 Booker Prize, and the Metatext

3.1 Introduction

The third chapter of this thesis carries on the argument from the second chapter that Brookner's oeuvre should be read as employing a variety of intertexts that interplay with her authorship and persona to create a body of work that is deeply intertextual in nature. While the second chapter focussed on how the various forms of this intertextuality affected the readings and interpretations of Brookner's persona in her first three novels – through not only their explicit narrative intertextualities but also their paratextual materials and intertextualities with each other and Brookner's own life – this chapter focusses on how other forms of intertextuality came to affect and alter the critical and public reception that Brookner's novels received in this period and moving forward in her career.

When *Hotel du Lac* wins the Booker Prize, a media event surrounding the novel is inaugurated which comes to serve as a metatext which then alters how Brookner's other novels are received by critics and readers for the rest of her career. This metatext, which first encompasses the novel itself as well as the media event of the Booker Prize ceremony and the aftermath that follows, is then reinforced and modified by the broadcast of the television film adaptation of *Hotel du Lac* for the BBC's 'Screen Two' series in 1986. Finally, at Brookner's death in 2016, the republishing (and significant repackaging) of *Hotel du Lac* again places the novel at the foreground of her corpus, further manipulating the manner in which her entire career is processed by the critical and media classes, as well as the reading public in the way that it still centres the novel as the most important publication that she produced.

By focussing on one book, it is possible to see how much influence one facet of a career can affect the interpretation and analysis of the whole of that career. Indeed, when *Hotel du Lac* expands into a metatext for Brookner's career, it has an unusually outsized place of prominence in the interpretation of Brookner's other novels, even though the vast majority of her oeuvre was published after it. However, that is not to say that this argument should be read as a judgment of how this process is unfolded: rather, it seeks to offer answers as to why that was the case and how that process came to unfold and alter the reception of the novel and Brookner's career. What makes this venture so worth exploring is in fact that *Hotel du Lac* itself was already an engagement with Brookner's previous works, and yet this major – radical, even – characteristic of the work became lost in the shuffle of the Booker Prize theatre. This left subsequent interpretations of the novel highly destabilised without the grounding of their multiple governing architexts of her previous novels, and thus susceptible to readings of the novel that do not extrapolate the text in its fullest context.[39]

To this end, the chapter further advances the argument that Brookner's fourth novel *Hotel du Lac* serves as a reflective intertext for the rest of Brookner's oeuvre by invoking her previous three novels in self-reflexive ways which hold her entire corpus up for renewed scrutiny and reconsideration as a consequence. This is mainly conducted through an ironic play towards her own literary persona (as described in the previous chapter) with the portrayal of a successful published author of romance novels. Furthermore, Brookner engages with the earlier critical responses she had received for this literary persona through the novelist-protagonist's discussions of her

[39] I would suggest that this is analogous to reading the word of a sentence in isolation. It cannot be 'wrong' to read only that word, but it is difficult to interpret any meaning from that word when it has been so stripped from its supporting components.

own novels with her agent who presses her to change them in order to follow emerging literary trends in the genre.

Much of the discussion that follows concerns Brookner's engagement with parody and satire, and there is a natural path that leads towards this realm of pastiche from the previous discussions of Brookner's persona. For Robert C. Elliott in *The Literary Persona*, questions of irony and sincerity, as well as 'truth', naturally arise from an investigation into the persona of an author and from there flow towards satire, a form that inherently makes the two ambiguous, or at least not immediately clear to its readers. Indeed, Elliott writes extensively of this ambiguity and the risk of an author and the author's persona becoming collapsed, concluding, 'It is an occupational hazard for a satirist, the power of whose language may be uncontainable.' (121) Nevertheless, or indeed *due to* this 'uncontainability,' it is worth close inspection; even, it necessitates such close inspection, especially when that collapsing (or the recognition of the risk of that collapsing) can come to bear so impressively upon how a text is interpreted.[40] Brookner as an author seems especially attuned to this occurrence as well. For instance, since her death, critics at the *New York Times* have published alternating perspectives: her obituary in 2016 written by Alan Cowell finds her fiction 'bleak' and yields to the *Telegraph*'s Laura Thompson in her assertion that the Brookner's novels are 'essentially autobiographical;' two years later the *Times*' Rumaan Alam writes of Brookner's 'ironic wit' and is careful to distinguish between the persona and the person. (Cowell) (Thompson) (Alam)

[40] Indeed, when John R. Searle in his article 'The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse' seeks to approach fiction from the theory of speech-acts and writes that all works of fiction are entirely fictional despite whatever significant invocations of realism or even inclusions of real people and places they might contain, he is no doubt correct. (560) However, this line of thinking does not account for how that fiction is then received by the reader, leaving the matter of interpretation untouched. There is a wide chasm between utterance being inalterably fictional and being fully accepted as such.

3.2 A De-stablising Self-Pastiche

There can be little doubt that Brookner was cognisant of the reception of her novels: this was frequently discussed in the interviews which she gave and she herself was a critic of art books for *The Burlington* for many years before her career as a novelist, opening her to first-hand knowledge on the role and impact of the professional critic in the commercial arts industry.[41] [42] Thus, when she portrays a professional writer who engages with her own criticism in the text, it mirrors the paratextual output of her career through media promotional material. Indeed, *Hotel du Lac* so directly engages with Brookner's own previous works and their reception that it must therefore be read as what Genette terms the 'self-pastiche'.

The self-pastiche, writes Genette in *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, is an 'intentional self-imitation' that is 'caricatural and satiristic'. Genette states that while it is not commonly practiced in literature, it has been employed by some titans of Western Literature such as Joyce, Nabokov, and Proust. He further states that self-pastiche is at times used by an author to critique the whole self while at other times it is used by 'isolating a single trait, thus depriving it of its structural function in relation to the total work and thereby reducing it to a mere *procedure*,' which Genette calls

[41] See Brookner's interviews with Shusha Guppy for *The Paris Review* and Mick Brown for *The Telegraph* for evidence of her willingness to discuss and knowledge of her reception.

[42] In *The Burlington*'s obituary for Brookner, Philip Ward-Jackson writes that she 'had cut her journalistic teeth' there and that in her first book review she 'lament[ed]… "the increasing stylelessness of writings on art history."' Ward-Jackson goes onto suggest, 'It was a declaration of intent, and her reports on exhibitions in France, Belgium and London and numerous book reviews and exhibition reviews gave her ample scope to display her powers of description.' (Ward-Jackson) Ergo, Brookner was not above dispensing criticism herself nor using her station as critic to improve artistic discourse.

'*Proustifying*.'[43] (124-128) There are several important points to pick up here which are directly relevant to this application to Brookner's work.

In the first place, while Genette gives examples that are more directly tied to modes of writing in the main text of a work, there is little reason why this conception of the self-pastiche could not equally apply to his wider conception of transtextuality: that is to say, if elements within a text can exhibit the traits of a self-pastiche, so too can an entire text exhibit the traits of a self-pastiche in relation to another text by that same author. And it is this mode of satire that Brookner appears to be engaging in when *Hotel du Lac* conducts a pastiche of her previous works and her own role as an author, as will be demonstrated thoroughly going forward.

In the second place, the list of authors that Genette generates is notable for each writer's firm place within the canon of classic literature, and especially notable for Proust's inclusion as well. First, when Nabokov writes in *Pnin* of an exiled Russian professor of literature in the north-eastern United States, where it was widely known that Nabokov himself was an exiled Russian professor of literature, it is done by an

[43] Genette further states in *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* that the self-pastiche is 'a bit of a phantom notion,' on the basis that it is often confused with an unintentional exaggeration of one's own manner of writing, and that to engage with it so deliberately is both rare and difficult. (124) Of this challenge, he is unconvinced that many writers would be up to it. He writes, '[It is] a very rare practice, as I have said, perhaps because it presupposes an uncommon capacity for self-awareness and for stylistic objectivation. It requires a writer gifted with both a high degree of stylistic individuality and a great aptitude for imitation.' (125) For the first criterion, it is clear from the previous chapter of this thesis that Brookner exhibits a very strong sense of self in her fiction with which she is capable of playing or using to transform. For the second criterion, the abundance of terms like 'Brooknerian' in reviews and criticism make clear there has at least been a kind of general acceptance as to her individuality within the Western Anglophone canon. However, in regard to such, Brookner's canon is discussed in significant depth in the fourth chapter.

It should also be noted that for Genette the term *Proustifying* is a way of differentiating Proust from the representations of himself in his self-pastiche. Were this thesis to maintain complete fidelity to Genette's terminology, a word like *Brooknerising* would be a way of expressing Brookner's satirical strategy in *Hotel du Lac*. However, as I go on argue that Brookner engages in a method of self-pastiche very similar to Proust's, and because *Proustifying* is evocative in its own way, the term has been left intact.

author widely appreciated for his sustained engagements with irony and form in his texts.[44] Without a doubt, this detail leaves critics and readers to assume that Nabokov would not have included a version of himself in such a way without some sort of grander satirical purpose.[45] For Brookner, this would perhaps be less clearly defined to readers, yet no less probable or intentional by her as a result of it being less defined, so similar in fact is this engagement to Nabokov's.

This raises intriguing questions about the role of reputation in the interpretive process. How many sophisticated literary games have authors played with us only to be never recognised for doing so due to the reception of their prior output? But for whatever lack of clarity might surround Brookner's sustained engagement with the self, *Hotel du Lac* is more than capable of supporting the *Proustification* proposition. Indeed, the novel can hardly support any other proposition.

There is without question a highly gendered element to the differing receptions of genre between a fictional work by, say, a Nabokov, that seems to inhabit an autobiographically-tinged universe, and by a female author working towards similar ends, which goes beyond the typical problematic underpinnings of gender on canon formation often found in criticism. Linda Anderson in *Women and Autobiography in the Twentieth Century: Remembered Futures* lays this bare in her chapter on Sylvia Plath's novel *The Bell Jar*, suggesting that 'more than most, Plath's writing exposes how deeply [the issue of autobiography versus fiction] is intertwined with gender.' (103) This is shown not only through the reception of *The Bell Jar* following Plath's death in which

[44] This is further cultivated on the cover of the first edition of the novel, which features a caricatured figure of the protagonist that bears a striking resemblance to Nabokov himself.

[45] Nabokov also openly cultivated this mode of how to interpret his work. In a 1964 interview with *Playboy*, he says, 'Art is never simple ... Because, of course, art at its greatest is fantastically deceitful and complex.' (Nabokov and Toffler)

the novel was widely marketed and received as confessional, but also in Plath's own letters during the process of writing in which she struggles with disentangling, on the one hand, her desire to write a novel in the form of what Anderson terms 'masculine mimicry' with, on the other, the desire to write in the mode of the 'feminised other' of popular bestsellers to which Plath was also drawn. (109)

Plath's uneasiness here is in fact performed by critics of Brookner, and this uneasiness similarly sets the liminal autobiographical/fictional space that her novels inhabit. On the one hand, Brookner is writing novels that demonstrably carry literary heft and respond to or emulate the old (largely masculine) masters of great literature. Critics are quick to point out her careful attention to language, character, and psychological truthfulness. On the other hand, her novels offer a female perspective on suffering and loneliness, hallmarks of the popular confessional and romantic novels of the mid- to late-twentieth century. In her journal, Plath wrote, 'Well-written sex can be noble & gut-shaking. Badly, it is true confession. And no amount of introspection can cure it.' (Plath 157) It is notable here that, in this dichotomy, Plath is assuming the position of that who will receive the writing, rather than that who is actually writing it: she is demonstrating that the power to determine which meaning can be derived from her work is in the hands of the reader. Though Brookner has not (yet) left us any accessibly archived journal entries that might support her personal awareness of how gender might play in the reception of her novels, it is largely immaterial in comparison with the reception itself, which ignores the postmodern elements of her novels that under a masculine authorship may have classified them as work in the similar vein to 'the masters,' as Nabokov's *Pnin* has been.[46] (Craig)

[46] It can also be taken as given that Brookner would have had an awareness of her identity as a woman writer. In *The Politics of Postmodernism* Linda Hutcheson writes, 'Few would disagree today that feminisms have transformed art practice: through new forms, new self-consciousness about

As for Genette's invocation of Proust, Brookner's devotion to his works is well documented.[47] Therefore, the self-pastiche as a literary form, as well as that method of *Proustifying* that Genette describes, would have been familiar to her though possibly not in Genette's words. As a reminder of the term, *Proustifying* is method which allows an author to incorporate a sense of the self into a text in a manner that can be detached from the rest of the self (through irony) or does not require that the whole self or text becomes a self-pastiche at novel-length that cannot be disentangled from an intended true representational account of the author's experience.

Indeed, it is this sense of *Proustifying* the self that is most helpful when approaching Brookner's *Hotel du Lac*, which is not simply a work of satire of the self but a work which incorporates a satire of the self, or as Genette says, by 'isolating' a few of Brookner's own traits in 'a reduction perfectly in keeping with classical caricature'. (127) Other critics of Brookner have touched on this aspect in her work, albeit very lightly. John Skinner in *The Fictions of Anita Brookner: Illusions of Romance* writes that the novel 'above all exemplifies the ambivalent relationship between "parody" and "target text,"' without going into further detail, while Inger Björkblom writes that at times, 'the Brookner novel almost becomes a parody of itself or a parody of "the novel,"' again without going into further detail or example. (Skinner 67) (Björkblom 30) Lynn Veach Sadler comes closest to making a specific point about Brookner's self-pastiche in

representation, and new awareness of both contexts and particularities of gendered experience. They have certainly made women artists more aware of themselves as women and as artists; they are even changing men's sense of themselves as gendered artists.' (139)

[47] See her review of a companion work to Proust for *The Spectator*, 'A Grand Overview.' Brookner also mentions Proust as a favourite author of hers whom she read regularly in several interviews. To wit, after her death, Julian Barnes wrote in *The Guardian* of 'Anita telling me that she had just completed a further novel, and with that off her desk she was now free to do whatever she wanted. "Well, in your case," I said, with joke-jocularity, "That probably means rereading Proust." There was a slightly alarmed silence: "How did you guess?"' (Barnes)

her book on Brookner for the 'Twayne's English Author Series' when she writes, '[Brookner] seems almost to parody – lightly – the first three novels,' giving one small example from the text in a footnote without an accompanying analysis of this point. (55) In fact, far from 'lightly,' Brookner deeply parodies her own existent body of work and persona, and this parody appears in many forms: not only in the main text but the paratextual materials appended to the main text in the book object as well. A thorough examination of these paratextual materials follows in order to demonstrate the totality of Brookner's parody that can be found in her work as well as to provide an example of the application of Genette's theory of the transtextual nature of any work.

3.3 Dedicating, Titling, and Covering *Hotel du Lac*

Innocuous though it may seem at first glance, one of the first things to notice about Brookner's *Hotel du Lac* is its dedication page, the significance of which in her oeuvre cannot be overstated. Indeed, it is the first work of Brookner's to feature a dedication at all, as well as the last. On the one hand, it is unremarkable that Brookner should not frequently dedicate her works. Many of the authors from the French realist tradition were similar, with Stendhal and Flaubert (two of her influences) also offering few dedications. There is a fidelity to realism in this as well, as including as little material as possible which diverts the attention of the reader away from the book's narrative could be seen as integral to maintaining the immersive worlds which her novels inhabit. On the other hand, the general lack of dedications in her works can also be said to contribute to the sense of serialisation mentioned in the previous chapter, as discrete dedications would heighten the sense of the reader experiencing discrete texts. But it is also generally remarkable for an Anglophone author in the contemporary era to have so few. As Genette points out, the dedication has a long history and continues to

operate in a privileged position at the front of the object. As such, for Brookner to have forgone the practice throughout her novels stands out as a paratextual material that is unique to her body of work and as such made all the more significant and worthier of investigation due to that uniqueness.

Hotel du Lac's dedication reads simply, 'For Rosamond Lehmann.' Lehmann is, of course, the novelist who, while stylistically innovative, sat on the periphery of the Bloomsbury set and despite finding some success in the 1930s was largely forgotten for decades thereafter.[48] Within these three short words, however, are a number of points that can be unpacked and which gesture towards the book's deeply intertextual and satirical nature. The first and most seemingly obvious point to pick up on is from whose voice might it be that this phrase is actually originating. As Genette notes in *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, the answer is not nearly so simple as it may seem. While of course many dedications in a work can and should be simply read as the author honouring a person of significance in their life or wishing to express gratitude to someone who helped them in the completion of it, it is equally possible that the 'narrator-hero' is in fact 'shouldering responsibility for the dedication.' (130) This point is made all the more relevant in the case of *Hotel du Lac* due to its portrayal of a published author and its close third-person point of view. While neither of these traits necessarily direct the dedication to have come from the protagonist, neither do they rule it out. On the contrary, it seems rather possible that the dedication comes from the protagonist, Edith Hope, given her interests and disposition in the novel.[49] To take the

[48] For an overview of Lehmann's career and ambivalent position in the canon, see Andrea Lewis's 1997 article 'Revisiting the novels of Rosamond Lehmann' for *English Academy Review*.

[49] Modernist figures bear heavily on the psyche of the protagonist in *Hotel du Lac*. She hopes herself to look like Virginia Woolf, even taking Woolf's initials for her penname, and she references T.S. Eliot's 'The Journey of the Magi' in her first letter to her lover back home. It is not a stretch, therefore, to suggest that she would have knowledge of Lehmann as much as Brookner herself did.

point further, accepting this premise would certainly enhance the sense of that circularity of Brookner's novels described in the previous chapter in an innovative way that would follow its own internal logic to the natural conclusion: the book that the reader holds in hand is the book that the protagonist has written after the events have passed. This distances Brookner from her own text and thrusts the responsibility to her character for the creation of what many perceived as such a seemingly autobiographical work.

Another point to make from these three simple words, is that they are utilised in dedication to a public figure. As opposed to many dedications in contemporary literature which refer only to single first names or to people who are not within the wider societal consciousness, this dedication places the reader firmly in the role of active participant in the distillation of its content. Further, by placing such a gesture towards the reader at the beginning of the book, it is not something that can be skipped over easily for anyone who is familiar with Lehmann and her works. In fact, it should be read as a cultivated effect, as the dedication could have just as easily been a gesture towards Lehmann with just the mention of 'Rosamond' or 'RM,' methods often seen in works by other authors. Instead Brookner gives her the full name treatment, simultaneously giving the reader something to latch onto as they carry that knowledge with them when the page is turned to the main text. All of which is to say that the significance of the figure chosen to prefix in the text cannot be underestimated, as it would have been just as practicable (as well as commonplace) for Brookner to dedicate her book to Lehmann in a way that remained personal and did not invite the reader into an awareness of the gesture that is taking place before them.

There is also the use of the word 'for,' which is significant. 'For' suggests that the novel has been written with her in mind: either as a response to Lehmann or as a

result of her. This is as opposed to the other common preposition used in dedications, 'to,' which, had Brookner used this word instead, would have conveyed a one-directional motion from Brookner that does not take Lehmann's antecedence as an author into account. Without question it is this 'for' which assigns the greater responsibility to Lehmann. It is not just a gift that has been extended without reciprocity but an expression of a relationship that Lehmann herself has participated in as well, exemplifying Genette's theory of the architext and its inherent interpretive bearing on the derivative text. With this dedication, Brookner is directly engaging with the author of her novel's architextual texts, signalling to her readers a source of material that can signpost a way for the novel to be read: as a work of deep and explicit intertextuality that is about authors, about women, and about romance.[50]

Because, of course, what remains to be discussed is the actual figure with whom this intertextuality is proffered by Brookner. The dedication on its own could be said to mark the intertextual nature of the text to follow just by virtue of its invocation of another author. But there are other similarities that draw this connection which has been given such prominence in the book closer together even still. Lehmann, like Brookner – and like the protagonist of *Hotel du Lac* – is a female author who writes fiction of a semi-autobiographical nature. Lehmann similarly wrote psychological novels of domestic and romantic circumstances with an emphasis on individual subjectivity, qualities which may have led critics to overlook the stylistic innovations her works contributed to the traditions of realism and modernism. Nevertheless, like

[50] There is also evidence that Lehmann herself was a believer in this relationship between her own body of work and this novel in which she acted as architect as described. According to Selina Hasting's biography *Rosamond Lehmann: A Life* (2002), after *Hotel du Lac* was published, Lehmann 'always thereafter referred to [it] with pride as "*my* novel."' (397) One might read this as simply a witty remark of gratitude, and yet, the vigorousness of repetition ('always') and tone (*my*) rather convey a righteous sense of ownership and hierarchy.

Brookner, Lehmann's novels resist easy classification and attracted division in their lifetimes after auspicious beginnings. It is in this liminal, metaphysical relationships across time and space that three authors – two 'real,' one fictional – and in their shared uncertain receptions inhabit that the satirical nature of the text is revealed from the start.

Indeed, by invoking Lehmann the public author here, Brookner inevitably invokes alongside her the ambivalent reception that Lehmann received over her career, and thereby, through the intertextual relationship, brings focus on the relationships between Brookner's novels, their characters, and their creator.[51] By drawing comparisons between her persona and Lehmann's, Brookner inextricably broaches the nature of her own perceived sense of reception and compounds it with the concerns of her protagonist in *Hotel du Lac*. This amply sets up the backbone of a pastiche that is pitched directly towards the critical class that has read and reviewed her first three novels. It states rather unambiguously, 'I am aware that you have been talking about my novels and the novel that you now hold in your hands is my response.'[52] [53]

[51] As Wendy Pollard makes clear in *Rosamond Lehmann and Her Critics: Vagaries of Literary Reception*, though Lehmann was well-received in her early career, and many works of hers are in print to this day, a long period elapsed before the 1980s when it was needed for her to be 'rediscovered'.

[52] Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that Brookner claimed to see little resemblance between her work and Lehmann's. Pollard writes, 'Brookner herself, however, would repudiate direct literary lineage from Lehmann; in answer to my enquiry about her perception of the effect of Lehmann's writing on her own work, she replied by letter: "I doubt if she influenced me. I loved her as a friend rather than as a novelist. It would have been fatal to follow in her footsteps, and I hope that I have not."' (164) Nevertheless, an author is but another reader of their own work and comparisons between Brookner and Lehmann have been drawn repeatedly by critics and readers alike. Hermione Lee, in a review of a biography of Lehmann's for *The Observer*, writes of Lehmann's novels, 'Doomed Chick Lit, this might be called, and it's a passé genre, alas - only Anita Brookner, a friend of Lehmann's, still does it.' (Lee)

[53] Further to this, Judy Simons in her monograph *Rosamond Lehmann* has asserted that Lehmann, '[found] a method of fictional expression that could adequately convey her sense of dislocation from the mainstream of traditional culture.' (36) Brookner adopts this dislocation in her dedication and dislocates herself from the literary culture into which her novel is published.

Before going into the full analysis of the main text, it is worth considering again the uncertain provenance of the dedication which Genette implies is inherent to all dedications. This is because there are other paratextual elements to the novel that are noteworthy for their distinctive qualities in Brookner's body of work and because these also offer a discernible connection to the main text in ways beyond what the typical, distant relationship that has very often been expected to exist between a text and its paratexts. To wit, the other paratextual materials that also suggest a closer relationship are the cover of the book and the title of it, as these are also features unique to Brookner's body of work that throw further questions upon the textual nature of the novel and are therefore worth all the closer inspection as a result.

The cover is unusual for a couple of different reasons. In the first place, it is the only cover that remained a constant throughout Brookner's lifetime, maintaining its positioning in the UK from hardback to paperback as well as across multiple printings, editions, and publishers. It was also commissioned specifically for the novel, standing it apart from all of her other novels. To this end, most notably, the cover of *Hotel du Lac* has a chronotope that aligns it with both the date of publication and the setting of the text. Indeed, the painting by Susan Moxley appears to take inspiration directly from the narrative: a contemporary watercolour of a writing table on a balcony with a palm tree in the foreground and expanse of grey and blue beyond. This could easily be a representation of a view from the hotel room that the protagonist resides in during her stay at the Hotel du Lac, which is said to look out onto such a scene where the lake is grey and blue and where palm trees grow along the shore.

The title too is distinct from the rest of Brookner's oeuvre. The titles of her prior three novels are each an abstracted psychological motif that call upon the trajectories of her protagonists: *A Start in Life* (US: *The Debut*), *Providence*, and *Look at Me* all

directly correlating with their main character's motivations and states of mind. *Hotel du Lac* rather asserts merely the setting of the novel, placing the significance of the novel to the events that take place in its present setting over the ruminative events of the character's past in London, a motivation that the protagonist in *Hotel du Lac* herself would be more likely to declare for her story rather than Brookner would. This further evidence of closeness that exists between the main text and its paratexts (dedication as well as cover and title) serve to distance Brookner the author from the novel, instead privileging her protagonist's point of view, initiating the room needed to establish that ironic distance between herself and the main text, that same ambiguous, potentially hazardous distance which Elliott writes is inherent to satire. The tying of the paratextual materials to the main text in this way increases Brookner's scope to comment upon her own body of work in the novel by departing from the manner that her previous three novels have been presented and knowingly engaging with them in the main text.

This distance that Brookner employs is clear from the very outset of the narrative. The novel opens:

> From the window all that could be seen was a receding area of grey. It was supposed that beyond the grey garden, which seemed to sprout nothing but the stiffish leaves of some unfamiliar plant, lay the vast grey lake, spreading like an anaesthetic towards the invisible further shore, and beyond that, in imagination only, yet verified by the brochure, the peak of the Dent d'Oche, on which snow might already be slightly and silently falling. For it was late September, out of season; the tourists had gone, the rates were reduced, and there were few inducements for visitors in this small town at the water's edge, whose inhabitants, uncommunicative to begin with, were frequently rendered taciturn

> by the dense cloud that descended for days at a time and then vanished without warning to reveal a new landscape, full of colour and incident: boats skimming on the lake, passengers at the landing stage, an open air market, the outline of the gaunt remains of a thirteenth-century castle, seams of white on the far mountains, and on the cheerful uplands to the south a rising backdrop of apple trees, the fruit sparkling with emblematic significance. For this was a land of prudently harvested plenty, a land which had conquered human accidents, leaving only the weather distressingly beyond control. (Hotel du Lac 7-8)

Brookner initiates here a framing device for the novel that is established from the very first phrase, 'From the window…' By foregrounding both a distance and a separation, the narrator is herself distanced from the events that follow, becoming an audience for a play happening on a stage, identifying closer to the reader than the characters. And the view through this window is a 'receding area of grey'. This suggests to the reader that a new form of storytelling is taking place in the novel that is moving away from its predecessors; the area of grey standing in for the mode in which her novels had often been received.[54] Indeed, the garden which is described in the next sentence 'seemed to sprout nothing but the stiffish leaves of some unfamiliar plant:' there is new, wild growth here which has not been previously seen in her work. Further, the lake is 'spreading like an anaesthetic' which is needed after the pain that has been caused by her works. The phrase 'yet verified by the brochure,' describing the peak of the mountain which cannot be seen clearly through the present fog, adopts an ironic tone that is returned to throughout the novel but also signifies the struggle between

[54] To take but a few brief examples, all taken from blurbs on the back of the Grafton paperback edition of *Look at Me*, the novel immediately preceding *Hotel du Lac*, '[this novel] moved and scared me,' - *The Standard*; '[a] disenchanted novel,' - *The Observer*; and '[the novel] chills to the bone,' - *The Times*. Mary Cantwell for *The New York Times* went so far as declare it, 'a horror story about monsters and their victims.' (Cantwell)

idealisation and reality that has been present in the Brookner corpus. Indeed, though the character is in a luxurious place, it is still 'out of season' with few tourists, another ironic nod to the shifting tone that this novel represents. And when Brookner goes on to describe the town's inhabitants – who are 'uncommunicative to begin with' and 'frequently rendered taciturn by the dense cloud that descended for days at a time' – one cannot help but be minded of the very scant approach to dialogue Brookner took in *A Start in Life*, *Providence*, and *Look at Me*. This, too, marks a departure in *Hotel du Lac*, which has considerably more regular examples of direct speech than its predecessors. Further, the 'dense cloud that descended for days at a time' mirrors Brookner's protagonist's instances of dolour that often incapacitate them before they recover after a brief period of inactivity and rumination. Brookner's send up of her own novels is made most clear in the final part of this paragraph when she describes all of the activities that could be happening in the scene but are not, such as boats on the lake, pleasant weather providing for the milling of crowds, a castle, 'cheerful uplands,' and 'fruit sparkling with emblematic significance.' In these lines Brookner seems to lampoon her own narratives by describing the absence of things that have never featured prominently in her novels before: scenes of action; sustained merriment; a sincere approach to fantasy and romance; overt symbolism. When Brookner closes the paragraph with reference to 'a land of prudently harvested plenty, a land which had conquered human accidents, leaving only the weather distressingly beyond control,' she draws away from this potential world that the novel could reside in – but defiantly does not – and refers back to the visual and tonal greyness that is immediately confronting the reader.

The narrative then moves swiftly into establishing the protagonist and the circumstances of her life around which the novel revolves. Like Brookner's previous novels, the character's name is given prominence, though, notably, not as much

prominence as her previous novels, which each declared the character's full name within the first few lines. (In *A Start in Life* and *Providence,* the name appears in the opening sentence.) It stands to reason that in *Hotel du Lac* it was more important to set forth the ironic and detached tone. Nevertheless, Brookner follows the mode she has previously established, entering deeper into that ambiguous space that Elliott describes as necessary for satire: to conduct an effective satire of the Brookner novel, Brookner must adopt the tropes of the Brookner novel. For Jonathan Swift, Elliott describes the endeavour thus, 'He must manipulate a persona whose utterance simultaneously expresses and unwittingly condemns the folly Swift is pursuing. As for the reader, his part in the game is to follow the complex manoeuvres as closely as possible… To keep footing means to follow the rules of the game.' (Elliott 125) In the case of Brookner, the folly would be to accept the novel as unironic confessional, and to follow the rules of the game would be to read the novel as directly deriving from her previous novels, which are themselves directly related to her own cultivated persona.

In *Hotel du Lac*, Edith Hope is introduced as 'a writer of romantic fiction under a more thrusting name.' (8) There are two things of note happening here. First is the name Edith Hope itself, the last name of which jumps out as directly naming the feeling that Brookner's protagonists have struggled with most, entering in and out as they do of states of hopeful- and hopelessness. 'Edith' too is significant, though subtler. Constructed as a combination of two words from Old English – one meaning 'riches' and the other 'war' – the name is both a spoil of conquest as well as an appellation of inherent conflict between potential positive and negative outcomes. (Hanks) (Cameron) It is also a name that announces itself as of an even more emphatically antiquated nature in comparison to Ruth, or Kitty, or Frances. Instead of contemporary society, the first association the name Edith is likely to call to mind for Brookner's

desired readership is realist American author Edith Wharton (1862-1937), who like Brookner in *Hotel du Lac*, used the epistolary device in many of her works of fiction.[55]

The second thing of note happening in the introduction of Edith Hope's name is the bifurcation of identity in the character which mirrors Brookner's own half-attempts at a bifurcation between herself and her protagonist. (Bifurcated identity is of course a major theme of in many of Brookner's works, most starkly illustrated in her second novel *Providence*, as previously discussed.) Indeed, Edith is 'a writer of romantic fiction under a more thrusting name,' a statement that immediately sets forth a clear separation between Edith's private persona and her literary one, at least as far Edith herself regards it consciously.

To write of an author who adopts a pseudonym is a significant move for Brookner. Jacqueline Rose writes in *The Haunting of Sylvia Plath* that for Plath the consideration of pseudonyms 'reinforces the divisions and differences of the voices in which, formally or generically, she chose to write.' (Rose 184) Anderson corroborates the significance of pseudonyms in Plath and extends the implications to authors generally: 'Writing, we could argue, becomes the space where new names can be put into play, where the woman writer can authorise herself as other or more, name herself as author, or even as the author of the author, through the texts that she writes.' (Anderson 115-116) In *Hotel du Lac* Brookner is the bifurcated author of the author who bifurcates herself into a wishful pseudonym: that 'more thrusting' doing the legwork of the identity that Edith wishes to cultivate through her novels.

[55] As documented in the articles in 'The Epistolary Motif and Literary Creation in Edith Wharton's Short Stories: Narrative, Aesthetic and Moral Issues' by Audrey Giboux and 'Celebrity and the Epistolary Afterlife in Edith Wharton's Early Fiction' by Cynthia Port.

Like Brookner, Edith is a writer, a detail privileged in the text by its direct juxtaposition to her name, and like Brookner, she writes of romantic situations, though in this case the suggestion is that Edith writes formulaic romantic fiction of the Mills & Boon variety, rather than Brookner's fiction which resembles more a subversion of the genre, as will be discussed further.[56] This itself is ironic; a satirical mode that Brookner is developing: Brookner has created a character more 'thrusting' than herself who in turn writes novels that are more 'thrusting' than *herself*. Brookner writes of/as 'Edith Hope' who writes as 'Vanessa Wilde.' This should be read as a linear extension of 'thrusting,' or exoticism, that is started with Brookner, as everyone finds their own name to be utterly ordinary, and follows through to 'Vanessa Wilde,' a name that quite openly plays upon Virginia Woolf, by adopting the same initials and number of syllables, not to mention borrowing the name 'Vanessa' from Woolf's sister, the painter Vanessa Bell.[57] Indeed, this is made even clearer through Edith Hope's recurring belief (or hope) that she resembles Virginia Woolf, itself another element of satire by Brookner that plays upon the vanity of the writer and their desire for greatness and immortality.

In its opening lines, Edith Hope (and the reader) look out of this window – through this framing device – and on to a barrenness, '…although she had been promised a tonic cheerfulness, a climate devoid of illusions, an utterly commonsensical,

[56] In the novel Brookner writes, 'She even wrote a few paragraphs of *Beneath the Visiting Moon*, then on re-reading them, realised that she had used the same device in *The Stone and the Star*, and crossed them out.' (Hotel du Lac 24) Brookner further supports her belief in the formulaic quality of romance novels in her interview for *The Paris Review*. (Brookner and Guppy) Though Edith crosses out the 'device,' it is labeled as such nonetheless and suggests a reliance on cliché in her novels or at least a recognition of the possibility of reliance. As Edith herself comments later, 'She comforted herself, that harsh disappointed woman, by reading love stories, simple romances with happy endings. Perhaps that is why I write them.' (Hotel du Lac 104)

[57] Bell was a contemporary of, and painted by, Roger Fry, the figure for whom a character holds a chaired position at the university in *Providence*, drawing closer that intertextual web that Brookner weaves in her novels, as discussed in the previous chapter.

not to say pragmatic, set of circumstances…' (8) Edith is in actual fact a hopeless writer of romance novels who has been exiled from her home for the crime of seeking a set of circumstances that more closely resemble her novels than the life her friends believed she should be living. Instead, she finds herself in trapped in a landscape that, though capable of providing a merriment (perhaps in its summer months), is drab and even more ordinary and dispiriting than the life her friends might have wished her to endure for penance.

Heightening the irony of this situation further is the enforcer of Edith's penitential exile, Penelope Milne, and again this is conducted through the name of the character. Beginning with the last name again, 'Milne' seems very much like a play on the publisher Mills & Boon given that 'Milne' and 'Mills' have a similar sound and contain the same number of syllables, as well as letter structure, and that Edith writes romantic novels for a seemingly very similar publisher. This would establish Milne as an avatar to Edith's publisher, and later passages would seem to bear this out as they both seem to demand certain behaviours from Edith. During a flashback scene preceding the events of the novel in which Edith's agent has taken her to lunch, he tells her, after he has heard about the new novel she is working on, 'I have to tell you that the romantic market is beginning to change. It's sex for the young woman executive now, the *Cosmopolitan* reader, the girl with executive briefcase.' (26) However, Edith is convinced of her own interpretation of what her readers are looking for in a romance novel. She goes on to say that in her novels, 'It is the mouse-like unassuming girl who gets the hero, while the scornful temptress with whom he has had a stormy affair retreats baffled from the fray, never to return. The tortoise wins every time. That is a lie, of course.' (27) Brookner directly invokes here the Mills & Boon variety of romance fiction in which the female protagonist – through calm subservience and preternatural patience – is always able to win over her man in the end, despite all of the obstacles

that lie in the way.[58] To invoke this is also to draw comparisons to Brookner's own novels in which precisely the opposite to this happens: Brookner's previous novels have exposed the lie that Edith is relating to her agent in this passage; they are diametric opposition to the novels that Edith says she writes in which all that she claims is idealised by women comes true for them. This is also playing upon the motifs already established in the first few pages, as already described, in which the idealisation of the setting of the hotel is forced to meet the reality where it is out of season and consequently depopulated.

Added to the name of 'Milne,' and everything about the romance novel genre that it can invoke, is 'Penelope.' This name conjures classical literature as Penelope is the character that Odysseus is desperate to reach in Homer's *Odyssey*. She is associated with amorous fidelity as, despite receiving many suitors, she remains faithful to Odysseus while he is away from her. The name 'Penelope Milne' is therefore strongly associated with an idealised form of romance that withstands (or surpasses) all complications that are traditionally introduced, not just in reality, but in the pervasive tradition of realist fiction that attempts to composite a simulacrum of that reality: the tradition of realist fiction in which Brookner has traded.

Brookner invoking the contemporary romance novel genre in this way is particularly noteworthy in terms of the satirical point of view she adopts in *Hotel du Lac*. Janice Radway's *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* was published the same year as *Hotel du Lac*, a period of time in which, after a merger, the combined Harlequin Mills & Boon was selling in excess of 250 million copies worldwide. It was further attracting the attentions of activists, academics, and cultural

[58] In Janice Radway's *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* her chapter 'The Ideal Romance: The Promise of Patriarchy' deftly examines this preferred narrative mode of romance novels by Harlequin which merged with Mills & Boon in 1971.

critics like Ann Snitow, Ann Douglas, and Tania Modleski who had each published on the topic by this point. (Mills & Boon UK) (Radway 53) Seeking a sociological analysis of the genre and its readers in her book, Radway writes:

> Romances purport to be open-ended stories about different heroines who undergo different experiences. They manage such a suggestion by using the conventions of the realistic novel, which always pretends to be telling the as-yet-uncompleted story of a singular individual. Despite this realistic illusion, however, each romance is, in fact, a mythic account of how women *must* achieve fulfilment in patriarchal society. By reading the romance as if it were a realistic novel about an individual's unique life, however, the reader can ignore the fact that each story prescribes the same fate for its heroine and can therefore unconsciously reassure herself that her adoption of the conventional role, like the heroine's, was the product of chance and choice, not of social coercion. (Radway 17)

It is clear from Radway's description of the contemporary romance novel that Brookner is deliberately employing the complete opposite strategy to this method of storytelling in her narratives. For the past three novels that Brookner has written, while the stories are open-ended in that they rely upon this 'realistic illusion' that Radway describes, they in fact demonstrate what Brookner perceives as women's inability to find fulfilment not necessarily in a patriarchal society but rather in a society in which women are in fact gaining in their level of societal agency. While some have come to terms with the rules of this new order, such as *Hotel du Lac*'s Penelope, others, like Edith, are left uncertain in their roles. The reader of the Brookner novel may find recurring outcomes for her heroines across each work. However, they are not outcomes that will comfort the reader should they identify with the protagonist. Instead, they act

more as desultory calls to action to rise above their current circumstances and grab hold of their objects of affection lest they end up in a similar loveless, unfulfilled predicament which seems to have no easy recourse to rectification. Brookner does not seek to placate the reader with the fantasies of chance and choice or merit and morality. She instead wishes to lay bare what she sees as social coercion – that myth of the tortoise and the hare – that she believes gets to the heart of many women's loneliness. Specifically, those women who might have sought refuge in the fantasies of romance novels. By portraying a writer who creates these fantasies for women – and as is made clear in the final chapter when Edith writes to her lover David, professing to really believe every word of them, or at least has wished to – Brookner in fact distances herself from the character, instead inviting the ironic comparison between this character who is so credulous of the fantasy of idealised love and the author who has written such decidedly conflicting narratives for several years.

Hotel du Lac is no exception: the narrative completes with the protagonist exactly where she started, presenting as it does the same circularity found in Brookner's previous novels. Edith continues on with the doomed affair that condemned her to the hotel at the start. The novel opened with Edith writing a letter to David and so too does it end as she writes a telegram:

> When the requisite form had been found, she sat down at the small glass table in the lobby. 'Simmonds, Chiltern Street, London W1,' she wrote. 'Coming home.' But after a moment, she thought that this was not entirely accurate and, crossing out the words 'Coming home,' wrote simply, 'Returning.' (184)

Brookner, through Edith, denies the reader any sense of closure without compromising Edith's yearning hopefulness. 'Coming home' could have signified a new sense of peace with her position as David's secret lover. But, recognising her own lack of fulfilment,

Edith realises that this is 'not entirely accurate'. Instead, she maintains stubborn fidelity to her own unresolved desire to find a home with David, even while she must write the address of the home he shares with his wife on the form, and in the process denies the reader the kind of ending that Edith herself would wish to write in her own novels.

The kind of sustained ironic distance Brookner employs through her romance-novelist-protagonist is only possible with the understanding that Brookner herself has written multiple narratives which oppose the romance novel while also seeming to engage with some of its tropes. In fact, this is from where much of the humour of the novel is derived; though the novel can still operate on a purely functional level as to the mystery behind Edith's exile to the hotel without this knowledge, to miss this self-pastiche that Brookner engages in is to miss a substantial aspect of the novel's complexity. When critics seem to damn it with the faint praise of appreciating it on a sentence-level but not recognising its greatness as a fully constructed novel, as will be show in the discussion of the Brookner Prize ceremony to follow, it is this surface of the novel to which they are responding rather than its place in the Brookner oeuvre.

All of this is to say that the novel clearly does significantly operate on a detached, destabilising satirical level that Brookner pitches directly at her own persona and the novels that she has previously written in the form of what Genette terms the self-pastiche. As will be made clear in the next section which deals specifically with Brookner's Booker Prize-win for the novel, to miss these aspects of the novel inevitably invites the dismissal of the novel which finds it be shallow and slight. In some way, for Brookner, winning the Booker Prize for that novel was a curse: it brought a massive amount of attention to the novel without an equal amount of attention to the previous novels that much of the text (and paratexts) requires an awareness of in order to interpret the novel in its textual complexity. Thus, the reception of the novel was

perhaps uncertain to begin with as it resembles a book in a series that has not been labelled as such but becomes doomed when that orphaned novel is praised as the greatest novel of the year, not for the greatest author who published a novel that year.

3.4 'The Central Paradox of Our Contemporary Awards Scene'

In *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards, and the Circulation of Critical Value*, James F. English comprehensively outlines the manner in which the Booker Prize ('the most successful of all the hundreds of literary prizes founded since the mid-twentieth century') operates as an awards ceremony that is highly aware of its own impact on the publishing industry, celebrity drama, and the resulting cultural resonance of both. Such is precisely the case in 1984 when *Hotel du Lac* was shortlisted – as the following discussion will illuminate – and the resulting proceedings perfectly encapsulated 'the central paradox' that English describes in which the awards scene pushes out the object it intends to reward with attention in the service of attention to itself in its place. (197)

In fact, by the autumn 1984 contest, British publishing and bookselling had already reached a febrile state of gargantuan advertising campaigns, due in large part to successive 'exercise[s] in market expansion,' by the Book Marketing Council. First, in 1982, the group ran a promotion featuring the 'Best of British Authors,' which included window promotions in the largest book chains (W. H. Smith and John Menzies), an episode in support of the promotion on BBC 1's *Omnibus*, and a feature in the *London Sunday Times* with an accompanying photograph by Lord Snowdon. It was reported that this promotion generated sales in excess of 250,000 copies for the authors who made the cut. The council was not shy about the aims of its promotion either. Desmond Clarke, the director, said in a brochure for the campaign, 'Listing twenty of Britain's

best authors was an effective way of creating healthy controversy and interest.' He added further, 'People love lists.' So too did the council. It chose to run a second campaign the following year, this for the 'Best of Young British Novelists.' Helmed again by Clarke but under the official auspices of the magazine Granta, it once again generated huge sales (250,000 copies by one source; $750,000 worth of sales by another) for the chosen authors during the two weeks of the promotion. It too had several supportive attractions in libraries, bookshops, and the press. (Atlas) (Buford)

Then, in February 1984, the council inaugurated its third campaign for the 'Best Novels of Our Time.' Generating even more attention than the first two lists – mostly in the form of controversy for its Anglocentric choices as well as some surprising omissions – it lived up to the hope of Clarke's 'to stimulate public interest in literature.' Referring to the numerous cautious or outwardly critical articles that had appeared in magazines and newspapers, including the *Observer*'s front-page headline, 'a splendid furore in the literary world,' and the *Times*'s 'List of best novels creates uproar,' Clarke said, 'All this is playing into our hands beautifully.' That is certainly a valid way of approaching the publicity his list had received if the goal was, rather than actually recognise the chosen authors for their writing abilities, to increase sales through sheer greater attention to the book industry. Clarke confirmed as much, saying, 'Our ambition from the start has been to stimulate public interest in literature. There's an enormous potential market for modern fiction.' (Atlas) As Paul Johnson complained in his media column for *The Spectator*, the Book Marketing Council was nothing but 'a body of (fairly) hard-faced men whose job is to flog books like milk, as a wholesome commodity people need.' Like such commodity trade, individual products were beside the point except for those which would be able to advance the aims of the trading group. One press release which trailed the reveal of the list described that its aim was to select

authors 'as personalities in their own right, whose adaptability to the media and public will be used to the full.'

Therefore, when the Booker Prize ceremony occurs on October 18 later that same year and broadcast live to the public for Channel 4, it is inaugurated into a literary culture that is Janus-faced and already rather cynical about the value of book contests. On the one hand, consent is granted by a host of media players to organisations which ostensibly seek to celebrate literature and reach an adjudication of value through a list format. On the other, an equal amount of attention is given to the procedure of such quantifications and the questioning of its relative merit. Nowhere is this clearer than in the transmission of the Booker Prize, in which the central entertainment value to be derived is not through the interrogation of the literature at hand but its own spectacular proceedings. The event therefore becoming a meta-event, operating a dual consciousness with a hyper-awareness of its own operation.

The host of the broadcast, Melvyn Bragg, makes this clear in his opening monologue, starting at 8:30pm.[59] In only the third sentence of his spiel, Bragg gets to heart of the ceremony's self-referential nature and the power it wields in the culture:

> This year it's worth fifteen thousand pounds – five thousand more than last year – and it can make the winner's [novel] the most talked about novel of the year. It can mean fame for a new author, as it did for Salman Rushdie a few years ago, and it can also reconfirm the reputation of an established novelist as with V.S. Naipaul, Iris Murdoch, and William Golding. It can mean films, fortune,

[59] It is worth noting the distinction between the broadcast and actual event. While the television audience is treated to Bragg's running commentary and interviews, the audience actually present in Guildhall is simply having dinner, acting rather like backdrop set pieces or film extras.

> envy, spleen, paranoia, everything that success brings in the literary world. (Booker Prize Ceremony)

Thirty seconds in and the broadcast has become a meta-event concerned not with the literary merit of the novels at all. Instead, it is the *notion* of literary merit bestowed *through the event*. Bragg himself all but confirms this to be the case – though notably (and nobly) acknowledging his own role in potentially diminishing the value of 'serious fiction' a few minutes later by focussing so much on 'hype.'[60] Indeed, the nature of the meta-event is at the heart of his conversation with the director of the National Book League Martin Goff that follows his opening statement:

> BRAGG: The worry that a lot of people have is that the hype, of which we tonight are part, is becoming more important than, as it were, serious fiction itself. What do you think of that?
>
> GOFF: No, I don't think that's true at all. Ah, the whole thing about the Booker Prize is hype or not it gets people reading worthwhile novels. It gets them reading the winner, the shortlist, and lots of novels that didn't make the shortlist. And I think that's good.

[60] Bragg should also be viewed as having been chosen in this role to fulfil a very specific function in the transmission of the Booker Prize ceremony. This function is that as a conduit between the world of arts and literature and the world of television. It is also a function which predates the Booker Prize ceremony. The television programme he created and hosted for ITV *The South Bank Show* first aired in 1978 and during his tenure commingled art and popular culture for the viewers, focusing on topics as diverse as the US pop band Talking Heads to the English fine artist Francis Bacon. He is also a novelist himself and featured in the Booker Prize longlist multiple times. However, throwing ever more light on his suitability to straddle multiple mediums, he was frequently ridiculed for his writing as well. His novel *A Time to Dance* was given the Bad Sex in Fiction Award in 1993 by the *Literary Review* and the editor of the review was said to threaten Bragg with 'a hate Melvyn rally' if he did not show up in person to accept the humiliation. A 1993 profile in the *Independent* further detailed the myriad criticism he received in which by some he was hailed as one of the great writers of his generation and by others denounced as a lazy and unserious writer who was unable to give due attention to his novels due to his busy television schedule.

BRAGG: Do you have real evidence for that or is that something which you bring to bear?

GOFF: Alright, let's take very simple examples. You mentioned Salman Rushdie, which Cape's hope to sell two and a half thousand copies of in two years. After it had won, 45,000 hardback copies were sold within three months. (Booker Prize Ceremony)

Though Goff at first gives the appearance of pushing back against the notion that the giving of the award could be about anything other than literary merits of the books in question, he is the first to mention the book sales that are increased due to promotion that the award and ceremony brings. He would have been intimately aware of this industry value as well. The 1983 Booker Prize had been so successful in generating increased sales that the American Book Awards organisation flew over to London to observe. (Atlas)

The fact that the ceremony so immediately calls itself into question is notable for the distance that exists at this point in the prize's history between its purported aims and the reality on the ground mutually acknowledged by presenters, industry players, and authors too. Indeed, there is clear evidence of the effect that winning a book prize can have on the sales of the books by the authors who have been shortlisted or go on to win. In his 2005 memoir *Publisher*, Tom Maschler – the managing director of Jonathan Cape for four decades and credited as the 'inventor' of the Booker Prize – states that the potentiality for increased book sales was his main motivation in the prize and throughout the memoir scarcely mentions the prize without also acknowledging how a win or shortlist appearance increased the sales of one of his authors. In the case of Brookner, he notes that when she won, her novel went on to sell

80,000 copies whereas, 'Prior to that we had never sold more than 7,000 copies of any of Anita's books.' (160)

Jonathan Cape is also by far the most 'Bookerable' publishing house in the UK, with the most winning and the most shortlisted authors. This operates in the literary sphere by imbuing any work published by Cape with an inherent characteristic which suggests that it is potentially prize-winning, giving Brookner (and Julian Barnes, also shortlisted) an edge in 1984 that had perhaps gone overlooked by the extispicious commentariat.[61]

Publisher	Winner	Shortlist
Jonathan Cape	8	32
Faber & Faber	6	19
Chatto & Windus	4	19
Hamish Hamilton	3	21

As of the 2019 dual prize winner announcement for Chatto & Windus and Hamish Hamilton.

There is also the general intrigue that surrounds culture of personality and the theatre of the proceedings, to say nothing of the sheer entertainment value on offer to the home viewer. Maschler, in addition to noting 'the amount of media space' devoted to the announcement of the shortlist, writes in his memoir that, 'A television programme is guaranteed, and several channels even vie for the right to cover the prize.' (161) It is therefore no stretch to suggest that if the prize-win looms large

[61] Sharon Norris also identifies in her doctoral thesis a trend in the 1980s of those affiliated with the Booker Prize having strong connections to academia that was not previously evident in history of the prize, citing winners such as Coetzee, Brookner, Amis, and Lively, with a further 50% of the judges during this period being Oxbridge educated. Norris goes on to point out a number of potential instances of nepotism between judges and those shortlisted as well, often through university as well, thus demonstrating some entrants may be more considered as 'Bookerable' than others due to their personal characteristics, be it by virtue of publishing house, profession, or personal connections. (116-118)

enough in an author's career, it could become a metatext to the novel that is being celebrated, which is to say a key element in the interpretive process. This would be true of the prize itself, in terms of reading the book with an awareness that it has been called 'the best' of that year. But its interpretation would also be affected by whatever interpretation of the text was offered by that prize-win and then transmitted through its various media outflow. Further to this, the mere fact that the ceremony is already operating at a meta-level which is flagrantly open about its own dubious nature and pageantry makes it all the more likely that the prize-winning text will be interpreted in a circumscribed way, especially at a time of speculation over the merits of such a distinction. Indeed, there would be scant other ways of interpreting a novel if one's only exposure to it had been vis-à-vis the ceremony in all its pomposity and grandeur.[62]

After Bragg and Goff's discussion, Professor Hermione Lee – herself a biographer of authors as well as literary critic, and, at this time, a presenter of Channel 4's book programme *Books Four* – is introduced.[63] She goes on to present short clips of interviews that were conducted with each author in which they are asked to describe their own novels. Brookner says about her novel:

> *Hotel du Lac* is about a lady called Edith Hope who goes to Switzerland where she has a little adventure. And I think it's a straightforward love story but I also

[62] It also seems relevant that, as Bragg himself points out, five of the six shortlisted books this year were in fact books about writers, Brookner's included. This no doubt contributes to the circularity of the event and the sense of a ceremony for ceremony's sake. It is notable as well that this point is not picked up on again at any point in the proceeding discussions of the books, relevant though it may seem, giving the impression that acknowledging it further might be alienating to the viewers at home watching writers and the academic class essentially congratulate themselves for their exclusionary accomplishments.

[63] After serving on the judging panel herself in 1981, Lee held this hosting role in the Booker Prize ceremony for Channel 4 from 1984 until 1987 and became the Chair of the Judges for the prize in 2006. She also hosted the programme *Books Four*, similar to Bragg's *The South Bank Show* as discussed in footnote 59, in that Lee could also said to be act as a conduit to the audience from the position of an insider who transmits her insights on literary arts through the medium of television.

> think it's something else. Edith is one of those dim, trusting women, who's always overlooked and overtaken and this is really a parable about the tortoise and the hare. And I'd like to think it's a vindication of the rights of tortoises. Tortoises don't win the race, they don't even get into the first heat, but they do get a vote. And as Edith finds out, she makes her vote, rather an unexpected one. (Booker Prize Ceremony)

Though Brookner's statement may seem simple enough, it does well to evoke the novel's complexities, disguised though they may be to many.[64] In fact, an even greater number of complexities of the novel are introduced by the disguised manner in which Brookner presents them, so entangled are they in her description, which seems laden with contradiction and evasiveness. On the one hand, the novel is 'a straightforward love story.' On the other, it is 'something else.' Edith is described by Brookner as not just a 'dim, trusting woman' (likely a surprise to many readers given Edith's superior sense of self-awareness) but one of '*those*' dim and trusting women, inviting the viewer to speculate as to which archetype she precisely refers. She goes on to say that the novel is 'a vindication of the rights of tortoises' but corrects to say that 'tortoises don't win the race.' Finally, Brookner states that Edith 'makes her vote, rather an unexpected one,' but to those familiar with Brookner's body of work thus far Edith makes exactly the vote one would have been taught to expect.

Lee does not push back on these pronouncements and instead tries to tie the events of the novel back to Brookner herself, a kind of foreshadowing of reception of the novel to come. Lee asks if Brookner would say that it is 'a naturalistic novel' and goes on to as, 'I mean, are the people that she meets the sort of people you have met or

[64] It is further worth acknowledging that though Brookner is not necessarily the most reliable interlocutor regarding her works, when presented with a simple question asking what her book is about, she is able to give a straightforward account that corresponds with the text in question.

might have…' A question like this ignores the complexities that Brookner has introduced in the summary of the novel, and indeed the satirical element that Brookner does not state aloud but seems to imply in her 'something else.'

Lee's presentation of the novelists describing their own books continues until the end of the first part of the broadcast, wherein Bragg says of the shortlist in general, 'It's been called an unadventurous choice by some people. In fact, the autumn sport in the book pages seems to me to have been find the "Alternative Booker."' He then, quite bizarrely, if not outright distastefully, goes on to offer his own alternative shortlist before stating, 'Which is not to crab this list. At least three, I think, are very good indeed, but the intense gossip shows how keen, how for some people's taste, over-anxious the prize-winning factor has become in what until recently was thought to be the quiet pastures of serious English fiction.' Again, Bragg cannot help but revel in, as well as repel, and, indeed, self-consciously rebel against what English terms 'the new rhetoric of prize commentary,' that is, the prize commentary that comments upon itself, dredging up whatever controversy it can find for the sake of making the media event that much more newsworthy; the prize becoming the prize for winning the prize, rather than say, for having written something that might genuinely be considered the best novel of the year by whatever metric one might wish to apply to it. (Booker Prize Ceremony)

This rhetoric is perhaps no clearer than in the beginning of the second part of the ceremony, the bulk of which is intended to be the roundtable discussion of the books by a panel of writers and critics, in which Bragg returns to the broadcast with the bookie's odds for the punters. He describes these odds as, 'now as traditional as jellied eels at the derby,' a suitably slippery and fishy (even disgusting) reference for such a practice. (Booker Prize Ceremony) For what it is worth, Brookner is placed squarely in

the middle alongside Anita Desai at 6-1, a placement that seems in keeping with the discussions that surround her novel and the speculation of her likelihood of winning the prize in the roundtable.

During this discussion the first thing to note is that their consideration of Brookner's novel is the shortest of any of them, highlighting the degree to which the panel thinks that she will actually win the prize. Malcolm Bradbury is invited to open the discussion on *Hotel du Lac* by the panel chair Hermione Lee. He says:

> Well, I think Anita Brookner is a very good and a very exciting novelist who seems very much concerned increasingly with a miniaturisation of her work, so I'm impressed by the basic splendour and quality of the writing of this book, also rather worried by its smallness, by its ultimate smallness. She's seeking smallness, the theme is recession, its withdrawal. (Booker Prize Ceremony)

Bradbury seems here to touch the circular, self-reflexive and intertextual nature of Brookner's novels. However, it is not clear what 'worries' him about 'smallness,' nor by what logical means he has decided that choosing to write about 'smallness' is necessarily an act of authorial 'smallness'. This would also appear to contradict his pronouncement that Brookner is a 'very exciting novelist.'

Lee then turns to Peter Ackroyd, who says:

> It was Anita Brookner's prose I admired most. It's very calm, very clear, very chaste. The book is unhurried but it, it's not very deliberate. I liked that very much, and I also enjoyed that rather brooding, languorous air of mystery and romance which she evokes in these pages. I mean, one hesitates to use the word romance, not least because of David Lodge [whose shortlisted novel is influenced by works of chivalric romance] but also because of Mills & Boon.

> There's a sense though in which she is writing that kind of book, although a much more intellectual and self-conscious version of that kind of book. (Booker Prize Ceremony)

Ackroyd picks up here a quality of Brookner's prose that Bradbury also praised. More than that, however, he registers Brookner's invocations of the Mills & Boon romance genre, noting it as oppositional (or perhaps appositional) to Lodge's chivalric invocations. Touching on Brookner's desire to make 'more' of the genre and conduct something 'intellectual and self-conscious' he seems to engage in a hierarchy between the two that favours his friend Lodge, who is not said to need to make 'more' of the genre. There is a conflict of gender between the respective invocations of 'romance' here as well. In Lodge's novel, a masculine perspective is present that is embodied within a protagonist who 'failed in the role of a romantic hero.' (336) Brookner's novel features the feminine perspective from a protagonist who disavows the virtues of heroism entirely. Nevertheless, it is clear that the satirical elements of Brookner's novel did not reveal themselves to Bradbury in their entirety.

Germaine Greer acknowledges a nod to the contemporary romantic novel as well but equally falls short in fully taking in the scale of Brookner's sustained incorporation of it in her novel:

> Well, it certainly is sturdily rooted in a tradition of very sensitive books about lonely ladies in European *pensionne*. I have a long shelf by Elizabeth Bowen, for example, which I've never managed to read more than a couple of, and I'm afraid Brookner and Bowen are going to come rather close together. However, I would agree that it is limpid, exquisite in some ways, beautifully turned, very consciously written. Again, that's part of that tradition where you read by the sentence and by the phrase. You daren't speed up because it'll just become a

> grey blur. I would however argue that the control of tone gets a bit rocky when the male love object, or not as the case may be, enters the picture. And we know where he comes from, he comes straight out of 'Bills & Moon', so to speak, but I don't think he works at all, and that's not so bad because the whole thing about women's projections of men as the powerful father who's going to take you away and make you a mistress of millions are completely inauthentic, but at that stage I think that the spectacles get a bit fogged. (Booker Prize Ceremony)

Comparisons to Bowen are perhaps even more apt than Greer makes out here, and the paradox she places on both – admiring a book but not necessarily wishing to read it – could explain why Greer, when asked later, said she did not expect Brookner to win. The kind of 'aspirational reading' she describes cannot easily cohere with an awards ceremony which celebrates chiefly a book's saleability. Further, Bowen was a contemporary and friend to Rosamond Lehmann as well as an early Booker Prize-shortlisted author and judge. She is also an author approached from perspectives such as autobiography and intertextuality and whose career has been re-evaluated to posit that her work was more radical than appreciated at the time of her writing.[65] More than these similarities, however, Greer is likely calling to mind Bowen's first novel *The Hotel*, which not only does centre on 'lonely ladies in a European *pensionne*,' but displays similarities in narratorial strategy to Brookner's novel as well. *The Hotel* also employs a humorously ironic distance between author and character and it also shows a keen interest in human psychology and behaviours. Like Brookner, Bowen's language is evocative, and she is concerned with placing characters against powerful, seemingly insurmountable romantic circumstances. That Greer is 'afraid' that 'Brookner and

[65] As seen in Judith Woolf's 2017 article 'Wrecked as Homeward She did Come: "Transposed Autobiography" in Elizabeth Bowen's Late Novel, The Little Girls' and in Joyce Mae Rothschild's 1983 doctoral dissertation 'Cataclysm and Recovery: Thematic Development in Five Elizabeth Bowen Novels.'

Bowen are going to come rather close together' is clearly pejorative, but it is not clear why Bowen is so low in her estimations, especially when Bowen had featured prominently in early Booker Prize history in multiple capacity as both a shortlisted author and a judge.

Greer's phrase that *Hotel du Lac* is a novel that is 'very consciously written' is worth flagging up, too. It raises questions as to what kinds of novels are not consciously written and what makes one novel appear more consciously written than another one. She uses the phrase in relation to notions of linguistic clarity and pleasure, reflecting a sentence-level appreciation as well drawing connections to notions of 'literariness,' as discussed in this thesis's opening footnote.

Finally, it is also worthy of note that Greer's main criticism in this response – i.e. that Mr Neville as a character does not work – seems to miss what Brookner had previously in the programme said about her characters. In response to Lee's question as to whether *Hotel du Lac* is a 'naturalistic novel' filled with characters who are 'the sort of people you have met,' Brookner said:

> Oh yes, certainly. They're types of course, but then people do occasionally fall into types. There's the avaricious widow, there's the predatory divorcee, and there's a sort of man who roves around hotels looking for bait and prey, and I think they all find what they're looking for. (Booker Prize Ceremony)

Greer is therefore correct in ascertaining the characters as of a type but fails to appreciate that playing with generic tropes is a means of engaging with and commenting upon that genre. When she goes on to say that the use of a type is 'not so bad' because the inauthenticity of the 'male love object' calls into question the authenticity of the trope, that is, of course, precisely the point that Brookner is making.

Brookner stated that all of the characters find that which they seek. If Mr Neville had actually ended up with Edith, Greer's criticism of the premise would be valid. On the contrary, his only goal is the thrill of chasing someone he thinks he might not be able to have. This is made clear at the end of the novel when it is revealed that he has also been pursuing an affair with another resident of the hotel. Mr Neville undermines his own posture of offering Edith redemption by being not – in the end – a 'powerful father figure' at all but a rather pathetic and unreliable adolescent sneaking into restricted rooms after dark. (Booker Prize Ceremony) This is distinct from the actual father figure in *Hotel du Lac* who maintains a recurring, nearly godlike posture for Edith, with the memory of him warning her that she has 'made a false equation,' popping up every so often to torment her. The other 'types' work to similar effect. Brookner gives them a version of what they are looking for and makes them all appear foolish in the process: it is the romance novel which ridicules itself.

The panel then concludes by agreeing again on the quality of Brookner's prose before moving on swiftly. One aspect of this discussion that jumps out seems to be a kind of grasping to deduce the 'importance' of each novel. While such a marker may be relevant to winning a book prize or landing big sales for a publisher in any given year, it is not necessarily in coherence with 'goodness' and displays the distance of ceremony between its discussions of who is likely win and which books were written well. This is not to say that any book on the list was not well written but that the novels do not always appear to be discussed with such quality at the forefront, further highlighting English's paradoxical appraisals of prize culture.[66]

[66] Kingsley Amis argued that novels are often not discussed in terms of 'goodness' because it is more difficult. In a letter to *The Spectator* taking issue with a dismissive remark about Elizabeth Taylor's novel *Angel*, he writes: 'Of course if you have no literary judgment, no ability to see a novel as it really is, you spend your time groping for guidelines like what reviewers have said or might say about it, what class it seems to fall into, where it seems to be aiming, whether its style strikes you as

At the end of the panel, all are firmly in agreement that J.G. Ballard's *Empire of the Sun* is the novel most likely to win the prize. From here the broadcast moves directly to the announcement of the winner by the chair of the judging panel, the historian Professor Richard Cobb.[67] After Brookner is announced as the winner, she is brought on to the stage where she makes a brief statement of thanks to the Booker McConnell chairman; to Cobb; to her publisher Tom Maschler; to her editor Liz Calder; and to her agent Bill Hamilton. Bragg then interjects in a voiceover with, 'Well it's of no doubt that that's a great surprise to most people here because Ballard seemed such a very clear favourite.'[68] (Booker Prize Ceremony)

Cobb then goes on to make a statement about the choice of Brookner. As a congratulatory statement, it is very odd, but it is also very revealing about the nature of the prize, the ceremony, the line of thinking that English formally delineates in *The Economy of Prestige*. Because it is so longwinded, and, indeed, quite rambling, the only way to convey the extent of its oddity is to quote it in full:

> In an exceptionally strong year, I don't think we could have picked a more powerful shortlist. What it seems to me all six have in common is a style that is elegant, direct, and above all easy to read. [Some jeering from the audience in response to this last quality is audible.] And in this important respect, they

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normal or not, above all whether it can be called important or not – which is far easier to decide than whether the thing is any good or not.'

[67] The format of the live broadcast makes clear that ceremony has been arranged to harmonise with its televisual counterpart. The ceremony is no longer a spectacle captured on television but a spectacle that has been *defined by* and *shaped for* television.

[68] Why Ballard's book was seen to have been such a clear favourite in front of *Hotel du Lac* is a worthy question in this investigation of the 1984 Booker Prize for which there is little space for discussion here. However, *Empire of the Sun* is also a novel that was viewed as autobiographical, though it concerned the Second World War and boyhood. As such, there seems to be an especially wide gender gap between the two novels that should be considered when tackling some of the commentary espoused throughout the broadcast.

might, I think, have a greater appeal to the general public than to the more specialised circles of literary criticism. If I might speak about each one very briefly individually. Novels about childhood are always I think exposed to danger of feyness. J.G. Ballard's account of a child growing up against the background of not always hideous but always alarming events in Shanghai during the Japanese occupation I think is both convincing, imaginative, and deeply moving. We accompany the boy as he advances from the minute awareness of people and objects at the age of 10 to the greater knowingness of 14, and the ever-present background, even a visible background on the horizon, is this terrifying city of Shanghai on its great dirty river. Julian Barnes takes us on a delightful witty and penetrating quest through the most beautiful parts of France – Rouen, and its countryside – in search of France's greatest novelist. It is a work of brilliance, inventiveness, accompanied by comments that are often devastating, especially to an academic discipline and literary biography. It's a very intelligent book that is also a delight to read. Our winner, Anita Brookner, has produced a cool, elegant, and terse account of events in a hotel on the lake of Geneva. It is written with wry humour and minute observation always in a very low key thus I think containing so I think an elegance and a very apparent simplicity that are truly eighteenth-century. Anita Desai's sad and yet comical novel is about mounting frustration. A narrative in which both objects and people, people and objects, combine against the patient efforts of the unfortunate principal character who leaves at the end still battling on. It's a delicate, kind, I think affectionate, and, at times, very funny book. And it's also beautifully written. And so is Penelope Lively's novel about another literary quest. The object of the quest doesn't intrude too much, being more of a pretext than central to the narrative. There is plenty of gentle malice and we encounter

> one person, the mother of the principal female character, who is simply and convincingly awful. Her name is Hermione. It's a kind and pleasant and reassuring book situated in an England that we would like to think still exists, at least I hope it does. When I was reading David Lodge, my wife inquired several times as to what on earth was the matter with me. For a day and a half, I hadn't stopped laughing and to such an extent that my laughter shook our house. It is a hilariously funny novel at the expense of academic pomposity, literary fashions, structuralist trendiness, and jet-setting professors and lecturers. It is indeed a great deal more than a funny book, offering a devastating take of literary pretentiousness and university intrigue. Its effect on myself was indeed one of relief: that I had myself abandoned professorial status so that I would no longer be in one of those framed pictures of great dons of the day or something like that in *Private Eye*. If I might conclude in the name of my fellow judges. One of my fellow judges I think had the very happy phrase about Anita Brookner's book that it was like a Vermeer. And when one is referring to a novelist who is also – well I know this because I had never read Anita Brookner's novels before but then I did have the privilege of reviewing her marvellous book on Jean Louis David in *The Times Literary Supplement* two or three years back – I think perhaps one of the qualities that we found quite outstanding in her book was this wonderful eye for detail, visual detail, the smaller picture, the microscopic vision which her character… [trails off as footage cuts to Lee interviewing Brookner at her table – Cobb appears to be saying here that he is unable to remember the name of the protagonist of the novel] (Booker Prize Ceremony)

This statement strikingly places Brookner into the middle of the pile yet again despite her having just been announced as the year's prize winner. Though it eventually becomes clear that he has decided to go through the list alphabetically and to say

something about each novel before resolving on *Hotel du Lac* for some final comments, it is still unusual for him to do so *after* the winner has been announced. Already unorthodox, this choice is made all the more bewildering that the clear favourite to win, J.G. Ballard, is first to be discussed as a result of Cobb's choice to go in alphabetical order.[69] As such, in choosing Brookner's novel, an upset is enacted by the judges but is left unsupported, as if to imply that a mistake may have been made. Further to this, in his actual statements on Brookner, no sense is given to the judging criteria which led to the judges choosing her novels above the others. If anything, the novel is described more coolly than all others, perhaps mirroring the novel in some ways, though that seems far too generous as there is no indication that it is in any way purposeful. He praises her book of art criticism more highly as well, calling it 'marvellous' and appeals to this background by saying the novel is like a painting by the Dutch baroque Johannes Vermeer, without any explanation as to how he has drawn the comparison. Cobb's statement about having not read any other of Brookner's novels is also noteworthy as this thesis argues that reading Brookner's previous work is integral to appreciating *Hotel du Lac*'s intertextual engagements with her literary persona and reception. Referring to the novel's 'smallness' would betray this too – assuming it refers to anything other than its length – as it displays a fundamental lack of awareness of its context within her oeuvre.

Indeed, the only criteria that Cobb relates in his statement at all is that which he also applies to all of the novels on the shortlist, which he suggests is a common style of

[69] Brookner was interviewed by Amanda Smith for *Publishers Weekly* in September 1985 and reaffirmed that the expectation had been that Ballard would win and left open the possibility that she had thought so too. With characteristic irony she said, 'Many people thought Ballard's *Empire of the Sun* should have won. And, being British, went on saying this 'til about last week. It's a very good book.' (68) Even the archived transmission of the ceremony held in the prize archives at Oxford Brookes University quite oddly reinforces this: on the DVD, following Cobb's final speech, is five-minute partial recording of a programme about Ballard's novel. (BP/1/16/5/1)

'elegance' and 'directness,' both vague platitudes that do little to contextualise the works separately or even as group. However, there is one aspect of the novels that he gives greater emphasis to than the others and that is their 'readability,' which is what some authors and publishers in the audience audibly rejected. Though of course any of the authors would likely have still wished to win on the night (there is no denying the vastly increased sales which Brookner experienced), it still came at the price of being praised for being a novel that literary critics would not enjoy reading.[70]

After Channel 4's transmission is concluded, Cobb doubles down on this sentiment in a second speech intended as an address on the topic 'The State of English Fiction' (which may have come as a surprise to the Indian shortlisted author Anita Desai and other writers of ex-England nations of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth that the prize is intended to honour.) In this speech, which was reported on widely at the time and of which a draft is available at the Booker Prize Archive at Oxford Brookes University, Cobb states:

> Some people may object – indeed, have done so – that we have been unadventurous, and I hope we have. It is not for a panel of judges to tell the general public what it OUGHT to be reading, but to choose books that people are likely to WANT to read. In an operation of this kind, one would not go for a Proust or a Joyce – not that I would know about that, having never read either. I do believe we have selected six books that people will enjoy reading because they find them <u>easy</u> to read. (Booker Prize Ceremony) [all emphases in draft]

[70] In any case, Ballard's *Empire of the Sun* would go on to do well in terms of sales. *The Standard* reported the next month that it was outselling Brookner on account of bookshops running out of copies of *Hotel du Lac*. (The Standard 1984)

He goes on to praise himself and the panel for avoiding, '…flamboyance, the lush and the torrid, the pseudo-picaresque, the pretentious, and the unremittingly depressing. We have also succeeded in avoiding political novels.' Cobb gives even more space to deriding novels which feature alcohol-use, sex, violence, profanity, and the Glaswegian dialect: a not-so-coded response to James Kelman for his entry that year, *The Busconducter Hines*.[71] (The Sunday Times)

In sum, Cobb's statements serve mostly as convincing treatises on why the historian should never have been offered the position of Chairman of the Judges. His statement betrays an ignorance of not only much of contemporary fiction but also two canonical works which he comes across as proud to have never read. That he should have cited Proust is doubly ironic given Brookner's affinity for him and the suggestion offered previously in this chapter that Brookner is consciously employing a Proustian pastiche of the self in *Hotel du Lac*. Cobb's statements should also be read as further evidence as to how interpretations of Brookner's novel could come to be so decontextualized. Not only does he acknowledge that he had not read any of Brookner's previous novels but acknowledges being quite ignorant of the tradition of English language novels generally. Any mocking of Cobb that followed the ceremony may have mollified some of those who recognised his unsuitability to the role (Goff wrote in *The New Statesman* in 1998 of a 'metaphorical bomb' of gasps being thrown by the audience in disbelief at Cobb's admission that he had not read Proust or Joyce) but this could have only dragged Brookner down with him. If he was of such poor judgement, what does it say about his panel's choice?

[71] Kelman would go on to win the prize himself in 1994 for *How Late It Was, How Late*.

3.5 'Anita Someone'

In the days following the ceremony, *Private Eye* was particularly unrestrained towards Brookner and *Hotel du Lac*, seemingly for the crime of having been chosen for the prize. It devoted an entire page to the subject, giving Brookner the joking names 'Anton Brookner' and 'Anita Someone' and the novel mocking titles like *A Stroke du Luck* and *Hotel du Lac of Interest*. The satirical publication further broke the genuine news that Brookner had lied about her age in the publicity materials for the Booker Prize. Though she had stated she was born in 1938 (and this is clear on the back cover of the ceremony's programme which gave a brief biography of each shortlisted author), *Private Eye* compared *Who's Who* catalogues from the 1980s and 1970s to correctly ascertain that she had deflated her age by a decade over the intervening years. If Brookner had given her true birth year, it would been apparent that she was oldest of the shortlisted authors; under the guise of a 1938 birth, she was second youngest.

It is also significant that as the 1984 Booker Prize begins to initiate explicit questions as to the commodification of the novel as a form and the commercialisation of prize culture in the publishing industry, so too does it generally begin to become the target of outward disgruntlement and derision. Even Lee grew disenchanted with the proceedings. In the *Times* in 1993 she writes, 'There is a lot wrong with the Booker Prize. It humiliates writers as much as it advantages them.' This is a very different spin on the Booker Prize than found in Maschler's memoir. Lee specifically points to the televisual aspect of it as one its weakest points, in direct opposition to Maschler who sees it as proof of its success. She writes:

> Television turned the Booker into a jamboree… It ensures that Booker would forever be identified by the word 'razzmatazz,' playing up its vulgar Miss World aspect and fixing in the British eye a peculiar view of writers as dinner-jacketed

> gormandisers… Television is not an experimental pioneering medium but a cumbersome machinery with very rigid conventions. So it is the opposite of the art-form which the Booker rewards, making the televised occasion seem ludicrously incongruous in relation to the work of writers. (Lee)

Lee deftly disentangles the forms of literature and television here, as well as of brow structures (pioneering medium versus cumbersome machinery) and class structures (writers versus dinner-jacketed gormandisers). Her choice of words to describe the televised ceremony as a 'jamboree' identified by 'razzmatazz' captures not only Maschler's intended spectacle but English's conception of the self-aware award which prizes drama and celebrity above all else, including the actual prize.

Lee further in her article recalls Brookner's 'aghast surprise' when it had been announced that she had won, and that it appeared as though she 'had been handed a poison[ed] chalice, before an enormous smile broke across her face.' Brookner may have been intuiting the unintended consequences that can accompany a success in the registering of a 'poison[ed] chalice' but more likely is acknowledging the lack of control over her own career that is set into motion on becoming, effectively, an overnight literary celebrity.[72]

[72] This precise scenario is satirised in Edward St Aubyn's 2014 novel *Lost for Words*, in which a cookery book is inadvertently submitted for the 'Elysian Prize' (named for 'a highly innovative but controversial agricultural company') and then shortlisted for it, boosting its entirely unknown author into stardom, along with other stock characters familiar to those who follow the literary prize circuit. (2) With a thoroughly unqualified judging panel and a controversial choice of novels, St Aubyn most closely mirrors the 1984 contest with his chairman's speech, which is lifted almost directly from Cobb, 'What we have offered the public is the opinions of five judges who were all asking themselves the same basic question: "Which one of these books could be enjoyed by the largest number of ordinary people up and down this country?"' (251) In his novel, St Aubyn tackles many of the concerns Lee raises in her article, not just of the role of television but that of celebrity, petty politics, and the essential human (and therefore fallible) quality at the heart of it. St Aubyn likely speaks for Lee and many others on the final page where the two most reasonable characters reflect on the evening, '"I'm sick of prizes," she said. "Comparison, competition, envy and anxiety," said Sam.' (272)

This celebrity, brought about by a highly covered and controversial media event, further contributed to the resulting interpretive effects on the reception of *Hotel du Lac* – a novel that, as discussed, had already been ignored for its intertextual connections to its antecedent works and the author herself. Going further, so greatly do the effects of the metatext that is the novel's Booker Prize-win and the Booker Prize ceremony loom, that not only did the metatext obscure *Hotel du Lac*'s sophisticated and postmodern engagements with textualities, parody, and the literary persona, but it went on to obscure the career that lay ahead for Brookner as well, the vast majority of which had yet to take place.

In the following chapter, the aftermath of Brookner's Booker Prize-win will be analysed with due attention to how this metatext continued to inform the way that she was received by the media and critical classes, as shown in the film adaptation of *Hotel du Lac* for Screen 2 on BBC, in her future literary output and media engagement in her novels and publicity materials, and, most notably, in her literary reputation before and after her death.

Paul Ewan's *Francis Plug - How to Be A Public Author* (2014) also satirizes the Booker Prize and the role of the public author. The novel follows a deranged wannabe writer who stalks and harangues Booker Prize-winning authors for autographs at their book signings.

4. 'Still Looking for Justice': Canon, Death, and the Changing of a Literary Reputation

4.1 Introduction

In her 2009 *Telegraph* interview with Mick Brown (the last interview she gave before her death) Brookner was asked to reflect on her authorial legacy as well as her process of writing:

> How attached then are you to the idea of Anita Brookner, novelist? 'Oh, not at all.' So you put your books in a bottle and throw them into the ocean, and that's it? 'That's right.' She gives a slight smile. 'Still looking for justice.' (Brookner and Brown)

As the previous chapters of this thesis have argued, the idea that Brookner was so ambivalent about the idea of herself as a novelist – as she often suggested in interview – is dubious: it is hardly so simple. She may have felt no such personal attachment to her persona and reception, but a professional attachment has been shown to exist regardless, intertwining author and work. This was conducted via the intertextualities of her narratives as well as the paratexts of her book objects and projection through the media, most prominently the Booker Prize. The metaphor (supplied by Brown) that her novels are messages in a bottle is an apt exploration of the process of reception in many forms of literary production: the texts are themselves fixed but sealed within a transparent glass tossed out by publishers into the waves of critics with the best of intentions but precious little control over on which shore they will ultimately alight.

However, Brookner's addition to the metaphor with the suggestion that her books need some kind of re-correction in the perceptions of them calls to mind the literary canon's impact on an author's reputation. Further, through the invocation of

time continuous through her use of the word 'still,' Brookner suggests that her books have been bound for a kind of positive reputation but became waylaid somehow along the way.

The central argument in this chapter as it relates to Brookner is that because of how her authorial persona and novels were received in her lifetime – i.e. as divisive and of indefinite quality – her reputation was left uncertain for decades through a lack of contextual consideration of her novels and the assumptions made about them and her as an author in the vacancy of such consideration. However, there are signs that this is beginning to shift and as result become more settled since Brookner's death in 2016. Indeed, this chapter will show how the greatest threat to an author's reputation is through a lack of interest, generally, but that this lack of interest can often be corrected through a sudden renewal of interest sustained over a period of time, usually seen at the time of an author's death. More broadly, the chapter examines the practice and materiality of the canon and how it is expressed through adaptation, the adoption to reading lists, and new digital methods of expressing fandom and cultural acceptance.

4.2 The Canons of 'Canon'

Theories of the literary canon have traditionally been considered a discussion of 'greatness.' F.R. Leavis, in *The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad,* focussed on works which were morally complex and thought to reflect some universal aspect of humanity through their choice of form. For Harold Bloom in *The Western Canon*, greatness was a somewhat more mystical deliberation that could be found in a work's engagement with language, mainly their 'uncanniness, their ability to make you feel strange at home.' (3) And then for Frank Kermode in *The Classic*, a novel's staying

power is located in its potential ambiguity and ambivalence as well as its status as work that can survive being subjected to a 'plurality of significances.' In other words, literature which can be read in a variety of ways while remaining edifying. (133)

There are several reasons why this line of thinking about 'greatness' has come into question in the last few decades. The first is the assumption in the survival skills of works of such calibre: that is to say that the cream of literature will naturally rise to the top. Kermode gets closest to acknowledging the randomness inherent to the resonance of narrative when he writes, 'We have changed our view on change,' but even still seems to resist extending that line of thinking to his own conception of that which is capable of plurality and that which is not. (139) For instance, by Kermode's logic, any work that has been the subject of multiple projects of doctoral research would qualify as a 'classic' insofar as it must, in theory, lend itself to more than one prolonged avenue of interpretation. Culturally, however, it is patently obvious that many such works have never been bestowed the designation of 'classic.' In fact, one aspect of the literature discussed by each of these critics, which is not acknowledged by the critics, is how 'classic literature' is itself a genre and therefore, in part, a marketing concept that relies more so on the expectation of the consumer rather than any intrinsic linguistic quality that a work might have. Further, this expectation almost always reflects a work's antiquarian nature, as shown by the designation of some works as 'modern classics' if from the modernist period onwards.

Secondly, and this is closely related to the first point, the line of thinking that there is something *inherently* canonical in a text ignores – or at least conveniently puts aside – the reality of the patriarchal structures of our society in which the majority of published authors in the western world have been white men, to say nothing of these declarators of canonicity. Indeed, it is not at all clear how it could be possible to

determine which works are of a unique quality when the very conception of 'unique quality,' however defined, is first informed by the dominating culture that produces most works and further resides in the opinion of that same powerful position of cultural influence. This problem of the patriarchal canon is so endemic in literature that even two of the most indisputably canonical female writers, George Eliot and Virginia Woolf, 'can be seen traversing, in the design of their careers and authorial personas, the culturally defined spheres of womanhood and of masculine greatness,' in their achievement of canonical status, as Alison Booth writes in *Greatness Engendered: George Eliot and Virginia Woolf*.[73] (3) Booth goes on to say:

> Women writers face not only the obstacle of preconceived womanhood, but also the perhaps more daunting problem of the conception of greatness itself. To be great, in patriarchal culture, is to resemble the male hero, and certainly to have some standing in a story; in modern, post-Romantic European culture, to be great is to embody an individualistic ideal. (4-5)

As Booth suggests here, even before the task of determining which work is greater than another one must first tackle greatness itself, and it is worth considering how thoughts of the canon were first shaped by male herodom and individualism. It has been argued here that Brookner's novels display a high degree of moral ambiguity. While one might view such ambiguity as supportive of Kermode's belief in the greatness of the multifaceted, Brookner's task is in actual fact more difficult than it would have been for Eliot and Woolf. While Eliot and Woolf seek to upend the individualistic ideal more or less directly – Booth finds Eliot as preaching the 'the virtue of self-denying fellow-feeling' and Woolf as parodying the masculine impulse toward egotism as well as subverting its gender dynamics – Brookner's novels refuse to either champion or

[73] Booth also acknowledges that even these two writers were privileged by class, if not sex.

disavow a masculine sense of greatness, leaving greatness itself in constant question. Revelling in their own ambivalence, Brookner novels never feature protagonists who are themselves individualists; indeed, far from being individualists, they regret their own lack of individualism.[74] And yet that is not to say that her protagonists' own regrets can therefore be read as a straightforward endorsement (or refutation) of individualism. In fact, though the protagonists desire individualism, the other characters who inhabit the individualism that the protagonists often desire are usually directly antagonistic towards the protagonist, or at least as never characterised in a manner that a reader could interpret as a direct endorsement of the behaviour. Yet they remain enviable, desired, and successful in achieving their goals.

'Greatness' has, thirdly, been questioned due to the degree to which the canon can function in society as a method of culturally accepting or cordoning certain messages and ideologies. This again relates to the first two points made, as the canon holds the capacity to be both arbitrary as well as replicative of its own inequitable structures. It has been further posited by Jonah Raskin in *The Mythology of Imperialism: A Revolutionary Critique of British Literature and Society in the Modern Age* that the literary establishment can use canonicity to perpetuate colonialism through what he describes as the valorising of certain narratives. To make this case, Raskin visits the novels of Joseph Conrad, Rudyard Kipling, D.H. Lawrence, E.M. Forster, and Joyce Cary, championing them as the first 'reckoners' of imperialism.

Yet, as Bruce Robbins points out in his 2009 article for the *Monthly Review* 'Against Literary Imperialism: Storming the Barricades of the Canon,' Raskin's choice of

[74] As Frances, the protagonist of *Look at Me*, says, 'I needed to learn, from experts, that pure egotism that had always escaped me, for the little I had managed to build up, and which had so far only gone into my writing, was quickly vanquished by the sight of that tremulousness, that lost look in the eye, that disappointment that seemed to haunt me, to get in my way, even to obtrude on my consciousness, when I was busy building up my resources of selfishness.'

authors, from the vantage of only forty years later, still comes across as vastly outdated. They belong, in Robbins' words, to a 'dying canon' and Raskin's list of the 'good guys' remain white authors (and, indeed, *guys*) who dealt with race and colonialism perhaps better than most, it could be argued, but not authors who actually challenged the orthodoxy in truly meaningful ways. And as Robbins points out, it is not the texts themselves which have changed but public opinion as to the standard to which authors should be held. And yet, with perhaps the exception of Cary, the authors mentioned – Conrad, Kipling, Lawrence, Forster – still command a literary authority today and could certainly appear on a contemporaneous list of the most important authors who ever lived, if not necessarily in the list of the 'greatest.'

Perhaps, then, it is best to think of not the 'dying canon' but the adaptive canon, as it evolves and mutates in tandem with society. Indeed, to think of it as a fixed object that an author either adheres to or defies is to miss the point: so long as the culture changes, so too will the canon. This is the basis under which it is possible to see how Brookner's novels both resist some cultural standards as well as inhabit others. Public attitudes to themes and form can change rapidly, and this has been especially evident with regard to novels by women and the expectations of the messages they should transmit.

As the title of this section suggests, 'greatness' is also disrupted by the inherent contradiction in which the theory of the canon constitutes its own canon. Because surely what is determined to be whatever prevailing notion of 'the canon' is in vogue at any given moment must also be an edifice that projects the present opinion of cultural tastemakers and insiders, leaving the ideology governing it held to the same ephemeral standards.

This is perhaps best expressed in the role that the academy plays in the formation of the canon. Bloom devotes significant time to this in his book, and it has been a lively issue in the contemporary era at times, especially in the United States. For instance, in 1987 the Yale Whitney Center held a symposium on 'Literary Theory and the Curriculum' that spawned a multiple-letter correspondence in the *New Criterion* when it was largely derided by the editor Roger Kimball. As Kimball notes in his review, the symposium did not appear in the vacuum but was a response to a number of publications questioning the value of what was being taught in universities, with some publications appearing at the top of the *New York Times* bestsellers lists that year. Decrying what he sees as the 'cynicism, devotion to shallow intellectual fashion, and unthinking acceptance of radical politics,' Kimball writes that the men and women who 'hold positions of considerable power and influence in the colleges and universities that are charged with educating our young' threaten the liberal education system. (Kimball)

Kimball's rhetorical pose is aggressively dismissive here and, in that way, its own radical politics despite the practice of radical politics supposedly being what he is against. Nevertheless, he draws from a variety of sources to demonstrate the pervasiveness of the issue at this time in the 1980s. And it is in fact that pervasiveness of discussion and criticism which would gird the academy with its power: through his emotive and forceful writing of the symposium, Kimball actually serves to canonise the academy's role in the canon further. Doubly, with universities in both the United States and the United Kingdom sending more of its population to university year by year, the power of the academy to shape the canon has grown substantially, whether through the literal assignations of reading lists or the abstract dissemination of ways of thought.

Finally, there are the roles of the media, often in the form of 'best book' lists, celebrity, and literary prizes, all of which can shape the conception of the canon.

Though, as discussed previously, theory of canon has traditionally been associated with consideration of 'classic literature,' it is clear that a dominating current in the contemporary literary landscape is one of popular fiction, very often in the form of genre fiction and young adult fiction. Bestsellers in particular have become the subject of many cultural studies, including Clive Bloom's *Bestsellers: Popular Fiction since 1990* and Ken Gelder's *Popular Fiction: The Logics and Practice of a Literary Field*. This has been compounded by a relatively popular expectation that the author act as a celebrity as well as public cultural critic, mostly conducted through the author interview as well as political interjection in daily newspapers. These three characteristics coalesce around the media event, a notion discussed in the previous chapter. The role that the media event plays in the canon is that those who are most able to exploit and/or are exploited by the mass media are those who are most in the eye of the public and therefore most likely to be considered (rightly, in many cases) as relevant to the readers. This is often reflected in reader polls of favourite novels which can often be very different from those selected by literary critics, as seen in the BBC's 2003 Big Read poll to find 'the Nation's best-loved novel.' Voted on by the public, the results placed J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of The Rings* as top billing, with authors like A.A. Milne and J.K. Rowling in the top ten, each of whom, though popular with readers and critics alike, have rarely featured so highly in lists compiled solely by critics.

As for prizes, their role in the publishing industry has been discussed at length in the previous chapter – at least with regard to the Booker Prize – and this role was shown to be far from straightforward as to their application to a literary reputation. Indeed, it is very clear that some authors benefitted hugely in their reputations after winning the Booker Prize, most notably Salman Rushdie in 1981 who won for his novel *Midnight's Children* – which then went on to win the 'Booker of Bookers' in 1993 and the 'Best of the Bookers' in 2008 – and J.M. Coetzee who won for two separate novels in

1993 and 1999 before going on to win the Nobel Prize in 2003. However, some critics have gone so far as to say that those authors who are prize-winning are those least likely to remain in the canon due to 'their worldview of the bourgeoisie [and] because they are more interested in being celebrities than in writing worthwhile books,' as Stewart Home writes in his polemical 2012 article, 'Humanity Will Not Be Happy Until the Last Man Booker Prize Winner is Hung by the Guts of the Final Recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature!' Because book prizes are events that create the idea of literary merit as much as reward it, there are likely cyclical patterns that correspond to public taste as well through bestseller lists. Michael Korda in *Making the Lists* suggests that, like boom-and-bust sequences in economic theory, patterns in the history of the American bestseller can be identified with regard to genre and subject matter. Contemporary book prize history is only roughly a third as old as that of bestseller lists and therefore patterns would be difficult to ascertain in this moment, but it seems likely they will emerge in the Booker which will be able to provide greater insight into how the critics, readers, and prizes operate within the literary sphere.

It is evident that there are a number of contradictions embedded within this discussion. How, for instance, can there be a 'canon' at all if a canon is always subject to change? Is that not a contradiction in terms? If the canon is inherently political, why is the canon not determined anew by the political moment? Furthermore, if what is political is subject to a plurality of interpretations, how is it, indeed, political? Would not a plurality of interpretations merely demonstrate the canon perpetuating itself in any case, which as discussed is already a factor of it?[75] How also to explain how works

[75] As in, it is not at all clear that Shakespeare being studied so intently for centuries necessarily demonstrates his works' unique capacity for interpretation. It could be argued that it rather demonstrates the human ability to find new, equally complex meanings in English Literature's most eminent figure who has traditionally been discussed in terms of his complexity.

can continue to be thought of as immovably canonical despite clear evidence that they are not read as nearly as widely as many decidedly un-canonical works?[76]

The solution to these contradictions is to accept that there is not one single canon (indeed, there cannot be one) that it is possible to think of as a unitary, defining canon. Instead, there are multiple: as many as eleven by Wendell Harris's count in his 1991 article 'Canonicity.' Harris finds that the canon, so-called, is better thought of as the amalgamation of several canons:

- that which would comprise all works ever written;
- then all of those works which have actually survived and could be read today;
- that which would comprise the lists made by authoritative sources such as a university's English department or a literary body or awards committee;
- that which would comprise a various selection of works which are drawn from these other canons dependent on the aim of that compiler;
- that which would comprise the works that an individual might favour in their own capacity;
- that which would comprise an already settled or determined set of texts, as in the Bible or the complete works of Shakespeare;
- that which would comprise works used for pedagogical purposes;
- that which would comprise works that were widely considered as being of significance in the past and continue to hold cultural value into the present;

[76] As an example, Henry James's most popular novel on Amazon UK, *What Maisie Knew*, is at the time of writing only the 9,677th most bought book in Literary Fiction and 3,907th in Classic Fiction. This would obscure the certainty of his canonicity if canonicity was based entirely, or even partly, by continuing reader numbers. For reference, at this same moment, *Hotel du Lac* appears in Literary Fiction as the 6,798th most bought, ~30% higher figure than the James novel.

- that which would comprise works that are widely considered as being of significance in the present through their visibility and as a result more prone to movement in the public consciousness;
- and that which would encompass those that move between these categories as cultural perceptions change.

(Harris 110-117)

It may seem like the only reasonable response to these myriad canons is to reject the notion of the canon entirely. However, as Harris points out, 'to attack The Canon is to misconceive the problem,' which is that these canons will exist whether we acknowledge them or not: 'selections with purpose' will undoubtedly endure. Indeed, Harris ends his article calling for not the undermining of any one conception of the canon or the introduction of any other but instead for a greater awareness of canons and what they do and do not accomplish. (118-119) With this in mind, it is desirable now to show not only what canonicity can tell us about Brookner but what Brookner can tell us about canonicity.

4.3 Postmodern Feminisms: Genre and Literary Tradition

The impact that generic classification and literary tradition can have on the canon is of such significance that each can be understood as canons unto themselves, or at least related concepts that can feed directly into formation discussed in the previous section. This is clear as almost every category of canon listed is in some way affected by genre and literary tradition. The most explicit example of this would be in the creations of modules and syllabi in schools and universities. These are canons entirely defined by their genre and literary traditions whether it is a class on Gothic novels, British identity

in literature, or women's writing. Each of these would constitute a canon in their own right and each adhere to a genre or literary tradition. A more implicit example, and one which was touched on in the previous chapter, would be that even awarding bodies are adhering to genre and literary tradition even if it is not stated in their remit: some prizes will be given for, say, horror stories, granted, but the Booker Prize can also be thought of as a genre or literary tradition unto itself, as well as a canon.

Nick Turner in his 2010 monograph *Post War British Women Novelists and the Canon* positions Brookner, firstly, as just that: a post-war British female novelist, placing her into his own idiosyncratic canon, alongside Iris Murdoch, Ruth Rendell, and Emma Tennant. In his chapter on Brookner, he further teases at a number of genres and traditions that her works could possibly fit into without committing himself firmly to any of them; these include 'anti-romance,' 'post-Darwinian,' as well as that of a writer whose novels can be read either generically or non-generically. He rather focusses on how Brookner elided being placed into any of these categories and how much the perceptions of messages within her narratives and the kinds of reception they received led to her unsettled placement. This is not to Turner's discredit: he amply recognises inequities and oddities about his chosen authors and their relationships to canon, and he is quite persuasive in his treatment of Brookner's career, if at times cursory and lacking in specificity about her texts.

However, he does utilise an interesting method of comparing Brookner's canonisation to Angela Carter's which I will now go on to unpack in my own way. There are sound reasons for this comparison, not least of all that Carter's novel *Nights at the Circus* was published in the same year as *Hotel du Lac*. It was also widely acclaimed and a highly anticipated entry for the Booker Prize upon release. Yet it was not even shortlisted, a slight that was as unexpected as Brookner's win. It is also an astute

comparison because of this novel's explicit adherence to a postmodernist literary style that blends allegory and a deconstructionist approach to the form of fairy tales, which can be read as in opposition to Brookner's similar but much more subtle methods in *Hotel du Lac* as to be discussed. For Turner, Carter's canon placement is more settled and Brookner's in a place of uncertainty, which he attributes to a lack of fashionability in her style, her perceived politics, and her resistance to easy categorisation.

Though it may seem reductive (or a damning with faint praise) to attempt to recover an author's canonisation through the means of displaying that the author can – despite protestations to the contrary – actually be rather easily placed into a literary tradition, I believe it will be useful to demonstrate here that Brookner's work has not been categorised in any such way simply because it has not been categorised in any such way, not because it is of its uniquely indefinable quality. (In any case, if Brookner was really so indefinable, that could in fact point towards her inherent canonicity: if its only referent were itself, it would surely be of a literary significance and therefore any questioning of its placement would be redundant.) In fact, when her works are approached with the precision applied in the previous chapters of this thesis, it is possible to see that not only does Brookner's work fall into a traceable literary tradition but one which is naturally situated alongside Angela Carter, and others, as writings which might be categorised as 'postmodernism and feminism.' (Turner 62-85)

While Brookner has been the subject of a small number of articles which seek to place her work within some traditions, these traditions are often of a sub-categorical nature rather than the more sweeping categories that tend to define a strong sense of canonisation through wide movements in the development of literature, such as realism or modernism. For instance, Brookner has been attributed the traditions of writing for moral purpose in the same manner as Edith Wharton and Henry James, and

as writing in an Anglo-Judaic tradition. (Anita Brookner in the World) While I would not dispute that Brookner's works can be read from such perspectives, I will argue that it is possible to apply a wider lens as well.

One of Turner's conclusions is that some fundamental aspects of Brookner's writing have been overlooked by many of her critics. He writes, 'the alleged repetition within Brookner is the whole point, for displacement and isolation are ubiquitous, suffering is universal, and the world is populated with millions condemned to silence.' (Turner 84) Indeed, rather than criticise Brookner's works for their repetition, the critics would have done better to ask what the literary function of the repetition is. This touches on the argument made in this thesis previously which is that Brookner's oeuvre should be read as one united text, or a series of texts – despite this not being formally inaugurated by the author or publisher – and that in this way her works become more elucidative of their own unique textuality that presents a cyclical dislocation of her protagonists.

What Turner leaves out here, however, is how exceptionally experimental that actually is as a technique in both its radical subtlety and wide thematic implications. So much so, it should, I argue, be considered as experimental as Carter's own plays with realism, morality, and allegory, and furthermore, place Brookner's novels alongside hers and other literature by women that was being published at the time, including Margaret Atwood and A.S. Byatt. These authors may currently seem to sit more easily alongside Carter than Brookner does, but a close inspection of Brookner and the postmodernist and feminist traditions can reveal more similarities than previously appreciated.

Susan Watkins in *Twentieth-Century Women Novelists: Feminist Theory into Practice* writes of postmodernism and feminism and how the two are able to sit *with*

each other, if not necessarily exist as a single unified tradition that might more succinctly be dubbed 'postmodern feminism.' Watkins first accounts for a postmodernity, which is characterised in her view by a moving away from the belief that 'metanarratives' of modernity – such as those provided by religion or Darwinism or psychoanalysis – are capable of explaining 'a huge variety of phenomena in terms of one overarching and all-inclusive story.' (123) It is important to note that Brookner does engage with metanarrative yet only in ways in which that metanarrative is constantly undermined, just as Watkins suggests postmodernity undermines modernity. For instance, though Brookner's protagonists are invariably raised on fairy tales and classic literature, in *A Start in Life*, Ruth Weiss has been 'ruined by literature' and the metanarrative it provided for her life: 'From Grimm and Hans Andersen she graduated to the works of Charles Dickens. The Moral Universe was unveiled. For virtue would surely triumph, patience would surely be rewarded.' (11) In fact, Weiss's patience wrecks her life. So patient is she with the demands of her unreasonable parents she finds herself at middle-age unhappily alone and longing to have made different choices but not able to return to the period in life in which she might have. There is the further suggestion that she at that point cannot even change for the present, and is thus doomed to loneliness, all due to her belief in the metanarrative that constrains her.

In *Hotel du Lac*, protagonist Edith Hope writes books that support the metanarrative that the tortoise will beat the hare, only to eventually succumb to the realisation that actually the hare always wins: the metanarrative she received as a child and then transmits herself to her readers as an adult is wrong. She reminds herself throughout the novel of her father's caution, 'You have made a false equation.' Even the concept of the metanarrative itself is not capable of standing to scrutiny. Although Edith claims to have corrected this belief in herself, she is, nevertheless, unwilling or

incapable of heeding its lessons. At the end of the novel Mr Neville offers her the chance to become a hare but she rejects this, preferring the 'hope' of yearning for the metanarrative to come true, though she knows, intellectually, that it will not.

Brookner also demonstrates the inherent tension found within the reality of a world of competing metanarratives. Her novels demonstrate that, by its essence, a metanarrative must be singular and when singular is always shown to be wanting, as the metanarrative is not capable of providing for the 'huge variety of phenomena' that Watkins describes. Because, while Brookner protagonists inevitably regret the choices they have made, they are often firm believers in predestination as well; predestination of course being a metanarrative in itself and one that is not capable of cohering with the life of regret. Also from *Hotel du Lac*, Edith is beset by these competing metanarratives, finding neither satisfactory nor able to make sense of the other:

> Her walk along the lake shore reminded her of nothing so much as those silent walks one takes in dreams, and in which unreason and inevitability go hand in hand. As in dreams she felt both despair and a sort of doomed curiosity, as if she must pursue this path until its purpose were revealed to her. The cast of her mind on this evening, and the aspect of the path itself, seemed to promise an unfavourable outcome: shock, betrayal, or at the very least a train missed, an important occasion attended in rags, an appearance in the dock on an unknown charge. The light, too, was that of dreams, an uncertain penumbra surrounding this odd pilgrimage, neither day nor night. (21)

Brookner first makes clear in this passage that only in dreams is it possible for unreason and inevitability to go hand in hand, as inevitability precludes any sense of unreason entirely: the inevitability of an action generates its own reason. In fact, the walk does not remind her of anything that she has experienced in reality. This

contradiction is mirrored in her feelings of both despair and 'doomed curiosity,' feelings which, again, are taken away from reality and placed into the realm of dreams. The physical path that she finds herself on draws her to consider the path that her life has taken. She does not know where either path will take her and yet is curiously confident that they will result in a series of humiliations, each of escalating significance: first the private experiences of shock and betrayal, all the way to being charged with a crime when she did not know she had even committed any. Even the light of the evening is a contradiction, stated again to be found only in dreams: it is neither day nor night but a liminal space of unreason. Her walk on the path an 'odd pilgrimage,' vague and purposeless. It followed with regret but without reason, the world of reason and its explicatory metanarratives having abandoned her. Yet her life plods on with its grim sense of inevitability, that inexplicatory metanarrative of predestination.

Because these metanarratives are not able to cohere and yet are replicated throughout her fiction, Brookner creates her own metanarrative of paradox. Indeed, her novels conspire to form a metanarrative of life without meaningful metanarrative, a kind of paean to an earlier era of faith, before the complications of secularism. This narratorial paradox that Brookner creates – in which a metanarrative is employed to describe the impossibility (or undesirability) of metanarrative as a meaningful tool of interpretation – can be thought of as an extension of the state of 'hyperreality' that Jean Baudrillard described in *Simulacra and Simulation*. For Baudrillard, humans are presented with so many texts in the postmodern age that they 'begin to lose faith in traditional ways of understanding identity and the self' and are further found to be 'fractured, inconsistent and irrational beings who are forced to turn to a multiplicity of small-scale, local explanations to account for the various phenomena they encounter.'[77]

[77] The metanarrative that describes the failings of metanarrative is also present in how Brookner uses intertextuality with works from the realist and modernist periods, as well as the romance genre,

(Watkins 123) This certainly describes Brookner's financially comfortable but spiritually unfulfilled protagonists who, though desperate to appeal to broad explanations for the behaviours they exhibit or find others exhibiting, are still found by the reader to act on desultory whim and with listless defeatism. This is made clearer by their independently wealthy status and their explicit atheism/agnosticism. They can find no fulfilment in consumerism or the organised religions. Indeed, the only appeal towards higher power that they ever make is to their internalisation of the literary canon, which as discussed, cannot be thought of as a metanarrative due to its scattershot and haphazard properties. The only other potential guiding principle for Brookner's protagonists is the experience of travel, which is, for them, in actual fact only the fantasy of travel, as her protagonists rarely find the fulfilment abroad which they expect – if they are even able to finally push themselves to really go – creating another false metanarrative: not only is the grass not always greener, but in fact none of it may have been green in the first place.

Carter's *Nights at the Circus* also presents concerns with metanarrative and hyperreality. Questions as to whether the protagonist Sophie Fevvers is actually capable of flying, as well as of her claims to being of a half-woman and half-bird provoke questions of authenticity, authorial authority, and the delineations of genre all at once in the reader. Just as the journalist Jack Walser is sceptical of Fevvers's story, so too is the reader drawn in on these questions and asked to consider how pertinent they actually are to the narrative as well as 'narrative' generally. Carter is the author of a magic story about an author of her own magic story which is doubted by its rational

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in which metanarrative is used as a guiding principle: the memory and perceptions of a narrator are reliable, virtue will bring love to the heroine, etc. At first it would seem that her allusions to these suggest a fidelity to the idea of metanarrative, but in fact the metanarrative is always undermined in the end by the inability of the characters to ever find purpose or fulfilment. This is similar to *Nights at the Circus* with its fin-de-siècle setting backdropping its quite readily apparent contemporary concerns.

(and masculine) reader. This is not so different from Brookner's predominantly female protagonists who are undone by the masculinist mythologies from canonical literature and fairy tale.[78] Indeed, Carter's portrayal of Fevvers as an erudite and witty non-human who defies the feminine ideal for men like Walser can be read as the obverse of Brookner's introspective and perceptive academics who also find themselves not meeting what they suppose is the feminine ideal of bold selfishness. Though Brookner's protagonists rarely revel in such placement as Carter's seem to, it would be a mistake to read their desires to fit in with what they perceive as the dominant culture that they have been left out of as an endorsement of those desires by the author. It could just as easily be read that Brookner sets up the failures of her protagonists not to expose how hard done by they are, but even more so how foolish they are to have thought it would ever not be thus. The irrational Fevvers upends the rational world of Walser with her refusal to meet him at the only level he knows; the rational Brookner protagonists are upended by the irrational world of a culture which they do not or will not understand.[79]

It is also worthy of note that Watkins identifies what some have seen as a possible tension between the postmodernism of Carter's text with its feminism made at the time of its publication. Indeed, if the novel is 'too feminist' it could potentially be seen as too ideologically driven to sit comfortably in the postmodernist camp. Watkins is quick to dismiss any concern that Carter would have done better to 'rise above' her feminism in the service of art with a less overt political agenda as some critics suggested, and she is right to do so. (Watkins also points out that this concern is

[78] To the point of the gender of Brookner's protagonists, it has been argued that even her male protagonists should be read as feminine. See the discussion of the Brookner 'heroine' in the second chapter.

[79] A similar comparison of Brookner and Carter has been touched on, briefly, once before: in *A Guide to Twentieth-Century Women Novelists*, Kathleen Wheeler writes, in her entry on Brookner, 'Like Angela Carter's, Brookner's fiction constitutes a ruthless and daring exposure of the mechanics of psychological manipulation, on a large scale, of girls and women.' (236)

undermined in any case by counterclaims that the novel was excessively post-feminist.) However, this perception of a sliding scale between a text on the one hand being too postmodernist to be feminist and on the other too feminist to be postmodernist can also help explain perceptions of Brookner's work in this period. Where critics found conservativism (or indeed post-feminism) what they might have found instead was a strong sense of the postmodern which for them precluded a feminist sensibility as well. At any rate, Brookner's texts present women struggling against the masculinist mythologies of rationality, the feminine ideal, and especially the canon: this is a profoundly feminist cause. That these women should in certain cases fail in their struggle cannot be thought of as anti-feminist.

The fact that such an argument which so emphatically places Brookner in the tradition of postmodernism and feminism has not yet been seen before now is, I would argue, partly as a result of a lack attention in the academy generally to Brookner, in addition to the practical function of the *Hotel du Lac*'s winning of the Booker Prize and not having been discussed at that time in such terms, as discussed in the previous chapter. Turner points out that at the time of his book's publication in 2010, there were 67 entries on Brookner in the MLA International Bibliography, compared with 340 on Angela Carter and 1,759 on Toni Morrison. (Turner 63) By comparison, nearly a decade later there are 77 on Brookner, 591 on Angela Carter, and 2,650 on Toni Morrison. That is a 15% increase for Brookner, a 74% increase for Carter, and a 51% increase for Morrison. For one, this illustrates the continued relative dearth of scholarship on Brookner in the academic canon. The figures are also suggestive of the academic canon's ability to perpetuate itself: future scholarship gravitates towards subjects for which there is already a strong baseline of scholarship. This can also be thought of as a function of the publishing industry, however, as well as the general reading block who support it. To teach or research a book there must first be a straightforward means of

obtaining it. That is a practical concern which is further overlaid by the concern that could exist over a book's relevance if it is not currently being validated by the industry and therefore contemporary readers. Thus, it is not particularly surprising if scholarship does not boom during a period in which an author's works are out of print, which had been the case for many of Brookner's novels in the years between Turner's book and her death in 2016. Nevertheless, in addition to those journal articles and the few monographs on Brookner which have been noted previously, there was other material published after *Hotel du Lac* which can shed some light on Brookner's place within the academic canon: educational editions of her Booker Prize-winning novel.

4.4 The Study Texts Series, the Lives of Authors, and Book Reviews

During Brookner's lifetime, three study texts for *Hotel du Lac* were published: the Longman Study Texts: Modern Women Writers series in 1989 edited by Cathy Poole; the Reading Classics series by the Italian publisher Cideb Editrice in 1992 edited by Paul Nixon; and the Longman Literature series in 1995 edited by Jackie Head. They first sparked interest because of how unusual it is to see any peripheral editions of Brookner's work and how *Hotel du Lac* would be chosen for students despite its ruminative voice and lack of physical action.

The first notable aspect of the editions is that each one of them opens the texts with a biography of Brookner – indeed, Nixon's edition even opens with a full-page portrait of the author. Though it may seem like a normal thing to do in a study guide of this kind, it is worth dwelling upon the function this performs for the reader in the interpretation of the text. To be sure, the reading and educational level that these editions are pitched at is closer to secondary school students than those at university

and it therefore would not be right to assume that Barthes or indeed 'the death of the author' is one that would enter into the conversations held in their classrooms. Yet, this foregrounding of Brookner-the-author is still a somewhat curious way to begin a study guide of literature. Presumably, students would not be expected to know much about the author for their assessments, and it is difficult to imagine Brookner's life being of much to interest to the average student in any case with its lack of high drama or swashbuckling. And though each edition does open in a way that privileges the life of the author, the editors handle their approach to her life in differing, illustrative ways.

Poole's edition for the Modern Women Writers series is the shortest and does not go into much more detail beyond the biographical statements which have accompanied the regular editions of *Hotel du Lac*, though this edition does notably include a couple of mistakes in its dates, suggesting a rushed endeavour. Poole does do one interesting thing throughout her accompanying texts which is to repeatedly refer to Brookner as 'Anita Brookner.' Other books in the series make clear this is not due to a house style. While it is possibly also a function of rushing through the process, it could also suggest a discomfort with honorifics generally. That would be understandable, especially for a series devoted to works written by women who should not be defined by whether or not they married or received some other designation during their lives. Nevertheless, not simply referring to Brookner by her last name does make for an odd reading experience, especially given that the characters of the text are only referred to casually. In fact, it gives Brookner a kind of godlike presence in the text, and with each invocation gives the impression that she is looming somewhere in the background of all the discussions that the edition contains, waiting to pop out at the student when they least expect it.

Nixon's edition for the Reading Classics series gives a lengthier biography of Brookner before seeming to disavow it and finally circling back round to its relevance. He opens by noting Brookner's desire for privacy and that even her novels give little information beyond her professional accomplishments. He embellishes on these details and then writes:

> It is very difficult to say to what extent an author's private life is relevant to his or her novels. Knowing too much of an author's life can, sometimes, lead the reader to read too much autobiography into a novel and spoil the appreciation of the novel as art. However, not knowing any details of Brookner's life raises some tantalising questions about this particular novel. Is the heroine, a French-speaking novelist like Brookner, modelled on the author herself? Is the heroine Brookner's *alter-ego*? Does Brookner see similarities between herself and Virginia Woolf to whom the heroine keeps likening herself and whose "stream of consciousness" technique Brookner uses to unfold her plot? (Brookner and Nixon X)

Nixon is raising some interesting points about the author's role in a text here and his contradictions are worth flagging up as they are the contradictions many students struggle with when setting out to interpret a text for an essay or exam. By starting with noting Brookner's preference for protecting her privacy he is in effect actually violating it in a way. Or, if that is too strong, he is at the very least using something that he knows about her from her private life to affect how he approaches his study of her book, which could be said to be tantamount to the same thing. Nixon does this without malice, of course, and this is not to that her wishes in this regard should necessarily be respected in the first place, but it *is* to point out there are always some inherent contradictions to be found in delineating the boundaries between the lives of artists and their art. This is

especially true regarding the canon, as discussions held are often in terms of authors who are said to be canonical rather than their individual works. Therefore, approaching canonicity is very much like taking the approach that these editors are doing in their educational editions: attempting to sum up an author and impart an estimation of their worth. To do that without mentioning anything about their personal lives would be difficult; as Nixon shows, even when trying to not to, it is entirely possible to end up doing it anyway.

Nixon refers directly to autobiography and reputation when he posits that there is a progression from having knowledge about an author, to using that knowledge to read an author as autobiographical, and to then judge the book negatively as a result of believing it to be autobiographical. This would risk 'spoiling the appreciation of the novel as art,' as he says. This clearly touches on several issues that have been raised in this thesis, but it is perhaps the clearest declaration of a tension between the value of a text and the amount of autobiographical detail that it contains. (None of the editors of these editions have biographical statements, giving the impression that only the artists themselves are deserving of any recognition.) Though some works deemed to be intensely autobiographical have been firmly canonised (Proust, most obviously) it is perhaps the signalling of the *intention* of autobiography which is significant, rather than the autobiographical elements themselves.[80]

[80] By this rationale it would seem possible that if Brookner had not actually been so protective of her privacy and flaunted the connections between herself and her texts she would have a different reputation entirely, one more similar to a writer like Philip Roth – an author of her time and who could have figured in a number of the canons detailed at the start of the chapter – or Karl Ove Knausgård, who writes presently and would likely be considered a part of the contemporary canon of authors who excite the media and public, which may have happened to Brookner in the wake of her Booker Prize-win but not much after, as opposed to the running international success of Knausgård's series. But even in raising these two authors as examples, questions of gender and its relationships to life writing and the canon are drawn. There are any number of reasons why men's autobiographical writing would be considered of higher significance than women's (historic and systemic misogyny, certainly) but this, too, can be thought of as a problem brought on by the canon's capacity to perpetuate itself. The collection of essays *Women, Autobiography, Theory: A*

Nixon's next questions are paradoxical ones. He says that 'not knowing any details about Brookner's life raises some tantalising questions' about the novel but the very first question he asks is one that would require some knowledge of the author in order for it to be at all 'tantalising.' Indeed, he uses his knowledge that Brookner is French-speaking as a way supporting his question as to whether the protagonist of the novel is modelled on herself. He then goes on to wonder if the protagonist is an '*alter-ego*' of the author, when, surely each protagonist is the 'other me' of their creator. Finally, he draws Brookner the author in unnecessarily. He asks whether Brookner sees similarities between herself and Virginia Woolf due to the latter's influence on the protagonist but in doing so invokes the slight stream-of-consciousness style in *Hotel du Lac* which provides enough of a basis itself to explicate the connections between Virginia Woolf and the protagonist, to say nothing of the deliberate likening Edith inculcates which Nixon also acknowledges. Again, all of this is not to say that Nixon is wrong to make any of these connections, instead, merely how inevitable some of these connections can become, even while one is deliberately attempting to avoid them.

Head, in the Longman Literature series, on the other hand, is deliberate to the opposite effect in her edition's biography of Brookner. Rather than seek to obscure or deny any influence of the author upon her texts, Head's statement makes multiple use of Brookner's novels as a means of guiding the biography, going so far as to place the titles of the novels in bold. These statements, replicated with the emphases of the

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Reader by Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson is particularly helpful in tracing the ways in which women's autobiographical writing has, on the one hand, been read differently, but also, on the other hand, perhaps been written differently as well. For reasons that are traced in the essays – from everything from essentialist psychoanalytical approaches to the institutional oppression of women and, especially, minority women – experiences by women have differed so significantly from men that it should come as no surprise that women might fund that they write differently as well. And if the canon has been in the grips of patriarchal structures for centuries, and the canon is self-perpetuating, then it stands to reason that even as hopefully some of those patriarchal structures are undone, or at least exposed, that the canon would continue to lag behind the cultural shifts.

original text, include, 'Here Brookner's own life reflects that of Betty in ***Family and Friends*** and Heather in another novel, ***A Friend from England***,' and 'When her father died it was she who nursed her mother through illness. Again, she portrays people caught in a similar situation in her novels ***A Start in Life*** and ***Lewis Percy***.' (Brookner and Head V-VI)

The effect here on the reader is to inevitably assume that Brookner's own life history is the genesis for the plots and characterisations in her novels. This biographical statement 'About the Author,' falls under the introduction titled 'The Writer on Writing,' and further suggests the strong life/work connection here, given that the introduction does not actually include any direct insight from Brookner herself, only that of her novels' protagonists. The statement then ends with a review from the *Times Literary Supplement* that mentions that 'the opposition' to Brookner have believed her novels to be 'mere petit point and explain that all her novels are the same.' (VI) In this regard there are two effects. One is that the book is itself generating a work within the academic canon's consideration of Brookner that indeed ties the authors to the texts. The second effect is to give credence to the popular media's reception of Brookner as a valid way of interpreting her texts: the reviews may be presented as 'opposition' but their inclusion will nonetheless contribute to the understanding of Brookner by readers of these study editions of *Hotel du Lac*.

Theories of the canon become enmeshed with these study editions in one other significant way; that is, the canons of their own series and how those series collide with Harris's delineation of the canon constituting works of great and lasting cultural significance and that which constitutes works of significance in their present moment. Certainly, these editions throw up questions about the canon and especially with

regard to Harris's notion that in our contemporary era canons are in a constant flux between these categories as cultural perceptions change.

As mentioned, Poole's edition of the novel belongs to a series called Modern Women Writers for the publisher Longman's study texts. With the series edited by Maura Healy, the other works are very firmly within the set of contemporary texts that would be considered a draw to the public when it was published in 1989. The other novels include: *Heat and Dust* by Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, *My Brilliant Career* by Miles Franklin, *Edith Jackson* by Rosa Guy, *City of Illusions* by Ursula Le Guin, and *The Albatross* (included with short stories) by Susan Hill. These texts are relatively diverse in regard to their themes, genres, and the backgrounds of their authors, and it is thus clear that Healy is attempting to make good on the series' promise of 'reflecting different cultures and experiences' as well as from a 'range of genres.' (Poole and Brookner back cover) However, the works do stand out for being quite different from what we might expect from a similar list of modern women writers drawn today. This is to say, not only would a list of works that would encompass today's literary landscape likely be quite different, but very likely a list of important works by women in its own time of the 1980s would likely be quite different from these chosen as well. There is a range of reasons for this and determining how perceptions of each of these novels has changed could very well be the basis of their own in-depth studies. However, it is probably safe to say that at this moment that Brookner and Le Guin stand above the others in the wider consideration of various canons. Le Guin in particular illustrates how authors can shift between canons in a short period of time due to changes of within the literary discourse of the public, media, and academy: authors of speculative fiction like Le Guin in 1989 were very often not equally considered as literary works alongside non-speculative fiction. Jhabvala, though celebrated for her fiction, has also become more known as an adapter of more formally canonised authors, such as Henry

James and E.M. Forster, for the screen due to number of wins and nominations for major awards such as the Oscars and the BAFTAs.

In fact, the winning of awards and film adaptations are playing a significant role in this list and are probably the greatest indicators as to how it was compiled. The novel by Jhabvala chosen had won the Booker Prize in 1975; the 1901 novel by Franklin in particular seems like an odd choice for this list until it is considered in the light of its highly successful 1979 film adaptation, which itself was award-winning; Guy's novels generally had been award-winning and one of her novels was being adapted to a very successful Broadway musical at that time; Le Guin had won a vast number of awards for speculative fiction by then and her works had also been variously adapted for radio and television; and Susan Hill's novella *The Albatross* included in the series had won the 1972 John Llewellyn Rhys Prize, one the United Kingdom's first literary prizes. And, of course, Brookner's novel had won the Booker Prize and was also adapted to the screen.

It is clear therefore that a transmission of canonisation is occurring in this series which situates the novels in a particular way. First the individual novels – or other works by the authors – are selected for awards and/or adaptations by various bodies during the two decades prior to the series being drawn up. They are then chosen for inclusion in the series Modern Women Writers on that basis as being relevant to readers in that moment, and then the study editions themselves become transmitters of the canon as they extend from the academic canon and reach students who are closer to being members of the general public rather than the academic canon itself, as they have little recourse to influence it. Thus, the internalisation of the novel's relevance by the students who use the study edition has in its genesis the novel's placement on awards lists or their adaptation to other media.

This is in many ways a perfectly understandable method of deriving a list of contemporary authors from a seemingly limitless list of ones to include. As Harris makes clear, this kind of canon's relevancy relies upon works being discussed in in the popular media: there are fewer better ways for a novel to achieve this in the late twentieth century than to win a literary award or become adapted into new media. Likewise, given that it is intended to be a series of 'modern' writers, it should not come of any surprise if some of the novels do not continue to represent what we think of as touchstone works of literature from the era – Harris also makes clear that this kind of canon is one most susceptible to quick changes: the novels would have been considered of a canon in their own time; that some of them may not now is only indicative of how that canon operates. That only a couple would seem to still be relevant may actually be an indication of how well chosen the series was; this is precisely what Harris seems to have had in mind when he describes how only some works might transition from the contemporary canon into the canon that holds works from the past that continue to hold significance.

In contrast to this, in the other two study editions, there is a different approach to canon that is representative of the different ways in which the series of the editions are contained. Nixon's edition is part of a series called Reading Classics for an Italian publisher, seemingly for readers who are studying English as a second language. The editor of the series, Paolo Bertinetti, chose to place Brookner's novel alongside some of the most indisputably significant works in English of the last century. His full series, at the time of the printing of Brookner's novel, consisted of: Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, and a selection of works from James Joyce's *Dubliners*. This is a rather remarkable group of authors for Brookner to be situated in, especially in 1992, in which

Brookner represents the entirety of literature which had been published in the previous thirty years, with the other most recently published novel being *The Old Man and the Sea* in 1953. Though this inclusion of the series might only exist as a result of the consideration of a few select people, it is worth appreciating this choice in juxtaposition to Poole's edition in the series edited by Healy. Though Healy's series makes explicit mention of a desire to be 'accessible and challenging' (somewhat of an oxymoron), Bertinetti positions Brookner alongside works one would probably not choose if they were being chosen on the basis of their accessibility, even with consideration to the fact that the novels seem to be for readers for whom English is not their first language. (Brookner and Poole back cover) It is also of note that Bertinetti's list would include two Woolf novels alongside Brookner. This would suggest that he sees the same connection between the two authors that Brookner teases at through her protagonist Edith who imagines herself to resemble Woolf and chose her pen name after her.

Meanwhile, Head's edition in the Longman Literature series edited by Roy Blatchford splits the difference between the two series previously discussed. Blatchford's list contained thirty-one novels at this point and featured several authors that appear on both of the other lists, including: Susan Hill, Virginia Woolf, and other names who could easily sit alongside some of the others such as Nadine Gordimer and Thomas Hardy. This seems to create a sense that Brookner is an author capable of permutation and combination. She is placed in three lists that represent very different presentations of the canon as considered between the late 1980s and the early 1990s and each one follows its own logic which is consistent with its respective purpose.

Indeed, more than these various canonisations telling us something integral about Brookner, it is probably fairer to say that it is actually Brookner who is telling us

something about canonisations here. This is namely that canonisation is a mutable process that can seem at once orderly and random, and, further, that it would be a mistake to hold any one person's or entity's suggestion of a canon as *the canon*, when, rather, multiple canons are in existence at multiple times, seemingly independent but ultimately interdependent of each other.

This interdependency is similar to the manner in which adaptations should be considered in relation to the canon, with Brookner's own playing a significant role in her canonisation. This is not simply on the basis that adaptation generally plays a significant role in our contemporary canon, as described in this section, but because the adaptation of *Hotel du Lac* in particular played a specific role in the public perception of Brookner as an author.

4.5 *Hotel du Lac* (film) and the Screen's Solidifying Image

Linda Hutcheon writes in *A Theory of Adaptation* that multiple versions of a text are able to exist 'laterally, not vertically,' by which she means that it is not correct to think of the adaptation of the source text as merely derivative of those source texts. Indeed, Hutcheon is clear that this is not an ideal way of viewing the adaptation, not least of all because it is the case that many may experience the adaptation before the source, if they even experience the source at all. This is an important consideration for an author's canon placement: any author who has been adapted will have those adapted works considered in conjunction with their original texts. In fact, it is inevitable that they would be thought of as a progenitor of the adapted text as well. Not only does it follow the basic logical pattern that not only has the first text sprung from their minds, regardless of who adapts it, but they would have had to have given their permission to

whoever is responsible for the adaptation, assuming the works are within the boundaries of copyright law. Supplementing this, their names will appear in the credits, dismantling the notion that they have nothing to do with it: as such, they cannot be formally separated despite how much the authors may wish them to be or critics wish to think of them in their interpretations. This is a point worth bearing in mind as one approaches the adaptation of *Hotel du Lac* for the BBC's Screen Two series, directed by Giles Foster, produced by Sue Braithwaite, adapted by Christopher Hampton, and starring Anna Massey as the protagonist.

First, it is important to note that Brookner herself was not happy with the production, namely because she felt that it did not accurately represent certain aspects of the novel. In particular she believed that the adaptation upgraded the hotel that Edith is staying at to a place of supreme luxury, while the text is at pains to demonstrate that is not the case. It is clear in the novel that the hotel should be seen as penance for Edith, rather than a reward. John O'Connor in a contemporaneous article for the *New York Times* writes:

> In interviews, Ms. Brookner is already on record as not terribly happy with this adaptation, finding it 'far more glossy than I imagined.' Among other things, she objects to the depiction of the hotel, which has been upgraded from the novel's slightly seedy, two-star residence to a seemingly luxurious, first-class spa. To an extent, Ms. Brookner is right. The change softens the edges of her story, and Kenneth McMillan's blurry photography seems determined to transform the entire scenario into a gentle dream. Miss Brookner is a good deal tougher than this production looks. (O'Connor)

This line of criticism has been further picked up by Margaret D. Stetz in her article 'Anita Brookner's Visual World.' She writes:

> What happens, though, when such an allegorical fiction makes the transition from page to screen? In the case of *Hotel du Lac*, that which was gray turns blue, yellow, and white with light and sunshine; the depressive clouds vanish; the form itself reverts to travelogue – the very genre that Brookner invokes, parodies, and dismisses. (Stetz 44)

Both O'Connor and Stetz are touching on the same point here: because the film does not pick up on the visual clues of the novel, it distorts the film's irony which in turn disrupts the interpretation of both of the texts, instead rendering it as one that seems like a sincere mimicry of the romance novel genre as opposed to a send up of that genre. These points were further supported by contemporaneous television reviews. It is clear how this discussion feeds back directly into the discussion in the previous chapter in which the irony of the novel is missed due to the Booker Prize placing focus squarely onto the novel itself without appreciating it within the sequence of Brookner's oeuvre.

This failure to appreciate irony further calls to mind the history of the production of the film. According to the DVD's production commentary, Braithwaite had first approached Brookner about producing one of her first three novels. Brookner declined but offered the book she had been working on but not yet published, *Hotel du Lac*. It stands to reason that Brookner would not have wanted a film adaptation of any of her first three novels when they are so closely entwined with her own presentation as a public figure, as discussed in the second chapter. Indeed, she may have expected *Hotel du Lac* to work better as an adaptation due to its sustained distance from the author and its heightened sense of irony, though this proved not to be the case: the Booker Prize disrupted any sense of the novel's irony in the first place, and the

adaptation would, to similar effect, go on to present its protagonist as an as an avatar for Brookner, rather than as a satirical transformation of the author.[81]

Massey's performance as Edith does seem to deviate from the novel in ways similar to criticisms of the setting. Indeed, Massey is portrayed as someone rather unconcerned with her appearance, with dowdy clothes and a hairstyle which suggests a lack of care of appearance distinct from the Edith of the novel. Edith reflects on her appearance regularly, at one point, in a fit of confidence, noting that 'heat and rebellion and extravagance served her appearance well.' (Brookner 155) This is then mirrored by Denholm Elliot's portrayal of Mr Neville which, again, is similarly unlike the novel as he is not quite the 'attractive in a bloodless sort of way' type of man he is described as and comes across as priggish rather than provocative. (163) The film also ages both characters by about ten years, making the arrangement discussed between them seem possibly more desperate than it did in the text. But this is likely the result of the practicalities of film production rather than a wish to place a new spin on the source material. Massey was attached to the project from the beginning, having played a role in acquiring the rights to the novel and was forty-nine at the film's release; ten years past Edith in the novel. This is relevant as Brookner's text is quite concerned with the expectations and mores of the culture in which the characters are enmeshed; Edith at thirty-nine is already seen within her social circle as somewhat of a curiosity for not having married. At forty-nine those same characters would likely consider her a lost cause, as many characters of that age and status are considered in Brookner's subsequent novels. Indeed, Brookner would probably portray an unmarried woman at forty-nine years of age quite differently from one who is thirty-nine, and this is borne out by her own novels: the characters in Brookner's first few novels, who are in their

[81] Massey herself goes on to become a kind of avatar for Brookner. After playing the role of Edith in the adaptation of *Hotel du Lac*, she read for several audiobook editions of Brookner's later novels.

thirties and forties are in substantially different positions and mindsets than those in Brookner's later novels, which nearly all portray protagonists closer to Massey's age in the film. This is even reflected in some of the marketing materials for the film. When it was released on DVD for a give-away included in an issue of the *Daily Mail*, the cover of it did not have Massey on the cover as would certainly be expected considering she played the protagonist, but instead Patricia Hodge, who played Monica – a comparatively minor character in text, and especially the film, and who was actually close to thirty-nine. From a marketing perspective These disruptions are both understandable as well as destabilising to the view of adaptation as a derivative transformation from one medium to another: the realities of the process make the desire for 'perfection' as an inherently elusive and nebulous goal, leaving its intertextual nature ultimately impossible for any filmmaker to evade.

Stetz goes on to suggest that the adaptation is further disruptive to the source material through its presentation of an objective and expansive version of the exterior world of the novel, 'rather than through the literal and figurative "window" out of which Edith Hope peers.' (Stetz 44) Finally, Stetz laments that 'Brookner's best-known novel [is] even better known through the distribution around the globe – first to the British market, then to the United States through an A&E Network broadcast – of this rather simpleminded 1986 adaptation, which has continued to have an international afterlife, first on VHS and now on DVD.' (45)

All of this is not to say that there is something incorrect about the adaptation: indeed, as Hutcheson makes clear, it is not possible to judge an adaptation on its faithfulness to the source. In fact, the film was nominated for nine BAFTAs and won three, further complicating the novel's relationship to prizes. Nevertheless, it is still worthy of discussion how an adaptation can inform the view of its original text and in

turn the author of that text. Such a wide distribution of this adaptation bolsters the position that *Hotel du Lac* was framed in by the Booker Prize ceremony which, as discussed extensively in the previous chapter, created the impression that Brookner's novel was not an ironic nod to the romance novel genre but instead a simplistic and autobiographical foray into that genre. Therefore, the effect on the canon that this should be considered as having had is one that in fact reinforces the effects of the Booker Prize ceremony, and also that further draws the connections between Brookner and her corpus as through the prism of *Hotel du Lac* chiefly, as opposed to Brookner and her corpus on the whole.[82] However, as with this film's wide distribution, noted by Stetz, and the Booker Prize-win proceedings, it is clear that Brookner throughout her life was continued to be associated first with *Hotel du Lac*. But what happens to the conventional narrative of an author can change quite significantly in death, as their legacy is, at one simultaneous moment, re-evaluated by a substantially wide number of figures (if they have been successful enough in their lifetimes), and this was certainly true for Brookner, who almost immediately was recognised for more than just one novel, and for more than one contested prize.

4.6 Literary Death and the Author's Post-Death Digital Resurrection

It is this thesis's original proposition that Henri Lefebvre's meditations on death in his *A Critique of Daily Life, Volume III* are highly relevant to any discussion of the (literal) death of the contemporary author and how their death is then interpreted by the

[82] As Brookner said of her Booker Prize – that she would have preferred to have won for her novel *Latecomers* – so, too, would she likely have felt about her film adaptation. *Latecomers*, with its sensitive and quite unironic treatment of two Jewish men still haunted by their experiences in the Holocaust, would have surely shown a different side of Brookner to television audiences, and one much less likely to be misinterpreted.

culture which survives them. (See Appendix 2) Lefebvre, a key philosophical figure in France in the second half of the twentieth century as sociologist and cultural critic, as well as a committed Marxist, has come to be known in English mainly for his books on the production of space, especially the urban and the social. However, his three-volume work on 'everyday life' dominated much of his own working life and had considerable influence on the development of French thought and politics. Opening his first volume with the words, 'Man must be everyday, or he will not be at all,' Lefebvre goes on to establish the 'everyday' as a way of understanding how capitalism infiltrates the seemingly insignificant aspects of modern life, obscuring itself in the quotidian nature of our daily existence. Encompassing a wide range of topics over hundreds of pages, his critiques tend to focus on processing how the claimed improvements in production and technology over the course of the twentieth century do not necessarily correspond with positive relations within the community or an improved personal experience of life, leading to disaffection and boredom rather than meaningfulness or even the once-promised increases in free time and leisure.

In his third volume, published in 1981, he considers how death functions as a 'presence-absence,' a conception laden with tautology and contradiction. In this section I argue that the very real, corporeal death of the author must be understood in a similar fashion in order to take in the full implications of what it means as a reader to receive the physical absence of the progenitor with the ongoing presence of their works.

When Lefebvre asks, 'Is this not the figure, its strangeness softened by familiarity, which forms the link between everyday life and great works?' one can say he touches directly on the author's ability to carry on living (by virtue of their literary reputation) in ways that exceed the memories of those who are not authors or others who are able to leave behind a kind of corpus, such as artists, philanthropists, or

tycoons of industry. Indeed, the author closely resembles the figure of the king or pharaoh that Lefebvre goes on to describe. And when he writes, '…the attributes of power [were] immortality, simulated by embalming and monumental tombs, and fostered on a daily basis by commemorative ceremonies,' one can take this to refer to the books that the author produces in their lifetime through the publishing process. When he writes of the 'commemorative ceremony' that takes place 'on a daily basis,' a metaphor is constructed that can be helpful to understanding the public's continuous act of reading books by that author long after their death. Then, when Lefebvre writes of the 'subjects' of these rulers for whom there is still some 'democratised' commemorative ceremony, how the critic responds to these authors springs to mind, whether in the formal role of the academic or critic, or in the less formal role of the reader, now free to post their thoughts on that most democratised graveyard of their interiority: the internet, with its inexhaustible memory and ineffable willingness to accept any and all comments by those who wish to leave them.

Now that there is this digital space of 'living-in-death' which can surpass the point at which the author no longer has a physical life, the author is yet able to remain in a state of metaphysical animation for as long their work continues to be discussed, and, in this way, become canonised in some form by their 'subjects.' This reanimation that occurs is probably even more rapid for those whose consideration had stagnated longest. In a memorial essay for *The Millions* following Brookner's death, novelist Alix Hawley satirically speculates that Brookner was a vampire, that famously lethal yet undead creature. (Hawley) This approach mirrors my own in a letter to *The London Review of Books* which was published in 2017 where I (also satirically) suggest that Brookner might have led a double life as a spy. (Beard) In both cases there is a reactionary position adopted which is indicative of some keenly felt desire to further

canonise, to reify the dead author's importance and stature, even if through grotesque corporeal or melodramatic occupational transformation.

Walter Benjamin posited that that which seems most at its end is that which is paradoxically most likely to recur.[83] Lefebvre can be seen to support this line of thinking as he traces the relationship of modern death at the point of the rehabilitation of the Japanese and German economies following their destruction, and the death and destruction they caused during the Second World War. This seems to hold true for the death of the author in contemporary society as well. It has at the very least been true in the case of Brookner. Though she had not published a novel in five years, no sooner had her death been announced then she had become 'alive' once more. Her obituary ran on the cover of *The Times*, something unthinkable in the intervening years that passed after her Booker Prize-win. She was given very personal commemorations by her friend and fellow author Julian Barnes in both *The Guardian* and *The London Review of Books*. And Penguin suddenly began rereleasing all of her novels again – many of which had been out of print for years – for new audiences, with new packaging and promotion, celebrating in the capitalist space the life which no longer lives as, before there can be rebirth, there must first be death.

This is in stark contrast to the legacy that had been built for Brookner in her lifetime. As discussed extensively in this thesis, *Hotel du Lac* was much of a literary albatross around Brookner's neck. She regretted having won the Booker Prize for it, was dismayed by its screen adaptation, and continued to believe at the end of her life that her books were 'still looking for justice.' It is perhaps an irony, utterly befitting a Brookner novel one might say, that that justice should be found not only *after* death but

[83] See Benjamin's discussion of Nietzsche and eternal recurrence in his unfinished twentieth-century opus *Arcades Project*. (Benjamin 116)

because of that death. It is an irony that Lefebvre would call a tragedy, and a tragedy which repudiates the tragic: the death of the author in our society consumes itself and, therefore, becomes consumed, in our hyper-consumerist contemporary era that seeks the profit motive even in that which has supposedly been deemed sacred. Or, perhaps, it is better put to say *especially* in that which has supposedly been deemed sacred. Without question, Penguin does not enact this republication out of a kindness, nor could that even be said of the obituarist, or the newspaper editor running any article saying Brookner's novels were misunderstood in her lifetime. Which is not to say that they are all merely soulless cynics participating in a shameless, depraved act either, but, rather, that this act of remembering finds its home in paradox: it is both admirable and lamentable; exciting and mundane; encouraging and dispiriting.

Signs suggest that, in Brookner's case, this is not merely a trend in immediate death, which is to say a trend in death that will soon die its own death. In popular media circles she continues to be discussed, often with a flummoxed 'Why had I not read her books before?' approach, or one that asserts oneself as having held the correctly appreciative view of her novels which is only now beginning to be appreciated itself. This can also be thought of as a function of the dictum not to 'speak ill of the dead.' Such a convention is sure to have suppressed more critical approaches to her work that could have been taken in obituaries and other commemorative material, and it likely continues to suppress opinion today, as there would be no perceived need now for anyone to bring her down. However, as controversy befell her in 1984, Brookner began to adopt the pose that it was not her fault that she won the Booker Prize. Yet it is clear that this was still taken as invitation to scrutinise her work, and – as *Private Eye* took to extremes – to deliberate upon the worthiness of the position in the literary hierarchy that she was perceived to have climbed to with such a win.

New digital media can exacerbate this ability for post-death authorial reanimation, and alongside it, offer the potential for reputational rehabilitation. If critics do not now speak ill of the dead, and do not in any case have much reason to do so if she is not thought to be occupying a position of privilege (or bringing out new work for renewed scrutiny), it is only those who have something beyond dismissal to say (whether it is a publisher for profit, a critic to assert their literary identity, or just a regular denizen of the internet looking to share an opinion) are the only ones talking now. Indeed, Brookner's reputation can be seen to take new shape in digital discourse, with her novels being discussed on book podcasts, quotes being widely circulated on Twitter, and now this thesis which seeks answers to how such dismissal could have been inaugurated in the first place. And yet these digital forms can also exacerbate pre-existing trends. Data from the Goodreads platform for sharing and rating personal booklists indicates that *Hotel du Lac* continues to be read in vastly larger sums than any of her other books; more than ten times so, in fact. Nevertheless, in 2020, Brookner becomes the subject of the first monograph by a major British academic publisher to focus solely on her work: Peta Mayer's *Misreading Anita Brookner* by Liverpool University Press. The title alone furthers this process, suggesting in only three words that a reputation is at stake and possibly in the process of being corrected, or at least understood more clearly.

It would be foolhardy to do more than survey the current literary landscape and make small prognostications with regard to the short-term. This thesis cannot determine for how much longer Brookner's novels will receive the kind of attention that they are receiving now: that considered, positive attention that affirms her entire corpus to a place in many of the different canons. But it certainly seems possible that what Lefebvre says about death's 'destructive capacity [to create] the premises of prosperity' applies in the case of Brookner's literary reputation.

5. Moving past that 'slight sneer somewhere in the background': Thoughts in Conclusion and Suggested Avenues for the Future Study of Brookner and Other Contemporary Authors

5.1 Recapping the Thesis Foundations with Notes to the Arguments, Frameworks, and Approaches

The aims of this thesis have been advanced on multiple fronts, employing a number of arguments in the service of answering the main research questions, which are summarised here alongside the theoretical frameworks and approaches employed, as well as the thesis's findings. It is followed by a discussion which looks to the future of some of these questions.

Because the questions are of such an interlinking nature and naturally flow from one to the other, rather than explicate all of the findings again in an abbreviated format, I will first delineate the undergirding methodologies of the thesis which were used to ground the discussions that were held herein and then provide a closing statement that seeks to address the questions in an amalgamated form.

The most prominent arguments made in the thesis have by and large been based on the desire to provide a blended approach to Brookner's novels and the era of book production in which she wrote that combines very close reading with sociological and culture critique methods. These arguments have centred on her place within late twentieth and early twenty-first century culture and sought to track her literary career from the early 1980s to today, with a focus on 1981–1984 and in particular the year in which she won the Booker Prize for *Hotel du Lac*. Supplementing these arguments, the thesis has sought to develop a way of reading Brookner's novels as significantly and widely intertextual in their invocations of canonical novels of the previous century, the

recurring presentation of self-reference to the author, and between the novels themselves with each other. More broadly, it has also been suggested that the massive events which can occur in an author's career, such as a major prize-win, can become metatexts unto themselves that readers interpret alongside the author's narratives and can go on to inform their thinking of those narratives and that author in general.

There have also been arguments advanced which are implicit to these discussions which are worth fleshing out again here. The first has been a pushback against Barthes and his edificial 'death of the author.' This has been conducted through the demonstration of an author who remained, often deliberately, at the centre of her own works in both a textual sense, as well as in the eye of critics and readers who sought to collapse her with her protagonists. In some ways this argument could be said to be simultaneously behind its time, of a fashion, and, I believe, the future of literary studies, at least while autofiction remains a dominant mode of our literary production. Because, though there are aspects to the thesis which seem to sit more comfortably with structuralism rather than poststructuralism, it must be said that a movement has formed which wishes to return to Barthes with a refreshed perspective and new questions.[84] Séan Burke, for instance, has questioned the practicality of stripping the author from the text, proclaiming in his 1992 book *The Death and Return of the Author* that in fact the author's death has been greatly exaggerated. J.C. Carlier, meanwhile, in the 2000 article 'Roland Barthes's Resurrection of the Author and Redemption of Biography' has argued that Barthes himself has been misread by the majority of those who seek to champion his ideas by not appreciating his ironical approach to the essay which Carlier refers to as 'the most misunderstood in literary theory.' (386)

[84] This is to say nothing of the postcritical perspective, which is also presently fashionable, as for instance Eve Kosofvsky Sedgwick's reparative readings which seek more experimental methods of appraisal and those who have followed her.

Finally, and perhaps closest to the drive of my own theoretical impetus, this thesis has sought to demonstrate the validity of an analysis of the entire book: its main text as a well as its paratexts, whether created by the author, publisher, or some third party like a jacket designer. Such analysis can show not only the variety of meanings we can derive from a work for ourselves as critics but also to show how consumers and other actors in the literary sphere transmit and receive their own independent meanings from a variety of signifiers located within one discrete object. Thus, the very nature of what we consider 'meaning' is made complicated, as textual meaning becomes pitched against secondary meanings in a competitive marketplace of interpretation, as multiple producers work in tandem to create the often-multiple editions of individual products. Then, beyond the book, meaning is created and carried through prize ceremonies, films, educational editions, or other scholarly works; the considerations of which can expand our understandings of seriality, adaptation, and the relationships that might exist between a host of seemingly independent works of creation.

To support these arguments, the dominating framework has been Gerard Genette's theory of intertextuality, which he terms transtextuality in order to encompasses a variety of forms of intertextuality. In addition to the close and comparative readings of Brookner's early novels, transtextuality has been applied to Brookner's whole body of work as well as the material objects of her books. A number of other critical approaches have been adopted too, chiefly in individual sections, as for instance with Avital Ronell's narcoanalysis, Mikhail Bakhtin's chronotope, and Henri Lefebvre's critiques of our quotidian contemporary culture. These inclusions have been deliberate, and deliberately brief, as they are intended not only in the service of the arguments made within this thesis but also to demonstrate the richness of Brookner's career, which as demonstrated is highly receptive to such variegated and meticulous

approaches, any of which I believe could be applied more comprehensively to Brookner in the form of its own project.

5.2 Findings in Summary

Brookner's career as a novelist was inaugurated at a point in her life when she was already a respected figure as an art historian, having achieved acclaim in the role for her direct and receptive responses to Neoclassical and Romantic French painting of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries and for breaking new ground as a prominent woman in a male-dominated field. Having already published two critical studies, such details of her life were prominently featured in the press materials of her first novel, *A Start in Life*, and on its book jacket. Unusual for an author of literary fiction to have already established herself in a separate career, this set Brookner up to establish her self-reflexive literary persona that invariably depicts intellectual female protagonists working in cerebral fields such as academia and literature. *A Start in Life* invokes this from the outset through its characterisation of Dr Ruth Weiss. Brookner's draws the connections between herself and Weiss in multiple, multi-layered ways in the narrative, including the subject matter which tracks closely with Brookner's own biography, the narrative's erudite and feminine voice, and its bookended form which privileges an academic discussing her books with her publisher. Further to this detached yet seemingly close approach, the novel's engagement with irony is made clearer through close examination of its intertextualized title with Balzac's *Un début dans la vie* and the implications that such an explicit intertextualization has on the interpretations of the text. Thus, a reflexive and ironic turn is established in Brookner's fiction, developing the beginnings of her literary persona from her first novel.

Further examination of the extent of the novel's intertextual referents to Balzac reveals a deep and complicated use of his works in her writings, and, indeed, it is even possible to read Brookner's entire corpus as a contemporary, Anglophonic response to Balzac's *La Comédie humaine*, his magnum opus of dozens of interlinking narratives portraying the ordinary lives of post-Napoleonic France. This is particularly demonstrated from Brookner's second novel *Providence* which is not only self-referential and deeply intertextual in its own way but also referential and intertextual with her first novel *A Start in Life*, thus establishing a sense of serialisation and a sequential or cyclical nature as her novels progress. Close readings of both *A Start in Life* and *Providence* reveal that they should *not* be read as formulaic but instead as a compelling engagement with life writing, the subjective experience, and the dismembered portrayal of identity. As I write in the second chapter, Brookner's 'persona is a persona that announces itself as a persona, an unusual construction [which] should be at the heart to any interpretation of her texts.' Through close and comparative readings of the two novels, and Brookner's public biography, it is clear that Brookner sought to draw the connections between the novels and herself very closely.

There is little doubt that can create a feeling of sameness in the reader who ingests multiple novels of hers within a short period of time. This has been discussed in countless reviews of her work, as well as some critical studies, and yet none have ever attempted to describe the effect this might have on the interpretation of her works. I redress this deficiency through a review of the available material on this characteristic and the application of Ronell's narcoanalysis to demonstrate the ways in which Brookner's books (the narratives and the objects themselves) are evocative of the aesthetics of addiction and drug usage through repetition, toxic drives, and déjà vu. This is especially prevalent in Brookner's third novel *Look at Me*, about a writer who is

driven to write by unhappiness and dissatisfaction in her personal life, and her fourteenth novel *A Private View* which tackles several themes and motifs from Brookner's previous novels directly and often literally, as the protagonist contemplates the roles that literature and myth have played in his cautious and ennui-laden life.

Brookner's literary persona was also conveyed by the promotional content and design of her books throughout her career. This is most clearly seen in the books' covers which invariably drew on Brookner's background as an art historian, usually featuring an avatar for the protagonist and author, or indeed both, through details of historical works of art featuring women in portraiture. In addition to invoking the self-referential nature of her texts, this also created what Bakhtin describes as the effect of an unsettled or multiple chronotope, which itself mirrors Brookner's narratives which also have this chronotopic effect through their uncannily old-fashioned feel and plotting conducted in contemporary settings. Indeed, Brookner's chief publisher, Jonathan Cape, flagrantly flouts the chronotopes of the narratives in many of their hardback editions by featuring entirely atemporal – at times even quite irrelevant – settings. Irrelevant, that is, beyond Brookner's background in art history. The atemporalities of the covers and texts are then mirrored by the books' biographical statements which very often privileged Brookner's background in art history. Though this would sit uneasily with the multiple interviews that Brookner gave in which she sought to downplay the connections between her two careers, it is difficult to see this as anything other than a deliberate marketing strategy which sets forth Brookner's novels as those which fall under a brand that would be recognisable to her readers – a brand that is, through the choice of works of art, cohesive both in its channelling of highbrow intellectualism as well as aesthetic bleakness. This branding is then compounded when Brookner wins the Booker Prize through the innumerable paperback editions of her novels which declare her as a Booker Prize-winning author.

The book for which Brookner won the Booker Prize was unique to her corpus at that time in the sense that it is satirical of her own novels and literary persona. While there are reasons why this might not have been as apparent at the time as it was for other authors such as Proust or Nabokov – such as those to do gender and with reputation – close examination of *Hotel du Lac* in relation to its antecedents quite clearly demonstrates what Genette termed self-pastiche, or a work that is *Proustifying*. Indeed, *Hotel du Lac*'s self-pastiche is conducted at the outset through its cover, dedication, and title which are each significant deviations from the rest of Brookner's oeuvre by virtue of the fact that they create an ambivalence over whether the book object has spawned from the protagonist Edith Hope (a writer) or Brookner herself, thus solidifying the image of an author who operates in modes of distance and parody rather than sincerity and directness, as has often been figured. The form that the narrative takes heightens these aspects, employing several distancing effects and levels of irony which consciously evoke the tropes of the Brookner novel thus established in her first three novels. This is inherently complex and can at times be difficult to parse given the necessarily subtle approach. However, there are a number of clues to tip off readers: most notably in the characterisation of the protagonist, a writer of pseudonymous romance novels who finds herself in a contrived but keenly felt social predicament that plays out in precisely the opposite ways of her previous novels. Brookner in this way contends with the romance novel and her own novels' relationships to it, by utilising *Hotel du Lac* as a way of undermining the form through her fulfilment denial to her characters and, by the same token, her readers. Rather than uphold the myths that the romance novel is perpetuating at this time – idealised love rewarded to women who are patient and virtuous – Brookner traps her protagonist in cycles of disaffection, at once invoking and satirising her role of the author who does

not believe in idealised love herself yet cannot stop writing novels from the point of view of those who do.

However, it is clear that any appreciation of the novel on this level would require an understanding of Brookner's previous novels, a process that is not congruent with the Booker Prize which is awarded to a single novel read in isolation by its judging panel. Therefore, when the spectacle of the 1984 competition, the ceremony's television broadcast, and the resulting massive influx of media attention is focussed onto *Hotel du Lac*, a decontextualized reading of the novel emerges that obscures all of the aforementioned elements of self-pastiche. Furthermore, due to the nature of prize and the undeniable boon it can bring to the publisher, this deconstextualization persists in Brookner's career with the prize suddenly attaching itself as a metatext to both the novel and to Brookner, signifying her as an author who writes sincere, diaristic, and (unintentionally) contrived romantic novels. Sustained analysis of the broadcast makes this clear as many of the operators in it are shown to have read it in the isolated manner, not least of all the chairman of the judging panel, Professor Richard Cobb, who in delivering his pronouncement of the winner, describes the book in terms of superficiality, suggesting it has an appeal to casual readers because it lacks the density of modernist works. Despite having been published by Jonathan Cape, the most eminently 'Bookerable' publishing house in the UK, these sentiments were simultaneously mocked and accepted as accurate descriptions of *Hotel du Lac*, as condescending press articles in the weeks following would make clear. This also brought the prize itself into controversy, with a wide number of industry players appealing to the reconsideration of its role in literary culture. Nonetheless, the novel became a genuine bestseller for Brookner and transformed her into a widely-known name, yet she was unable to shake this ridicule: indeed, her novels before and since

were reprinted and published under the pitch of that of a Booker Prize-winning author, controversy be damned, or perhaps courted.

This controversy feeds into how Brookner was canonised in her lifetime, a preoccupation of hers to some degree, as revealed in her comments in interviews, including those about 'looking for justice.' While it has been clear that a consensus on Brookner was never developed in her lifetime, her ability to be canonised in the traditional position of 'great works of literature' was compromised on several fronts. In the first place, due to the patriarchal structures of that canon, Brookner's works, which neither endorse nor defy attributes associated with patriarchal literature, are too ambivalent to easily position. Furthermore, because this conception of the canon has been so deconstructed beyond its monolithic perception, it is more helpful to imagine the canon as a mutable process made up of an infinite number of canons, often categorised in terms of genre and literary tradition.

However, the ambiguity of Brookner's novels has further complicated that process by resisting an easy categorisation of her work within even these two strands of canon. Nevertheless, it is possible to place Brookner into the relatively wide and overlapping category of 'postmodernism and feminism' which is congruent to the period in which Brookner was writing, even if her methods were of a heterodox nature. Through examination of Brookner's themes and those of her contemporaries, it is evident that Brookner shares their resistance to the metanarratives often espoused in modernity. Indeed, Brookner engages in metanarrative but only in the service of undermining that narrative. Furthermore, a comparison with Angela Carter reveals a shared scepticism towards masculinist mythologies. Whether this would constitute a feminism or a post-feminism is not agreed upon but it would be wrong to read Brookner's work as conservative in this respect, as some critics have asserted. Yet it is

clear that Brookner has not been studied to the extent of her contemporaries in postmodernism and feminism. While this is indicative of the canon's ability to perpetuate itself, it is also indicative of the high degree of ambiguity in Brookner's novels which, by seemingly able to fit into multiple classifications, makes it less likely that they are ever fitted into any at all.

Hotel du Lac has been studied in such a manner to some extent, however: at least at the secondary school level, as shown through the three educational editions that were published between 1989 and 1995. Each of these study editions reinforces many of the points made in the discussions across the thesis – most notably in regard to the role of autobiography – as well as demonstrates the idiosyncratic nature of canonicity, as Brookner is positioned in relation to authors as seemingly disparate as Joseph Conrad and Ursula Le Guin. It is clear as well the prominent role that adaptation in popular media plays in what works are considered to constitute our contemporary canon and in turn can alter how the original work is then canonised.

Brookner was disappointed with the adaptation of *Hotel du Lac* for the BBC's Screen Two series of films. Though it is important to acknowledge the distinction between source and adaptation as textual works, it is accurate to say that novel is presented in a distorted form on the screen, as it presents a mimicry of the romance novel, rather than an invested interrogation of it. Furthermore, the star power of the adaptation's lead actors renders the heart of the novel's romantic plot mutated, as the age and relative glamour of the actors deviate from the source and disturb the love triangle's sense of comedic urgency. Generally, the irony of the text is displaced in the service of short, light entertainment, as made clear in the distribution of the DVD in the tabloid press and the reduction of expressed subjectivity in the protagonist's experiences. This served only to heighten the described effects of the Booker Prize

ceremony, cementing Brookner in the minds of many as just the type of novelist she sought to send up, rather than a novelist sophisticated enough to send herself up so deftly.

Brookner went on to publish many novels after *Hotel du Lac* and yet the reputation she developed following her 1984 prize-win largely persisted, at least until her death. Lefebvre's interrogations of death in the everyday can be read to have direct bearing on the death of authors in our contemporary marketplace, conceived in both its literal consumptive version as well as in the figurative marketplace of ideas. Like the canon, the reputation of the author who leaves behind a corpus is never immutable, and the author is able to carry on life through the rituals of their readers. Brookner in particular is representative of this metaphysical reanimation as her importance and stature is reified not only by virtue of this thesis but to an even greater extent conducted through the internet as fans across the globe seek to reaffirm her status as author worth reading, both closely and widely, beyond that prize-winning albatross saddled so long around her neck in life. In death she was featured on the cover of a newspaper and honoured with a number of high-profile obituaries.

Though Brookner once asserted that behind appraisals of her novels lurked a 'slight sneer somewhere in the background,' it seems increasingly likely that the sneers will fade away entirely as new media and the academy give her novels the serious critical attention she eluded in her lifetime. (Brookner and Brown)

5.3 New Research Arising from the Thesis and Current Considerations

As suggested at the end of the fourth chapter, speculating on the future of Brookner's literary reputation without due caution risks future embarrassment and would

undermine the position already expressed in this thesis of the capriciousness of literary reputation. There are certainly a variety of avenues that could be pursued, however, some of which have been only been touched on here due to the limited nature of such a project and the desire to provide above all a new starting point for future scholarship. Certainly, only a few novels – nearly all from the earliest points of Brookner's career – have been discussed in great depth. Examining some of the novels from the middle period of her oeuvre in particular could be valuable, especially from a publishing studies perspective as it is during this time in which Brookner's editor Liz Calder leaves Jonathan Cape to form Bloomsbury Publishing while Brookner remains at Cape, and it is also the time in which Brookner is writing some of her most thematically ambitious novels. (Maschler 194-195) The Cape files at the University of Reading could illuminate the changes, if any, which might have occurred in the treatment of Brookner or her narratives following Calder's departure. *A Friend from England*, published in 1987, singularly introduces the portrayal of same-sex desire into Brookner's oeuvre, producing complicated but subtle relationships in the text that could benefit from sustained analysis in a time in which attitudes are more enlightened than when it was published. Brookner's 1988 novel *Latecomers*, also of this period, has been scarcely mentioned in this thesis yet is a remarkable and distinctly un-Brookner novel that follows the lives of two Jewish child refugees of the Kindertransport growing up in London and learning to reconcile with their tragic pasts. Though the outlier status of the two novels is what occluded either from featuring in any discussions held in this thesis, a comparative study with some of those analysed here could further illuminate what makes a novel by Brookner a 'Brookner novel,' and provoke such distinctions within her body of work. Furthermore, a study of Brookner's later novels – most of which deal extensively with the loneliness and isolation of elderly characters – could be highly relevant to the intersections of gerontology and the arts as our ageing

population presents new challenges to our communities, many of which having become starker since Brookner's time. This thesis, too, could be elongated to encompass these multiple potential avenues of research in the form of a critical biography, an idea considered at the very germination of this study but ruled out in favour of a more traditional thesis due to concerns of archival and copyright access while Brookner was still alive.

On this, there is still much to be mined from the available archives housing Brookner's materials. In the case of the Cape files at the University of Reading, on my visit, due to a cataloguing error, it was thought that only items related to Brookner's first novel were available. In fact, the files from her first eight novels are. A number of surprises were found in the one box which was accessed, so it seems likely that a future researcher might be eager to learn what material is held in the others. Furthermore, though the Anita Brookner Papers at the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas are quite limited, there is a separate archive held since 1985 and added to intermittently at Boston University's Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center. It is not clear how many researchers of Brookner would have accessed this as it does not feature in any of the presently existent research that was used in this thesis. However, not only is it extensive, it also holds many unique items of correspondence and what could be a memoir of the time in which she studied abroad in Paris, an experience very often alluded to in her narratives and biographical statements but has rarely been accompanied by any concrete description. It goes without saying how valuable these could be to any work of biography.

Separately, while many of the conclusions that can be drawn from the thesis have a focus on Brookner as an author, it is also true that Brookner has been used as a case study of how books can operate within the publishing and media industries, and

how the intervention of multiple texts can play a role in interpretive processes that complicate our understanding of a narrative. Analysis of an entire book, through transtextuality, can come closest to revealing these processes as well as the myriad 'meanings' that might exist within a book. This analysis has been applied to Brookner because she is uniquely capable of demonstrating the intervention of oeuvre, publishing, and prizes, but it is certain that other authors would bring to light findings of their own if considered with the same precision. In the digital space in which new kinds of texts are being formed – be they in the form of programmed bot-generated stories, narrative-driven video games, or new multisensory virtual reality experiences – a need for renewed application of Genette's work of detailed classification and rigorous consideration presents itself more than ever in order to understand the potential relationships inherent within the encounter of any text, author, and the public sphere. Any contribution to the understanding of these relationships in the period prior, as this thesis has sought to provide, can prime the new understandings necessary in this contemporary moment.

There is still much consideration of the Booker Prize and other literary prizes to be done as well. While English's study is still relevant in its consideration of how prizes operate in culture, there is a still a surprising dearth of scholarship on prizes in literary studies despite a wide amount of material available and their collective impact on the industry. The Booker Prize archives at Oxford Brookes University are very well resourced and a number of approaches could be taken, most notably the long-term impact on individual author sales figures, the aesthetics and forms of the 'Bookerable' novel genre and its relationship to literary celebrity, and the prize's shifting influence.

This past year's Booker Prize typically generated controversy: this time by way of the judges breaching a rule established in 1993 that there must be only one winner,

instead announcing that the prize must be shared between Bernadine Evaristo and Margaret Atwood. For many this was lamentable as it denied Evaristo, the first black woman and first black British author, the opportunity to win on her own, whereas Atwood had been shortlisted in 1986, 1989, 1996, and 2003, and won previously in 2000 for *The Blind Assassin*. Indeed, Charlotte Higgins, *The Guardian*'s chief culture writer, argued that because the judges were unwilling to forgo either the 'cultural tide' of Margaret Atwood's *The Testaments* or the potential to make history with Evaristo's *Girl, Woman, Other*, the 'doublethink' of prizes in which competition is simultaneously held to be destructive and constructive to art faltered and 'push[ed] back the Wizard of Oz's curtain, suggesting the imperfect, flawed humanity lurking behind the award's supposedly authoritative façade.' Though I remain sceptical of Higgins's concluding prediction that shortlisted writers might start to pool their winnings and 'repudiate the notion of the individual winner' any further beyond the immediate future (the financial reality for many writers will ultimately preclude such a luxury in my estimation, barring any revolutionary social-structural change) it does seem accurate to say that this past year may have been a watershed moment for the prize. Because, while many will have been thrilled with the publicity it generated – Evaristo doubled her lifetime sales in five days after the announcement – for the cynically minded it is hard to view the proceedings as much more than a morbid indulgence on behalf of publishers to, in effect, potentially double their boosted earnings with their two winners. (Higgins) That the majority of the judging committee for 2019 work in industries that can benefit from such a move – Brookner's old editor and the Bloomsbury Publishing founder Liz Calder was one of the judges, in fact – is hardly surprising, yet one wonders what it portends if it proves irresistible again and initiates a dismantling of the prize's very raison d'être to find the best individual novel.

Meanwhile it is not at all clear that prizes will be able to continue to capture the public's imagination. Recent polling indicates that fewer than one in five British adults are 'very interested' (4%) or 'fairly interested' (18%) in the Booker Prize, with 'not at all interested' the group which commands the largest support (47%), followed by 'not very interested' (29%), and the rest not knowing (3%). This trend follows even amongst those who say they love books: the groups are repeated with 36% at 'very' or 'fairly' and 63% at 'not at all' and 'not very.' (YouGov) Yet prizes are still a boon for publishers and booksellers alike, even in the face of such public disinterest. The largest book chain Waterstones now follows the prize model explicitly in order to boost sales and to regularise its orders from publishers, with a shortlist in several categories released each month before the crowning of a 'book of the year' each December. A new North American prize for women, the Carol Shields prize, has also been announced in recent months in order to redress gender inequality in prizes which has remained a characteristic of many since their inception, including the Booker Prize despite its fairly balanced recent history. (Flood)

Therefore, while there is yet ample intellectual space in which to further interrogate prizes, it is also true that such considerations may actually be small potatoes in comparison with some of the bigger forces at play currently affecting our production of literature. Thomas Docherty argues in his 2018 book *Literature and Capital* that the 'cultural capital' space that literature inhabits has become so entwined with first colonialism and now neoliberal market fundamentalism that even students and professors of the humanities have come to view themselves as 'human capital' and to define their own self-worth in regard to the financialization possibilities of their mental or artistic labours. Given the fiscal realities of being a practicing writer in the UK, in which many published authors opt for the patronage system of the university through contributions to English and Creative Writing departments in order to support

their artistic labours, it is worth asking if, since Brookner's time, the university plays the greater role than prizes can in shaping the direction of literary discourse, albeit more subtly. This seems probable as, despite the high-profile events which prizes can still command, the university would remain the greater epicentre of the relationships between capital, politics, and market-driven hermeneutics in our contemporary modes of the production of literature due to the sheer numbers. Even those writers who do not take on formal position within the university system will have doubtlessly been affected by these same or adjacent pressures, whether as students themselves, as visiting speakers, or as participants at related events such as book festivals which are typically subjected to an even more explicit profitability and/or 'impact' impetus. Indeed, despite its cultural cache, winning the Booker Prize is a luxury afforded to but one author a year, for not much more than a lecturer's yearly salary. The resulting increase of book sales would supplement the remuneration to be sure, but the dim prospect of winning would likely divorce the prize from the daily grind of making ends meet as a writer in our society.

Paul Crosthwaite demonstrates the extent to which these forces have already shaped fiction in his 2019 book *The Market Logics of Contemporary Fiction*. While Crosthwaite's focus is less on the role of specific institutions in the literature of neoliberalism themselves and more on how the market logics of the financial sector and publishing and book trade industries have guided authors to produce certain forms and aesthetics of neoliberalism in their novels, prizes are equally not held as a dominating force in the production of new literature. For both Docherty and Crosthwaite, prizes should be seen as secondary actors – like the authors and publishers themselves – which are to the larger degree responsive to the demands of the market, rather than having much say on those demands in the first place. Indeed, it is worth considering the role that prizes would play in an economic system of greater

equality, wherein the life of a writer might come to be viewed as valuable, affordable, and autonomous, and therefore less reliant on systems of finance generally. Though difficult to imagine given the hegemony of capital in our daily lives, it is not at all clear that a desire to rank novels would naturally feature in such a system. This is not to dream a fantasy of pure egalitarianism or even to declare that such a dream, however conceived, is definitively desirable. Rather, it is to simply point out that the Booker Prize arises from specific circumstances of our capital-based system that correspond to the unique developments of that system historically: it was not inevitable and is not necessarily a permanent component of our literary culture. Indeed, changing the way we value our own lives has significant implications for the ways in which we determine how literature holds value and which holds the most. This in turn would alter the role that literature plays in society, as well as our methods of writing, reading, and interpreting any text. In the words of Jonathan Culler, 'one can always ask of a novel how what it implicitly says about making sense relates to the way it goes about making sense.' (34) Perhaps it is equally worth asking how, at this moment, what a novel implicitly says about making cents relates to the way it goes about making cents.

Brookner's career can complicate these ideas further, bringing this thesis back to its introductory consideration of divisiveness. With their presentations of self-reflexivity, ideological ambivalence, and demonstrations of yearning for purpose in a secular and avaricious society, her narratives can feel as contemporary as ever. Yet the chronotopes of her covers and intertextual referents seem to draw us back to another age entirely. Though bestowed the most prominent accolade a writer can receive in our time, the prize hardly inoculated Brookner from criticism. Indeed, it seemed to invite it further, demonstrating that even within supposedly meritocratic systems the 'winners' can be made to feel like a 'losers,' especially if they fall outwith easily identified classifications of tradition and value. Mostly ignored by the end of her career, it was

Brookner's death which brought renewed attention.[85] And though Brookner's protagonists were invariably the 'winners' of an economic system that rewards inherited wealth and the labours of the professional class, usually living without financial regard at all, their profound disaffections call into question the inherent spiritual value of any wealth redistribution system that is not accompanied by substantial investment in our communities or new focus on policies which prioritise the happiness of the populace over its productivity.

As for what else might lie ahead in scholarship, literature, or society, the enigma that Frances Hinton – one of Brookner's most explicitly self-reflexive protagonists – offers at the start of *Look at Me* seems relevant:

> Once a thing is known it can never be unknown. It can only be forgotten. And, in a way that bends time, so long as it is remembered, it will indicate the future. It is wiser, in every circumstance, to forget, to cultivate the art of forgetting. To remember is to face the enemy. The truth lies in remembering. (5)

Whether wiser or not, it would be difficult to say in a cosmic sense. But Brookner has not been forgotten, and the truth of her career does lie in remembering, in all of its complexities.

[85] One recalls Jacques Derrida's *The Gift of Death* and his reading of Baudelaire's *Counterfeit Money* in which Derrida finds that the gift is the site of 'the impossible,' continually undoing itself by its reciprocal nature. Brookner's death gifts to her the attention she eluded in life, with the ontological impossibility of her 'realising' it alongside. (34)

Appendix One: Jonathan Cape Covers

Image 1: First UK edition of *A Start in Life* published by Jonathan Cape 1981.

Image 2: First UK edition of *Hotel du Lac* published by Jonathan Cape 1984.

Image 3: First UK edition of *A Misalliance* published by Jonathan Cape 1986.

Image 4: First UK edition of *A Friend from England* published by Jonathan Cape 1987.

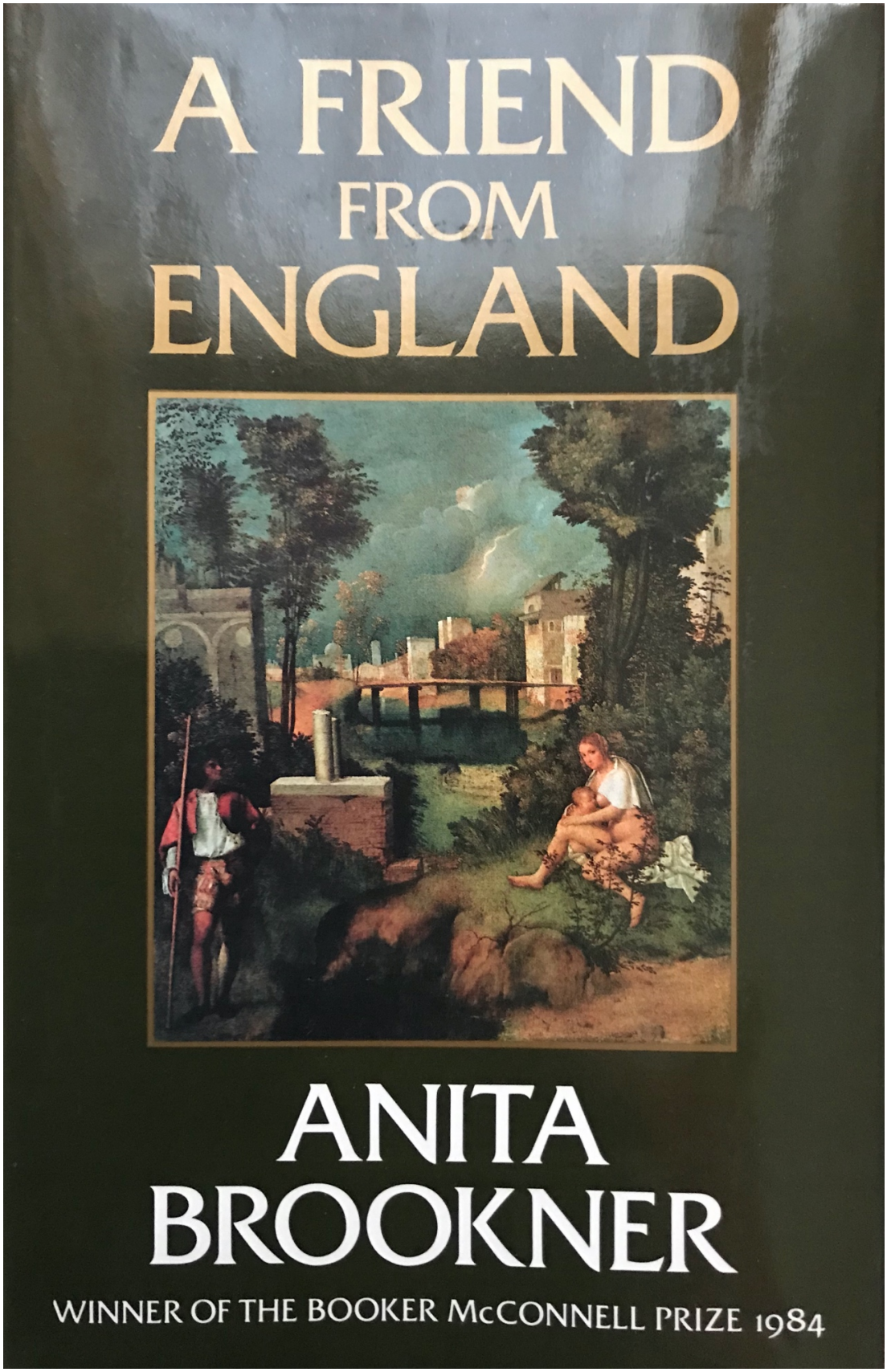
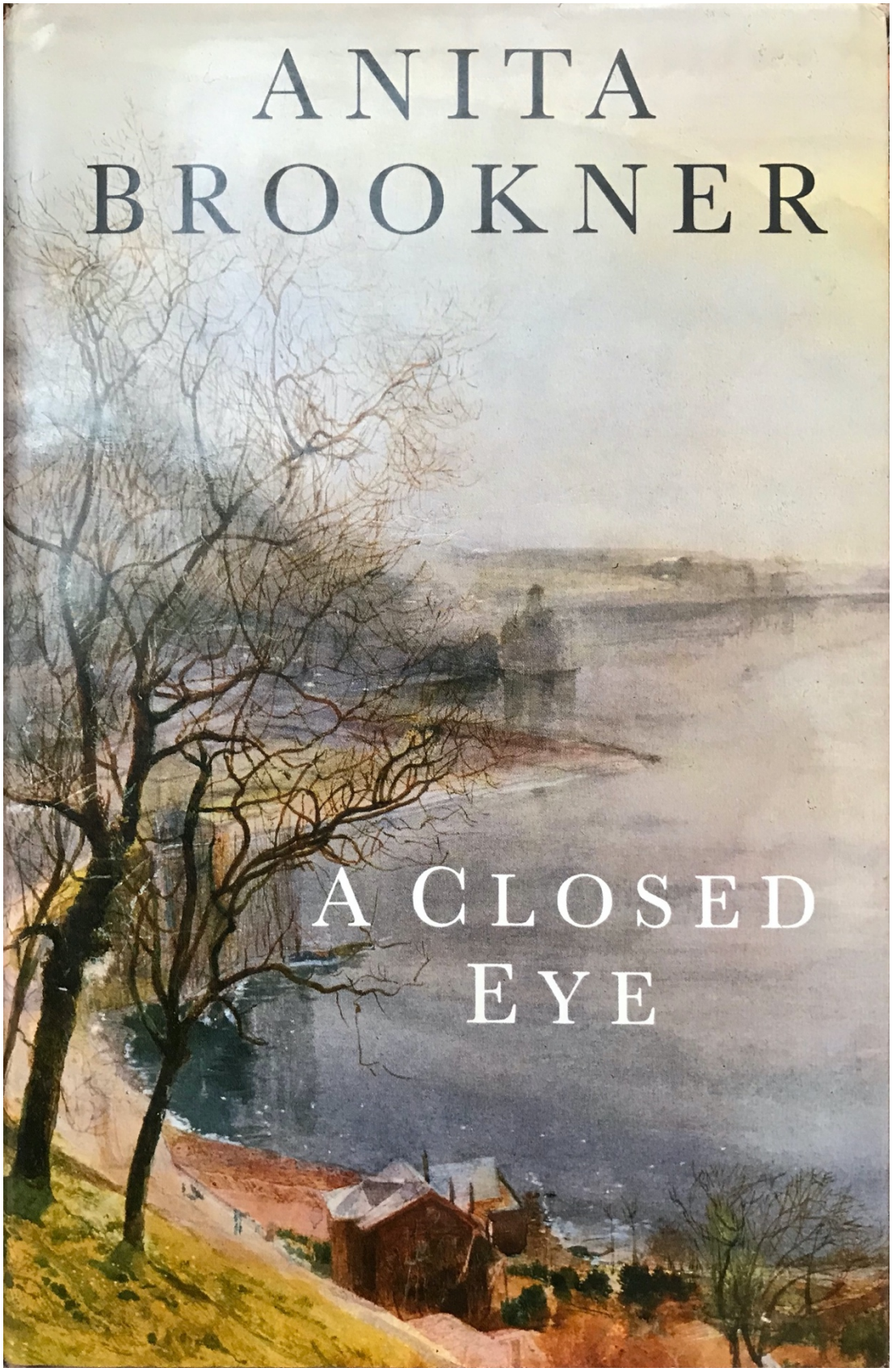


Image 5: First UK edition of *A Closed Eye* published by Jonathan Cape 1991.



Appendix Two: Channel 4 Booker Prize Ceremony Transmission, 1984

Old Library, Guildhall, London

THE BOOKER PRIZE (title sequence)

Melvyn Bragg: Hello, welcome to the Old Library at London's Guildhall and to the presentation of the 1984 Booker McConnell prize for fiction. That'll happen live here in about 40 minutes. The Booker Prize is Britain's major literary award. This year it's worth £15,000, five thousand more than last year, and it can make the winner's the most talked about novel of the year. It can mean fame for a new author, as it did for Salman Rushdie a few years ago and it can also reconfirm the reputation of an established novelist as with V.S. Naipaul, Iris Murdoch, and William Golding. It can mean films, fortune, envy, spleen, paranoia, everything that success brings in the literary world. The prize is awarded to the best novel published in the United Kingdom during 1984 by an author from the British Commonwealth, the Republic of Ireland, Pakistan, Bangladesh, or South Africa. There's a strong tradition of non-British winners. This year 106 novels were submitted for consideration. A month ago, the judges selected a shortlist of 6 novels. Their authors are: J.G. Ballard, whose *Empire of the Sun* is an account of his boyhood experiences in war-torn Japanese-occupied Shanghai; Julian Barnes author of *Flaubert's Parrot*, a book about a retired English doctor's obsessive quest for the real Flaubert; Anita Brookner whose *Hotel du Lac* describes a writer of romantic fiction in mysterious exile in a Swiss hotel, Anita Desai can't be with us tonight but her novel *In Custody* is the study of an Indian teacher's disillusionment with his hero, a famous old poet; Penelope Lively's *According to Mark* shows us a literary biographer becoming gradually entangled with his subject matter; and finally David Lodge's *Small World* has international academics questing after truth like knights after the holy grail. Three men, three women. Five of the books about writers. No duds. But first to tell us more about the Booker Prize works, here's Martin Goff, director of the National Book League, who has organised the prize since it began sixteen years ago.

[to Goff] The worry that a lot of people have is that the hype, of which we tonight are part, is becoming more important than, as it were, serious fiction itself. What do you think of that?

Martin Goff: No, I don't think that's true at all. Ah, the whole thing about the Booker Prize is hype or not it gets people reading worthwhile novels. It gets them reading the winner, the shortlist, and lots of novels that didn't make the shortlist. And I think that's good.

Bragg: Do you have real evidence for that or is that something which you bring to bear?

Goff: Alright, let's take very simple examples. You mentioned Salman Rushdie, which Cape's hope to sell two and a half thousand copies of in two years. After it had won, 45,000 hardback copies were sold within three months.

Bragg: Is there an element though that again people worry about that you can't judge six different novels as if they were six racehorses and in that sense you can't have a clear winner?

Goff: I think there's some truth in that, obviously. If you've got six different species of roses, you can say which is the best. If you've got six flowers it's jolly difficult to say which of those flowers, if they're all different flowers, is the best. But I still think it's possible to find a modicum of judgement in it.

Bragg: Well let – could you introduce us to the judges who have been spending most of their summer, perhaps most of the year, looking through these literary flowers. Let's hear about the judges.

Goff: Yes, the chairman of the judges is Richard Cobb. He's a fellow of Worcester College, Oxford and was professor of Modern History there until earlier this year. He's written a number of books on French history, and also a memoir of his childhood in Kent called Still Life. Anthony Curtis, another judge, is the literary editor of the Financial Times, and he has written books on the French theatre and Somerset Maugham, among other subjects. Polly Devlin is a well-known journalist and broadcaster, she's also an author and her books include *The Far Side of the Lough* and *All of us There*. Then there's John Fuller, who teaches English at Magdalen College, Oxford. He's also a poet and last year his first novel Flying to Nowhere was on the Booker shortlist. And, finally, Ted Rowlands: he's Labour MP for Merthyr Tydfil and chairman of the all-party parliamentary committee on book [unintelligible].

Bragg: The mention of a politician brings, uh, the question, is there much politicking around, for the Booker prize, are there approaches by publishers in the night, and so on?

Goff: I'm not sure there's *that* but I do think that publishers do think a great deal of which books they'll submit, which books if – they're only allowed to put in four each – and if they um don't submit those four will have the judges have the right to do so, call in others. There's that sort of politicking but I've never heard of a case of the judges being nobbled or influenced or anything like that.

Bragg: Can you recognise such a thing as a Booker Prize shortlist novel?

Goff: Fey Weldon claimed that in addition to every other quality, uh, Booker books had a quality which she called 'Bookerish'. I think that's jolly difficult. You can say that because it's often been won by Indian author, a South African, that it's Commonwealth, that isn't true. You can say all sorts of things but I think that the best thing about Booker judges, I suspect look for, is a book that in ten years' time will have the sort of meaning it has now. That may be a Booker quality.

Bragg: Okay. Tell us about the judging process and then we're all clear about what goes on.

Goff: What goes on is that the books are sent in I think it was you yourself who mentioned 106 titles were submitted, the National Book League sends those titles to all of the judges who spend the whole summer, 106 is a hell of a lot books to read, spend the whole summer reading them and when they've done so they send me their front runners, so six, seven eight front runners, which I submit to all of them, then they meet and that, those lists of front runners means they've got something like 30 titles to consider, out of that in mid-September they get the shortlist and then from that that shortlist is published and after that they have to work today to find the winner.

Bragg: And they worked this afternoon and the smoke came out of the chimney about an hour or so ago when we'll know what message it was carrying in a few minutes. But thank

you Martin Goff. Now here's Hermione Lee presenter of Book 4 to introduce from our own studios the six authors and the descriptions of their own books.

Hermione Lee: Our interviews with the six shortlisted authors are in alphabetical order for strict neutrality. So we start with J.G. Ballard. Ballard who's lived for many years in Shepperton, a quiet outer suburb of London, is well known for his science fiction novels and stories, obsessive myths of catastrophe and dereliction, such as *Crash*, *The Drowned World*, and *The Disaster Area*. With his latest novel, *Empire of the Sun*, he seems to be moving away from his fantasies of abandoned post-space age landscapes towards more realistic autobiography. But in fact it has a lot in common with Ballard's science fiction. Those derelict landscapes turn out not to just be Ballard's private inventions but what he saw from his prison of war camp in Shanghai. We asked him to describe the novel:

Ballard: *Empire of the Sun* is a novel set in Shanghai, China during the Second World War. I was born in Shanghai in 1930 and lived there through the war, and was I interned with my parents in a camp south of Shanghai, and I describe in the novel the adventures of a boy of my own age called Jim who is in fact separated from his parents and spends the entire war on his own surviving through the network of camps around Shanghai until he finally finds himself in Lunghua camp, there he lives for three years, on his wits, struggling to survive, and at the same time, watching his own mind turn into an adult one, and looking forward to the future and coping with the total dislocation that has taken place in his life. Um, most of the adventures in the book are imaginary but they draw on my experiences. Now I chose to write the book as a novel rather than a work of nonfiction, uh, because I felt that in a way well I could reach the psychological truth, uh, by fictionalising rather than in a work of nonfiction, and I felt that in a way the imaginary adventures of my hero were psychologically true of my own experiences in a way that a straightforward account, a nonfiction account, would not have been.

Lee: Julian Barnes is a literary journalist as well as a novelist. He's worked on the book pages of the New Statesman and the Sunday Times, is currently the Observer's television critic, and has written to earlier novels, *Metroland* and *Before She Met Me*. His new novel sets out in search of the true historical facts about that quizzical genius Gustav Flaubert but on the way Flaubert's parrot gets mixed up with all sorts of other things: critics, coincidences, pyramids, red currant jam, clichés, and a sad secret. He told us how he came to write the book.

Barnes: Well, *Flaubert's Parrot* is one of those books which starts from a single identifiable incident. Um, I was in Rouen about three years ago and I went to a Flaubert museum. There are two museums in Rouen. One where he was, in the house where he was born, and one in the house where he died. And I went to the first one and amongst the exhibits I discovered a stuffed parrot which um he had borrowed, according to the label, it said that he had borrowed it from the museum of Rouen in order to help him write *Un Coer Sample* which is one of his greatest short stories. I was sort of curiously touched, and moved by seeing this. It seemed to me that this was something which put me in touch with the writer. Um, until two days later, I went to the other Flaubert shrine in Rouen, and there among the exhibits, there was a second stuffed parrot. And it was a sort of odd, bizarre, incident. And at the same time it was a sort of slap over the wrist. It was as if the two parrots were saying to me, 'You think you can get in touch with an author that easily, you think you can seize him, get his reality, of course you can't.'

Lee: Until four years ago Anita Brookner was known as a distinguished art historian who teaches at the Courtauld Institute, was the first woman to be Slade Professor at Cambridge and has written books on eighteenth-century French painters. But in 1981 she published her first novel, *A Start in Life*, and a made an immediate name for herself in this new field. Since then, she has written three more novels: *Providence*, *Look at Me*, and now *Hotel du Lac*. In all of them, a woman on her own finds out some sharp truths about happiness, love and success. *Hotel du Lac*, as she told us, is no exception.

Brookner: *Hotel du Lac* (pronounced in a French accent) *Hotel du Lac* is about a lady called Edith Hope who goes to Switzerland where she has a little adventure. And I think it's a straightforward love story but I also think it's something else. Edith is one of those dim, trusting women, who's always overlooked and overtaken and this is really a parable about the tortoise and the hare. And I'd like to think it's a vindication of the rights of tortoises. Tortoises don't win the race, they don't even get into the first heat, but they do get a vote. And as Edith finds out, she makes her vote, rather an unexpected one.

Lee: Is it a, is it a naturalistic novel would you say? I mean are the people that she meets the sort of people you have met or might have…

Brookner: Oh yes, certainly. They're types of course, but then people do occasionally fall into types. There's the avaricious widow, there's the predatory divorcee, and there's a sort of man who roves around hotels looking for bait and prey, and I think they all find what they're looking for.

Lee: Anita Desai lives with her family in Delhi, and has been writing novels, stories, and children's books in English for over twenty years. Like her recent short stories, *Games at Twilight*, and her best known early novels, *Fire on the Mountain*, and *Clear Light of Day*, which was shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 1980, her new book has a very vivid Indian setting, and deals with characters who aren't at all successful or secure. *In Custody*, is the story of a wretched teacher of literature, unhappily married and discontented with small town life, who gets swept up into the orbit of a famous Urdu poet old and drunk is as sad as it is grotesque. Anita Desai began by telling us about the book's title.

Desai: Well I'm told that it's got a very unattractive and unappealing title, *In Custody*. I couldn't help that because it's about a vision I have of everybody living inside a trap and not being able to break out of it or hardly ever, although that's not the basic idea behind the book, I must confess. It's a far more trivial one which occurred to me years ago when I first started going to concerts of Indian music and became fascinated by the figure of the accompanist. It seemed strange to me that an accomplished musician would be content to sit behind the great maestro and simply accompany him all through his life, and I realised this relationship must be a very complex one between the two and in fact I wrote a little short story about this figure. It's called 'Accompanist,' in my *Games at Twilight* collection but I wasn't done with it when I had written the story, I went on to write this novel only for some reason the musician became a college lecturer and the maestro became the poet. Perhaps because I live in New Delhi and am more aware of the Urdu literary scene which is a very tiny one and therefore very intense. It has a few darling figures and a great many smaller ones hovering around and this creates a very exciting although a very limited world.

Lee: Like Anita Desai, Penelope Lively is also a writer of children's books, and she too has been shortlisted for the Booker Prize before with her first novel for adults *The Road to Lichfield*. She grew up in Egypt and has lived for many years in Oxfordshire. Her novels and

stories, which include *Treasures of Time* and *Judgement Day* are always interested in investigating history, place, and the past, and *According to Mark* as she described it to us pursues that kind of historian's interest.

Lively: It's called *According to Mark*, it's, it's a book about a biographer. I was fascinated about this curious, rather eerie relationship between the biographer and his or her subject, the way in which the subject who may well be dead has the advantage of silence and of concealing, manipulating evidence, perhaps, and the way in which the biographer, has the advantage of a sort of omniscience, of knowing the story, knowing what comes next, so it's about a biographer called Mark Lamming who's writing about an invented figure called Gilbert Strong. Obviously, I had to invent a total subject. He's a literary man of the sort of rather sub-, distinctly sub-major literary figure. He's not a Wells, or a Shaw, I didn't want him to dominate the book and the story is of Mark's feeling that he's becoming more and more invaded by his own subject. He falls in love with Gilbert Strong's granddaughter, his literary executor, a totally inappropriate and inconvenient kind of love, a sort of obsessive delusion, a midsummer night's dream kind of love because she's not a bit like him, she's totally unbookish, she doesn't read, and then towards the end of the story he finds out things about Gilbert Strong's own life that actually distress him. He begins to feel prurient.

Lee: David Lodge is a writer of comic novels and also an academic. He's professor of modern English literature at the University of Birmingham and has written three books on critical approaches to modern fiction. Though he doesn't only write campus novels – his last book *How Far Can You Go* was about a group of English Catholics in middle age – he's probably best known for *Changing Places*, set in the semi-fictional universities of Rummage and Plotinus. *Small World* is a kind of sequel to that novel, with some of the same characters. But as David Lodge explained to us, the campus novel is a lot more mobile than it used to be.

Lodge: *Small World* has a subtitle, 'an academic romance,' and the basic idea of it is a kind of metaphor, a sort of resemblance that I saw between the world of academic conference going, of professional people jetting around the world meeting each other in rather exotic surroundings having, perhaps, affairs, certainly being in rivalry with each other, between that world and the world of traditional romance, of knights in armour going out on quests, trying to win the love of their ladies, having adventures, coincidences and so on. So the interplay, or the resemblance is really a comic device in a way, so sort of mock heroic, in a way, I suppose, but I think it also has a slightly deeper meaning in that some people think that the story of the Arthurian knights and the grail legend is really about sterility and fertility, about the lands laid waste by sterility and being fructified again. And I was thinking the world of literature and scholarship, the intellectual world also in some ways seem to be often sterile and people in it suffer from say writer's blocks, intellectual blocks, and so on. So, I was also playing, there's an underlying myth about people being frustrated in their creatives lives and getting a kind of release at the end. So, it's um a novel I think with several layers, like an onion. The top layer is a funny layer, I hope so, but um the deeper you get perhaps there's more meaning in it.

Lee: So, those are the six authors who are on this year's Booker Prize shortlist, now back to the Old Library at the Guildhall.

Bragg: Thanks, so that's the shortlist. It's been called an unadventurous choice by some people. In fact, the autumn sport in the book pages seems to me to have been find the alternative Booker. Paul Bailey at the Standard called for Angela Carter's Nights at the

Circus and so do many others. Robert Nye at *The Guardian* for Howard Jacobson's *Peeping Tom*. Auberon Waugh in *The Mail* for Keith Waterhouse, regrettably underrated as a novelist, perhaps because he writes for a popular newspaper. Neil Linden, *The Sunday Times Magazine*, tipped Martin Amis, as did others. *The TLS* regretted the absence of Muriel Spark, and so on. My own alternative list would include some of those and Kingsley Amis, Francis King, and Beryl Bainbridge. Which is not to crab this list, at least three, I think, are very good indeed, but the intense gossip shows how keen, how for some people's taste, over-anxious the prize winning factor has become in what until recently was thought to be the quiet pastures of serious English fiction. Now we take a short break. In part 2, we'll hear our own panel's views of the six books, the announcement of the winner, and the presentation of the prize itself.

End of Part One

THE BOOKER PRIZE (title sequence)

Part 2

follows shortly

[this is overlaid stock footage of swans, and a graphic]

Part 2

Bragg: Hello, welcome back to the Booker Prize live from the Guildhall, London. Each year Ladbrokes offers odds on the shortlisted books for literary punters. It's now as traditional as jellied eels at the derby. Here we go: J.G. Ballard's *Empire of the Sun* is the 7-4 odd favourite [graphic says 4-7], David Lodge's Small World is 11-2, the two Anitas, Brookner and Desai are both 6-1, Julian Barnes with *Flaubert's Parrot* is at 7-1, and the outsider is Penelope Lively's *According to Mark* at 12-1. Now Hermione Lee is joined by her own panel to discuss the books on that shortlist.

Lee: With me to discuss the shortlist are Peter Ackroyd, journalist, poet, novelist, and author of the highly praised biography of T.S. Eliot, which was published last month, Malcolm Bradbury, professor of English and American Literature at the University of East Anglia, one of whom's novels *Rates of Exchange* was on the Booker shortlist last year, he was chairman of the judges in 1981, and is now on the management committee of the prize, and Germaine Greer, who has taught at universities in Britain and America and who is the author of the *Female Eunuch*, *The Obstacle Race*, and *Sex and Destiny*, which was published earlier in the year. I think for the sake of variety that we should take the novels in reverse alphabetical order, so we'll start with David Lodge. And Peter Ackroyd could I ask you first for what you thought of David Lodge's novel *Small World*.

Ackroyd: Well, I suppose one could call it a kind of intellectual farce, couldn't one, set in the rather diminished world or a sort of toy town world of academia. Now myself having nothing whatever to do with university life it's actually rather riveting. It was full of authentic or at least convincing detail and for those who have no connection with that world it might as sort of a revelation. One didn't know for example that academics are preoccupied with sex. So quite apart from being a very comic novel, it's also something of a sociological trek. But having said that, it is also very comic, I think the defining characteristic of this book is the exuberance of it which comes from comic invention of a very high order. There are very few pages I thought where the tension of the narrative lapsed. And although

some people might be rather disconcerted by his use of literary self-consciousness, literary metaphors and so on, I think he did that very well. It was done with a great deal of skill and taught one more about poststructuralism than one had learned at university.

Lee: Germaine Greer, I suspect you don't agree.

Greer: Well I think I probably do, I just would derive a different meaning from the same ideas. I think um as a novelist David Lodge is probably a very good literature teacher, the stuff I really like is his guying of the theoretics schools and his defence of the English refusal to take up, by and large to take up, a theoretical Germanic sort of position. Literature escapes unscathed at that level, but it doesn't escape unscathed in the use that he makes of the romance tradition for what I think is a very predictable little piece of work. Also for a novel which has as one of its basic values purity it's extraordinarily prurient. And it's also I think – I hate to use the word – but it's vulgar. The descriptions of people in terms of what they cost and what they spend and what they earn is I think poisoned with the envy of small-time academia, besides which there are very few academics who actually get into this jet-set business. Most of them are teaching their knickers off in our society, especially where they do long hours for a very paltry reward.

Lee: Well, I thought that was part of the joke. Malcolm Bradbury would you hold the balance on this one?

Bradbury: Well, I'll try but I'm in a rather embarrassing position in that um David Lodge is a very close friend of mine and usually I'm confused with him, so it um many people think that I've written the book, so um I have to be very careful about what I say –

Ackroyd: Small world.

Bradbury: …Yes, it is a small world, but um I admire his work enormously. I admire his comedy enormously. He's a novelist who has spread from very serious fiction about catholic experience into comic fiction. And this, this is a repeat in a sense of a novel that he's written before, um that is to say the characters are brought back, but they're brought back I think in an extremely splendid and extensive way. David Lodge seems to me to have written a global novel and tried to write a very global novel, and tried to write a novel about literature. A lot of the books on this list are about literature. This is a very good one, I think.

Lee: Can we go on to uh Penelope Lively's book and could I start by asking you, Malcolm, what you thought of that?

Bradbury: Well this is another book about writing and writers and I think one of the problems about this shortlist in fact is that perhaps there are almost too many of them, and so you start to give them marks. I think Penelope Lively is a very good writer, um I don't actually think that tested against the competition this book is quite as good as some of the others. Its subject is indeed writing a biography, a subject that recurs with some if the other books, and I found that it was less inventive, less unrealistic – and one of the things about David Lodge's book incidentally is that I like is his refusal of realism in the end, his insistence on motif, metaphor and narrative complication – and I missed that in this book, it seems to me that it played a little flatly and therefore um I although I enjoyed it very much, I think that tested against the game –

Lee: You thought it was a little ordinary is what you're saying?

Bradbury: I did, yes.

Lee: Germaine, what do you think?

Greer: Well, the word that I can't get out of my head in relation to this book is 'tepid'. It's quite well done, I suppose, except that Gilbert Strong doesn't emerge as a strong personality –

Lee: Gilbert Strong is the object of the biography.

Greer: The object of the biography, yes, and Mark Lamming himself is supposed to have an obsessive love affair which seems to me to be conducted at half-throttle all the way through, and guess what happens, he recovers – how surprising – and his wife tolerates it, there's no passion or putrefaction.

Lee: You don't think that involvement of the love affair with the fact that he's writing about the loved one's grandfather, worked?

Greer: I don't think that really comes across because we really learn that he fell in love with her because she was so dim witted and had golden hairs on her arms. All the description of her attractiveness is frankly rather [makes a face] repellent, to me anyway, and also as somebody who is passionately interested in plants I wasn't even convinced by the nursery.

Lee: The nursery that the girl has, the garden centre?

Greer: Mm-mm, it's just doesn't go far enough into the obsession one has with plants if one has one.

Lee: Peter Ackroyd would you have anything more positive to say about it?

Ackroyd: Well I'm not so hot on the plant bit, that I would have to pass on, but the actual discussion of the art of the biographer, which at one point was close to my own heart, I thought she did perfectly well. She got the technique of the biographer right, the cross sectioning, the references, the card sending and the seeing people and she also is very acute about the petty evasions and hypocrisies which the biographer has to undergo to get close to his subject. All that I thought was very well done. And I also liked although it was ostensibly a comic novel, in certain ways, she's got a bit of a bleakness, a slightly chilling note in her account of human relationships, which I thought worked perfectly well in the context.

Lee: Let's go on to Anita Desai's novel. Can I ask you again Peter what you thought of Anita Desai's *In Custody*?

Ackroyd: Well it's a very striking novel. I think for me primarily because of the prose. She's got that rather lush and melodic prose which seems characteristic of Indian novelists composing in English. I like that. I liked also not the grandiosity but the grandness of her themes. Here we had the idea of imprisonment, as she said in her film, the idea of people stuck in their lives without much hope for the future. Now that can be seen as either comedy or melancholy. And the great advantage of this book is that she treated it in both terms. So, for example, we get the rather poignant portrait of Deven the young man who's about to interview the poet and that's a wonderful psychological portrait of a man who sees larger horizons but never seems able to reach them. And then on the other hand we have the Indian poet Nur who, I, that description is one of the best descriptions of a poet

that I have ever read, the drunk, the monomaniac, the infantalist all rolled into one and that's very much closer to the actual lives of poets than most other novelists have discovered.

Lee: That interesting. Malcolm Bradbury, would you agree with some of that?

Bradbury: Yes, yes very much. Um Booker Prize books are always supposed to be about India, aren't they, and there's a dreadful temptation to think that this on line, because it is. The real question of course is how good is it, is it a good book about India. I think this is a quite extraordinary piece of writing, a very strong book from a very strong writer, and that um a good deal of the strength of it and that it's another book about writing, is the notion that she has of the extraordinary relationship between the harsh material world of India, and the facts that grow out of such a society and yet at the same time there's a high ideal of art that drives them all forward into absurdity, and the comic absurdity and this is insisted on very, very firmly all the way through, and it produces a tragic and bleak effect and yet at the same time a comic universe comes out at the end.

Lee: Germaine what did you think of it?

Greer: I again would agree with all of that except that the tragic bleak world which also exists within a novel with a comic universe they both seem to me to be in a sense negative in a way that I don't associate with India. And that's partly because one of the ways that I ever got to know India was through Narayan who deals with the same combination of apparent pointlessness and meaninglessness but he does something magical with it, he builds myths out of ordinary events and ordinary people without condescending or falsifying. You get the feeling you get I would say with great art that the smallest people have some dimension of amplitude and greatness and have their own potential for nobility and what worried me about the book was something mean and cold about it. That you never expanded, Devin still really was a poor devil, and Noah was really a fake. Now one of the problems of course was in the use of the English translation of what purport to be his great poetry, and that's a real problem. How do you put that core there? Now Narayan has dealt with the same thing, with lunatics in Malgudi running a printing press and printing poetry and so on, and they mostly print rubbish, but the way they go at it is with this tremendous sense of importance and dignity. *That's* the dimension that's not there. Dignity of small people.

Lee: [to Ackroyd] You would disagree with that?

Ackroyd: I would disagree with that in a sense, the magic of which Germaine thinks is missing I actually found in the extracts of that poetry.

Bradbury: Yes, I would agree.

Ackroyd: There's a sense in which this book, despite its title, *In Custody*, i.e. everyone's imprisoned, which I agree is pretty crass, but there's also a sense of freedom, and I think the freedom came from the poetry. It may be illusory freedom, which they're all aspiring towards, but it's there in that Urdu, translated Urdu work, that suggested a different life, one they hadn't led but one which they wanted to reach towards.

Lee: Can I ask you, you mentioned just now Narayan, who has been conspicuous by his absence, I suppose, on Booker shortlists. Do you think as a whole, taking these six books

together that they're books that ought to be on this shortlist that aren't? Did you think it was an exciting shortlist as a whole?

Greer: Well, not really. I was puzzled. I didn't know why Muriel Spark wasn't there. Except I suspect that it comes to rule by committee. They had to pick six books which nobody particularly wanted to exclude. I think that's one of the things which happens, you know – a camel is a horse designed by a committee. It's probably as good a shortlist as we could have got but I think by extension it's unjust to people who have published this year like Angela Carter, for example, or Francis King, or even Martin Amis, perhaps.

Lee: Malcolm, what do you feel about…

Bradbury: Well, I feel the same. I feel a number of very significant omissions with this list. Angela Carter certainly.

Lee: Who else?

Bradbury: Elaine Feinstein, Don Thomas surely would have stood a chance, Lisa St Aubin de Terán, there a number of very good uh writers who are not here and one or two writers who are here who might have been displaced by them.

Lee: Peter Ackroyd, do you think it's a slightly safe list in that way?

Ackroyd: It's certainly a traditional list. It wouldn't offend many people but it probably won't please that many either. I mean, Michael Moorcock isn't on it, William Boyd isn't on it, Martin Amis isn't on it, um Angela Carter isn't on it. I could go on forever with names of people who have written books on a much larger scale than some of these and with much more intelligence than some of these.

Lee: Malcolm, can you tell me now what you thought of Anita Brookner's *Hotel du Lac*?

Bradbury: Well, I think Anita Brookner is a very good and a very exciting novelist who seems very much concerned increasingly with a miniaturisation of her work, so I'm impressed by the basic splendour and quality of the writing of this book, also rather worried by its smallness, by its ultimate smallness. She's seeking smallness, the theme is recession, its withdrawal.

Ackroyd: Yes, I, it was Anita Brookner's prose I admired most. It's very calm, very clear, very chaste. The book is unhurried but it, it's not very deliberate. I liked that very much, and I also enjoyed that rather brooding, languorous air of mystery and romance which she evokes in these pages. I mean, one hesitates to use the word romance, not least because of David Lodge but also because of Mills & Boon. There's a sense though in which she is writing that kind of book, although a much more intellectual and self-conscious version of that kind of book.

Lee: But I wonder, Germaine, whether you thought in a sense that it was a 'woman's book,' if one can use that.

Greer: Well it certainly is sturdily rooted in a tradition of very sensitive books about lonely ladies in European pensionne. I have a long shelf by Elizabeth Bowen, for example, which I've never managed to read more than a couple of, and I'm afraid Brookner and Bowen are going to come rather close together. However, I would agree that it is limpid, exquisite in some ways, beautifully turned, very consciously written, again that's part of that tradition

where you read by the sentence and by the phrase, you daren't speed up because it'll just become a grey blur. I would however argue that the control of tone gets a bit rocky when the male love object, or not as the case may be, enters the picture. And we know where he comes from, he comes straight out of 'Bills & Moon', so to speak, but um I don't think he works at all, and that's not so bad because the whole think about women's projections of men as the powerful father who's going to take you away and make you a mistress of millions are completely inauthentic, but at that stage I think that the spectacles get a bit fogged.

Ackroyd: Well I don't mind a little bit of sentimentality, certainly not when it's done with her skill. I mean, the effective thing about that book is she writes very well, actually. That's all I've got to say about it.

Bradbury: To be sure, she writes beautifully.

Lee: Can we go on to *Flaubert's Parrot* by Julian Barnes? Germaine, what did you think of this?

Greer: Well this is actually the sort of book I'm going to give people for Christmas, the sort of people who love books, because it's endless food for thought. It's beautifully written, in lots of different styles – I have some reservations about that – when he enters the character of Louise Collet and writes in her person, it doesn't work. I also think that Charles Braithwaite doesn't really work –

Lee: Geoffrey Braithwaite.

Greer: Geoffrey Braithwaite –

Ackroyd: GB.

Greer: …the doctor, doesn't really work because his voice gets too tangled with up Julian Barnes's voice too often. The narrator is quite often a long way away, we have these sort of Hawthornean or Melvillian exposition on all sorts of little things that we're supposed to find ourselves interested in, and it's done with such wizardry that one finds one is enormously interested suddenly in stuffed parrots – not a subject with which I've ever felt interest before. I think it's a tour de force and it's a book for people who really love books.

Lee: Malcolm Bradbury what did you think of the book?

Bradbury: Well, it is the most experimental book on the list and for that reason I have a particular taste for it, I think. I also think it's marvellously written. It is commentary on writing in a quite different way from some of the other commenters on writing that we've got on this shortlist. They, the book I think is devised extremely cunningly, it's an intricate structure, an extraordinarily intricate structure, the bestiaries and the lists and so on are wonderfully clever and um we don't get the conventional story. It doesn't give us a plot, it's not a novel with a plot. All of these things I like (laughs). This wins my approval. I think there's something slightly soft about its teasing at times, although it's an extraordinary knowing novel about one of the greatest of all writers, Flaubert.

Lee: Peter Ackroyd, what do you think?

Ackroyd: Well like Germaine and Malcolm I thought it was very stylish, very inventive, very graceful. It's also a very unusual book as we've said and one sort of reaches for unusualness

in fiction with bated breath because there's so little of it. It's not at all studied which I feared it might be. He writes so gracefully and with such lucidity there's no suggestion of fussiness around the edges. I particularly like the way he has chosen a great French writer and he's done to him, as it were, what the French post-post-structuralist have been trying to do for years, writing their meta-meta-meta-text and this is much more sparkling version of French preoccupations than anything a Frenchman has actually written.

(Group laughs)

Bradbury: Yes, it's a bit of a run on Roland Barthes.

Lee: Yes, he puts the boot into Roland Barthes, in fact, at one point.

Ackroyd: It's also very comic. See that's the thing I liked most of all. It's not exactly wit, his humour comes from a sort of sceptical relativism almost. It's humour, intellectual humour.

Lee: Yes, I thought it was much the funniest book on the list. Can we go on to J.G. Ballard's Empire of the Sun? Staying with you, Peter.

Ackroyd: Well I was impressed first of all by the tone of this. It's very coolly written, it's a distant, rather neutral tone, and yet the events he's describing, the child's descent into hell and the terrible city itself are most extraordinary and in a sense what happens is this distant tone makes the events themselves even more unbearable. There are some passages I found very difficult to read. And I suspect this neutral tone is his way of still keeping a distance from it all. It's like a plate glass window between him and the world. It's as though he didn't want to get still too close to those events, hence this dispassionate neutral tone.

Lee: Malcolm Bradbury how do you think it relates to Jim Ballard's earlier work?

Bradbury: Well I think this is a very interesting question for me, that is to say I thought this was a book that I wasn't going to like because I was told it's a really realistic novel and that um it was his factual book, his most factual book. I didn't really quite find it that. As a science fiction writer I think he has brought to it the kind of skills and cunning that we get in books like *The Atrocity Exhibition*, and this is another 'atrocity exhibition', this novel. And also in some sense serves as a late explanation for some of his earlier books. So it fits very powerfully into a strong career. I found it a little bit like Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse 5 in its relationship to the fantastic and the factual. And I think what is striking about the book is that it really is possible to read it on two levels. One is kind a surreal story, the other is a version of historical document

Lee: And like Vonnegut he seems to be making use of the same traumatic world experience over and over again.

Bradbury: That's right. There's one thing that I would like to add about it: that is that I did say that most Booker Prize novels are about India, this one isn't it's about China it's about another end of empire and the great theme in a way of so much British fiction, but by shifting the setting to another landscape he's actually taken us a step further.

Lee: A landscape much less written about.

Bradbury: That's right.

Lee: Yes, Germaine, what do you think?

Greer: Well this was the one book on the shortlist that I really couldn't put down. I was absolutely transfixed. I couldn't really believe what I was reading in a way. I have never feared so much for picaro as I do for this little picaro who doesn't ask for any sympathy. Like children he goes wide-eyed into the most horrible situation and he simply seeks to move on, to get out of them, so the most terrible things are printed on him and he moves on and I think descent into hell is right because I would – while it's clear that he risks being identified with little Jim, because he has the same name, I would say that little Jim is a construct of art. If you think about yourself from the ages of 8 to 14, or whatever, 8 to 11 or 11 to 14, you couldn't possibly write this way about yourself, you couldn't possibly have this lofty dispassionate sympathy for what becomes really a sort of basic human equation, it's sort of two eyes on a stick it's "oh mo" it's the basic nugget to which we will all be reduced, either as senile or as infantile and I really think it's a staggering piece of work. I'm awfully glad I had to read it because I might have missed it.

Lee: Can I ask you all now which book you would like to win and also which book you think the judges are going to vote for? Can I start with you Germaine?

Greer: Well it's Ballard/Ballard, I think and hope.

Lee: Malcolm?

Bradbury: I think the book that is going to win is Ballard and I would be perfectly happy to see that. I think in love, friendship and admiration I would wish a *Small World* by David Lodge to win.

Lee: Peter?

Ackroyd: I imagine that it'll be Ballard and I'd like it to be Ballard.

Lee: I think Ballard's going to win too but my money is on an outsider. That is our decision and now for the judges' decision. Back to the Old Library at the Guildhall.

Bragg: Thanks, that's clear enough anyway: Ballard it seems has it. Now we'll really see. Here's Michael Caine, chairman of Booker McConnell.

Caine: We come now to the purpose of the evening and it gives me great pleasure to call upon Professor Cobb to announce the winner of the 1984 Booker McConnell Prize.

Cobb: Lord Thompson, ladies and gentlemen, let me just remind you of the six books we chose for our shortlist. In alphabetical order, JG Ballard - *Empire of the Sun*, Julian Barnes - *Flaubert's Parrot*, Anita Brookner *Hotel du Lac*, Anita Desai *In Custody*, Penelope Lively - *According to Mark*, and David Lodge - *Small World*. It is the decision of the judges that this year's Booker McConnell Prize should be awarded to Anita Brookner.

(Anita Brookner looks shocked and breaks into a very wide smile. She is beckoned to walk up to the head table where she accepts the prize.)

Caine: Many, many congratulations.

Brookner: Thank you so much.

(Walks to a lectern on the stage where Cobb was)

Cobb: (whispers) would you like to…?

Brookner: Ladies and gentlemen when I stand up to speak I usually go on for fifty-five minutes, with slides. I'm not going to do that tonight. I just want to thank you. To the Booker McConnell chairman, to Professor Cobb, to my publisher Tom Maschler, to my editor Liz Calder, my agent Mark Hamilton and his partner Hester Green, and to all of you, thank you very much indeed. (Comes across as nervous)

Bragg (in voiceover as Brookner walks to her table): Well it's of no doubt that that's a great surprise to most people here because Ballard seemed such a very clear favourite. *Hotel du Lac* though, is an excellent book.

Cobb: In an exceptionally strong year, I don't think we could have picked a more powerful shortlist. What it seems to me all six have in common is a style that is elegant, direct, and above all easy to read. [Some jeering from the audience in response to this last quality is audible.] And in this important respect, they might, I think, have a greater appeal to the general public than to the more specialised circles of literary criticism. If I might speak about each one very briefly individually. Novels about childhood are always I think exposed to danger of feyness. J.G. Ballard's account of a child growing up against the background of not always hideous but always alarming events in Shanghai during the Japanese occupation I think is both convincing, imaginative, and deeply moving. We accompany the boy as he advances from the minute awareness of people and objects at the age of 10 to the greater knowingness of 14, and the ever-present background, even a visible background on the horizon, is this terrifying city of Shanghai on its great dirty river. Julian Barnes takes us on a delightful witty and penetrating quest through the most beautiful parts of France – Rouen, and its countryside – in search of France's greatest novelist. It is a work of brilliance, inventiveness, accompanied by comments that are often devastating, especially to an academic discipline and literary biography. It's a very intelligent book that is also a delight to read. Our winner, Anita Brookner, has produced a cool, elegant, and terse account of events in a hotel on the lake of Geneva. It is written with wry humour and minute observation always in a very low key thus I think containing so I think an elegance and a very apparent simplicity that are truly eighteenth-century. Anita Desai's sad and yet comical novel is about mounting frustration. A narrative in which both objects and people, people and objects, combine against the patient efforts of the unfortunate principal character who leaves at the end still battling on. It's a delicate, kind, I think affectionate, and, at times, very funny book. And it's also beautifully written. And so is Penelope Lively's novel about another literary quest. The object of the quest doesn't intrude too much, being more of a pretext than central to the narrative. There is plenty of gentle malice and we encounter one person, the mother of the principal female character, who is simply and convincingly awful. Her name is Hermione. It's a kind and pleasant and reassuring book situated in an England that we would like to think still exists, at least I hope it does. When I was reading David Lodge, my wife inquired several times as to what on earth was the matter with me. For a day and a half, I hadn't stopped laughing and to such an extent that my laughter shook our house. It is a hilariously funny novel at the expense of academic pomposity, literary fashions, structuralist trendiness, and jet-setting professors and lecturers. It is indeed a great deal more than a funny book, offering a devastating take of literary pretentiousness and university intrigue. Its effect on myself was indeed one of relief: that I had myself abandoned professorial status so that I would no longer be in one of those framed pictures of great dons of the day or something like that in Private Eye. If I might conclude in the name of my fellow judges. One of my fellow judges I think had the very happy phrase about

Anita Brookner's book that it was like a Vermeer. And when one is referring to a novelist who is also – well I know this because I had never read Anita Brookner's novels before but then I did have the privilege of reviewing her marvellous book on Jean Louis David in The Times Literary Supplement two or three years back – I think perhaps one of the qualities that we found quite outstanding in her book was this wonderful eye for detail, visual detail, the smaller picture, the microscopic vision which her character… [trails off as footage cuts to Lee interviewing Brookner at her table – Cobb appears to be saying here that he is unable to remember the name of the protagonist of the novel]

Lee: Anita Brookner, congratulations.

Brookner: Thank you very much, Hermione.

Lee: All of your novels are about people who lose things rather than winning does it seem strange to be a winner?

Brookner: Extraordinary. Extraordinary and delightful.

Lee: You're a very moral writer – do you think winning is good for the soul?

Brookner: Oh marvellous, yes.

Lee: Will it change your priorities do you think about your work?

Brookner: No, I don't think so; I think I'll go on just as before.

Lee: You won't give up your academic life?

Brookner: No, I don't think I could now.

Lee: No, well many congratulations.

Brookner: Thank you very much indeed.

Lee: Now, back to Melvyn.

Bragg: And so this year's Booker Prize has been won unexpectedly by Anita Brookner and we hope to be here next year with our hosts Booker McConnell. Book 4 Channel 4's regular book programme is back at 4:15 with Hermione Lee. That's all from us this evening here, good night.

Appendix Three: Henri Lefebvre on Death in *A Critique of Daily Life, Volume III*

Upon analysis, certain standard representations contained in discourse turn out to be highly complex, even paradoxical. In daily life, they are accepted without any difficulty. For example, death-in-life, with its opposite: living death. The dead survive in photographic documents; people recognise them; the absent becomes present once again, and people are moved. One should not speak ill of the dead. They are referred to in words that identify them with misfortune, not nothingness: 'My poor father…' A visit to the cemetery with flowers on All Saints' Day reawakens the dead by giving life to memory. As for death-in-life, a more explicit analysis might evoke dead gods who come back to life, the heroes and kings who reappear in history and the theatre. Everyone understands ghost stories. That is to say, death-in-life is the great presence-absence in the most elevated works and daily life alike. Is this not the figure, its strangeness softened by familiarity, which forms the link between everyday life and great works?

A string of relations between the living and the dead is thus woven into the heart of everyday life. The photograph and the mask keep these relations alive. The mask, the replica that clings to the skin, is closely related to the absolute other, the deceased. It reincarnates him, transforming the one who wears it into one of the living dead. Paradoxically, this produces a moment of festival, for death is overcome. This festival shatters daily life – or, rather, extends it by magnifying it – whereas the photograph and the image (the portrait) help to shore up its continuity.
Could we not say the same of representations as of power? The sovereign has always been regarded as immortal: son of the gods, his death immortalises him. He is prince, king, emperor for life and beyond, because he is close to the Lord and the eternal Father. Thus, among the attributes of power was immortality, simulated by embalming and monumental tombs, and fostered on a daily basis by commemorative ceremonies. Everyone understands it within daily life. The honest and fidelity of 'subjects' are registered by the fact that they know themselves to be mortal. But they, too, can sometimes demand their share of immortality, through property and inheritance, mementoes, the cemetery and a plot in the cemetery. We know that in Egypt revolts were staged to democratize the immortality of the pharaohs. Modern cemeteries attest to an analogous democratization.

…

Contemporary society is sinking into hidden contradictions which form such a tight knot that people do not know which end to approach from in order to unravel it. It is better to sever it.

Here is a contradiction indicated *en route*, which seems minor but has some serious implications. Modern society disposes of death. People no longer die; they disappear (Kostas Axelos). This society thus also disposes of tragedy, returning it to the spectacle or to aestheticism. Yet it is not enough for it to set the mortal power of the state over it; it runs on death. This other power creates the vacuums that techniques, production and satisfaction arrive to fill. It is enough in this context to recall that the countries most devastated by the war – the defeated countries of Japan and Germany – are today at the

forefront of progress, are comparatively rich and prosperous countries, with a strong currency, and so on. As is well known but rarely stated, wars and crises do their job; they perform the function of the negative, unnoticed as such; they purge the mode of production of its temporary surpluses, and prime a resumption of accumulation on a new technological basis. Destructive capacity creates the premises of prosperity. Thus moulded into a mockery of a full life, daily life itself enables the mode of production to function. It is true that the everyday offers much satisfaction and amenities to those who live above the level of infra-daily life. That is precisely the trap. This tragic age repudiates the tragic. Moreover, there is no more reason to experience the feeling of tragedy than there is to ratify its elimination. In and through a knowledge of this age, a different form of thought is instituted. How? In the first instance, through knowledge of the negative powers driving this society, which aims and claims to be so positive – and is, moreover, in that it presupposes the positivity of what is operational and profitable. Thinking is born out of contradictions and consideration of the negative, but above all from the relations between the triads we have encountered *en route*, where daily life always figures in a larger whole – the mode of production. The thinking that clarifies daily life also discovers that it carries within it what it negates and what negates it. The negation daily life carries within I, and which it tries to dispose of, is the tragic. In philosophical terminology and from a metaphilosophical viewpoint, it is the negative. A fundamental triad is thus disclosed: daily life – the ludic – the tragic.

(Lefebvre 743-744 and 836-837)

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