

Introduction

1. The Problem of the Time of Writing

Writing a novel is an enormously time-consuming, even life-subsuming activity—“Long à écrire,” Proust characterized it, in an atypically short sentence¹—which must be performed in solitude. Yet writing a novel demands material, real research into human interactions and human destinies: not only *long à écrire*, but *long à rechercher*. Having managed the one, how does the writer find time for the other?

The problem of the time of writing is more fundamental to the novel than to other literary forms. As Mikhail Bakhtin has pointed out, the novel is the only major literary genre “younger than writing and the book”:² the time of writing, a post facto condition for works with “ancient oral and auditory” origins, is a basic, ineluctable condition for the novel. The lyric or epic writer, even the writer of short stories, can grasp the whole of his content synchronically; but the novelist discovers the content only through the diachronic process of writing. To quote Frederic Jameson, “the novel as a form is a way of coming to terms with a temporal experience that cannot be defined in advance or indeed dealt with in any other way.”³ Tolstoy considered the content of his novels impossible to define not only “in advance,” but even after the fact: “If I wanted to say in words all that I meant to express by my novel,” he wrote about *Anna Karenina*, “I should have to write a novel—the same one I wrote—all over again.”⁴

These novelistic constraints are not shared by the historical or scholarly text, which can be researched solely from other books, and which synchronically flatten the events of centuries into a matter of some hours’ reading. Not only is reading about experiences faster than having experiences but, in a scholarly work, the time of research must be effaced altogether. (For example, regardless of how many years, filled with personal growth and changes of opinion, have gone into the production of this dissertation, my job is to erase such “diachronicity” and maintain a uniform stance towards my subject from beginning to end.) The novelist’s content, on the other hand, is the passage of time itself, and can only be researched

¹ Proust, *À la Recherche du temps perdu* (7, 348). All French quotations from the *Recherche* are by volume and page number to the seven-volume Gallimard edition. For the *Recherche* and all other works cited more than once in this dissertation, full bibliographic information appears in the Selected Bibliography; for all other works, bibliographic information appears in the notes. Unless otherwise specified, English translations are my own.

² Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (DI), 3.

³ Frederic Jameson, *The Prison-House of Language* (PH), 73.

⁴ “Если бы я хотел словами сказать все то, что имел в виду выразить романом [Анной Карениной], то я должен был бы написать роман—тот самый, который я написал, сначала.” Lev Tolstoy, letter to N. N. Strakhov, 26 Apr. 1876, in *Pis'ma Tolstogo i k Tolstomu*, 203.

through real experience. Quoting Jameson again, “we can name only the things that happen to other people”: “our own lived experience” and “feeling of the passage of time” must be diachronically narrated, not synchronically named (PH 73).

The novel is, in this sense, “biographical”: it is the story of life. This affinity between novel and biography has been expressed by Georg Lukács in his *Theory of the Novel*:

The outward form of the novel is essentially biographical. The fluctuation between a conceptual system which can never completely capture life and a life complex which can never attain completeness... can be objectivized only in that organic quality which is the aim of biography.⁵

An analogous temporal “fluctuation” operates between the act of writing, which can never completely catch up with life, and the “life complex which can never attain completeness”—precisely because it is forever interrupted by periods of writing.

The one other literary form which is highly subject to this “novelistic” fluctuation is, I suggest, the biography of a living subject: a genre epitomized in the work of James Boswell. Whereas Samuel Johnson’s *Lives of the Poets* are characterized by “the biographer’s retrospective glance (for all of Johnson’s subjects are dead and gone),”⁶ Boswell, determined to capture a *living subject*, spends the great part of his career pursuing Johnson himself, soliciting his opinions on everything from gambling to ghosts, inveigling him into a tour of Scotland, and minutely recording the results. Boswell’s Johnsonian journals often exhibit the Lukácsian fluctuation between writing and life; “I am now writing on the same day between one or two, to catch half an hour before dinner,” reads an entry from 1776, “I am fallen sadly behind in my journal. I should live no more than I can record, as one should not have more corn growing than one can get in.”⁷ (The next entry resumes “in the Hon. Mrs. Stuart’s dressing-room,” where Boswell hastily recounts a breakfast taken with Dr. Johnson nearly two weeks earlier.)

In this dissertation, I trace a genealogy of literary texts—starting from Cervantes’s *Don Quijote*, and ending with Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu*—which internally account for their own fluctuation

⁵ Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel* (TN), 78.

⁶ Greg Clingham, “Life and literature in Johnson’s *Lives of the Poets*,” in Greg Clingham, ed., *Cambridge Companion to Samuel Johnson* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997), 165. The exception to this rule is Richard Savage (1698–1743), a biographical subject with whom Johnson was personally acquainted.

⁷ James Boswell, *Journals: 1760–1795*, 284. Further references by page number to “Journals.”

between research and writing. Before introducing my theoretical framework, I will briefly present two instances of such accounting from these two monumental works.

In *Don Quijote*, we find the Boswellian problem—how to “live no more than [one] can record”—clearly articulated in the famous encounter with the convict Ginés de Pasamonte in the convoy of galley slaves. Ginés has actually “solved” the problem of the time of writing: for, although he lives a full, busy life as a famous master criminal, he periodically *ends up in prison*, where he gets to work on his book:

“And what is the book called?” asked Don Quijote.

“*The Life of Ginés de Pasamonte*,” replied the same.

“And is it finished?” asked Don Quijote.

“How can it be finished,” he responded, “if my life isn’t? What I’ve written is from my birth up to the last time they sentenced me to the galleys.”

“So you’ve been to the galleys before?”

“To serve God and the king, I was there for four years... and it doesn’t bother me much to go back, because it gives me somewhere to finish my book, for I still have many things to say.”⁸

The “fluctuation” between writing and life corresponds to Ginés’s literal oscillation between prison and the world. This movement is replicated in the mirror of finance: Ginés actually pawns the first installment of his memoirs in prison for two hundred reales; upon liberation, his first act is to purchase and train a Barbary monkey—possibly using those same two hundred reales—for his latest con act. Traveling from town to town, he now charges the citizens two reales each to pose questions to the “clairvoyant monkey.”⁹ In other words, having mortgaged the *Life of Ginés de Pasamonte*, Ginés reinvests the proceeds into more

⁸ “¿Y cómo se intitula el libro?,” preguntó don Quijote./ “La vida de Ginés de Pasamonte,” respondió el mismo./ “¿Y está acabado?,” preguntó don Quijote./ “¿Cómo puede estar acabado,” respondió él, “si aún no está acabada mi vida? Lo que está escrito es desde mi nacimiento hasta el punto que esta última vez me han echado en galeras.” / “Luego, ¿otra vez habéis estado en ellas?” dijo don Quijote./ “Para servir a Dios y al rey, otra vez he estado cuatro años... y no me pesa mucho de ir a ellas, porque allí tendré lugar de acabar mi libro, que me quedan muchas cosas que decir...” Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *El Ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha*, ed. Gaos, 1, 22. Further references to this edition by volume and chapter. Translations consulted include those by Burton Raffel (ed. Diana de Armas Wilson; New York: Norton, 1999) and Edith Grossman (New York: Ecco, 2003).

The link between incarceration in the galleys (*galeras*) and the process of writing is strengthened by the word “galera” which may, like the English “galley,” refer to a tray for printers’ type. The association is strengthened in Book 2, when Don Quijote’s visit to the print-shop in Barcelona (where he witnesses the proofreading of Avellaneda’s “False Quijote”) is immediately followed by a visit to the galleys (2, 62).

⁹ “Sucedió, pues, que de unos cristianos ya libres que venían de Berbería compró aquel mono, a quien enseñó que, en haciéndole cierta señal, se le subiese en el hombro y le murmurase, o lo pareciese, al oído. Hecho esto, antes que entrase en el lugar... se informaba en el lugar más cercano, o de quien él mejor podía, qué cosas particulares hubiesen sucedido en el tal lugar, y a qué personas; y, llevándolas bien en la memoria... proponía las habilidades de su mono, diciendo al pueblo que adivinaba todo lo pasado y lo presente... Por la respuesta de cada pregunta pedía dos reales” (2, 27).

“material”: the number and variety of these misdeeds produce a proportionately “thick volume [*gran volumen*].”¹⁰

To fully understand the significance of Ginés’s writing protocol, we must bear in mind that Cervantes intended Ginés as a parody of Mateo Alemán’s picaresque hero, Guzmán de Alfarache.¹¹ In the preface to *Guzmán*, Alemán claims that it is the picaro himself “who writes his life story from the galleys, where he is sentenced to the oar for the crimes he committed... as you will see in the second part”:¹² a promise which is not completely honored. Guzmán does end up in the galleys at the end of the *Segunda Parte*, but he does not write his life story there. In the galleys, as everywhere else, Guzmán is a relentlessly social animal: having ingratiated himself with a rich passenger, a relative of the captain, he manages to be appointed steward of this man’s clothing and jewels—which possessions do in fact have a tendency to disappear, so that Guzmán has his hands full tracking down first a missing silver plate, then a truant hat-band. During this time, his only apparent literary output—his “visible oeuvre,” to borrow Borges’s phrase¹³—is an update of the “inventory” of his master’s troublesome belongings.¹⁴ In the book’s last pages, Guzmán is released from the galleys (a reward for finally unmasking the thief of that hat-band). The implication is that these events have been narrated following a religious conversion.¹⁵ What was initially announced as a running account of the life of crime, turns out in Book 2 to be a conversion narrative written from, as a subtitle informs us, a “Watchtower of Human Life” (“*Atalaya de la vida humana*”).¹⁶ Cervantes’s Ginés exposes this broken contract.

¹⁰ “Su bellaquerías y delitos... fueron tantos y tales, que él mismo compuso un gran volumen contándolos” (2, 27).

¹¹ See, for example, Roberto González Echevarría, *Love and the Law in Cervantes*, 197.

¹² “Él mismo escribe su vida desde las galeras, donde queda forzado al remo por delitos que cometió, habiendo sido ladrón famosísimo, como largamente lo verás en la segunda parte.” Anticipating the reader’s doubts that Guzmán could really have written the entire book himself, Alemán explains that the picaro in question was also a fine student of Latin, rhetoric, and Greek, who kept up his studies during religious periods in his life of vice: “Para lo cual se presupone que Guzmán de Alfarache, nuestro picaro, habiendo sido muy buen estudiante, latino, retórico y griego, como diremos en esta primera parte, después dando la vuelta de Italia en España, pasó adelante con sus estudios, con ánimo de profesar el estado de la religión; mas por volverse a los vicios los dejó, habiendo cursado algunos años en ellos.” Mateo Alemán, *Guzmán de Alfarache*, 5 vols., 1, 1, “Declaración para el entendimiento deste libro.”

¹³ In “Pierre Menard, Autor del *Quixote*,” Borges uses this phrase (“*obra visible*”) to designate the sum total of Menard’s works, minus the two chapters of *Don Quijote*: “La obra visible que ha dejado este novelista es de fácil y breve enumeración.” Jorge Luis Borges, “Pierre Menard, Autor del *Quixote*” (1939), *Ficciones*, 51.

¹⁴ “...le dijo el capitán a su pariente [Guzmán’s master] que lo más acertado sería, para el tiempo que su merced allí estuviese, dar cargo de sus vestidos y joyas a un forzado de satisfacción, que con cuidado lo tuviese limpio y bien acomodado, porque a ninguno se le daría por cuenta que se atreviese a hacer falta en un cabello”; “Entregáronme por inventario su ropa y joyas, de que siempre di muy buena cuenta” (Alemán, 2, 3).

¹⁵ Echevarría mentions an affinity between the subtitle “*Atalaya de la vida humana*” and the genre of conversion narrative (197). Because Alemán never wrote the projected third and final volume of *Guzmán*, we cannot know the literal situation of this “watchtower.”

¹⁶ According to Echevarría, Cervantes uses Ginés to expose “the artificiality of conversion as a form of closure”: in Ginés’s case, “each sentence to the jail [serves as] the requisite conversion” (198).

Ginés's program of writing and research, an anti-conversion narrative, is predicated on a continued supply of crimes and incarcerations. The conversion narrative—and, by extension, the traditional autobiography—bears mention in this context as a negative example of the kind of work I am discussing. The conversion narrative is written in the timeless solitude following the fray; its denouement serves, as Timothy Hampton observes of Augustine's *Confessions*, to "recuperate [the] narrative in a synecdoche." Seen in its retroactive light, all the narrated events lose their diachronicity and become static *figurae* for the final conversion.¹⁷ In the conversion narrative, not only the narration but the *very narrated material* is immune to what Proust calls the "chemistry of time." The "secular" autobiography, although not centered around religious conversion, follows the pattern set by Augustine. The first published secular autobiography was written by the sixteenth-century astrologer and doctor, Jerome Cardan: having run afoul of the Bolognese Inquisition, having been expelled from his university post, Cardan composes his *De propria vita* "in his bare rooms in Rome, decorated only with a banner claiming 'Time is my Possession.'"¹⁸ *Tempus mea possessio*: Boswell, in Mrs. Stuart's dressing room, could never have said as much; nor can Guzmán in the galleys.¹⁹

Ginés can, though. The stoicism with which he faces the prospect of four years' hard labor contrasts comically with Guzmán's restiveness: Guzmán, of course, spends his time in the galleys just as he has spent all his incarcerations: *working towards his escape*. This is what any master criminal would do. Who can imagine Casanova, instead of filing iron bars and hacking through the roof-beams, reconciling himself to five years in the Piombi, in order to can get a head start on the story of his life? Only in old age does the great outlaw, desperate to stave off boredom and madness in the library of the Castle of Dux, write his *Histoire*.²⁰ Likewise, the infamous master criminal *cum* master detective Eugène Vidocq, armed only with a pair of scissors and a straw dummy, escapes the French galleys in Brest in a matter of days;

¹⁷ Timothy Hampton, *Writing from History: The Rhetoric of Exemplarity in Renaissance Literature*, 29. Once we are presented with the image of Augustine "seated beneath the fig tree in Milan, reading from the text of the Apostle," then the very pear tree from which Augustine stole pears as a boy becomes a *figura* of the fateful Milanese fig tree.

¹⁸ Anthony Grafton, introduction to Girolamo Cardano (Jerome Cardan), *The Book of My Life: De Vita Propria Liber*, trans. Jean Stoner (New York: NYRB, 2002), 70. Cardan's *Vita* was written in 1575–76, and published posthumously in 1643.

¹⁹ Goethe uses this phrase as the epigraph to *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*.

²⁰ "[W]riting my memoirs was the only remedy I thought I could employ to keep from going mad or dying of chagrin... [in] Count Waldstein's castle at Dux. By keeping myself busy writing ten or twelve hours a day, I have prevented black melancholy from killing me or driving me mad." Giacomo Casanova, *History of My Life*, trans., intro., Willard R. Trask (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1997), 11–12, 170.

only after retiring from crime and the Sûreté—after actually purchasing a paper-factory in Saint-Mandé—does Vidocq pen his famous *Mémoires*.²¹

Then there is Ginés who, having spent four years in the galleys, doesn't mind going back, "because it gives [him] somewhere to finish my book." This is clearly a joke, and a good one—and yet there is something else there, something not really funny at all. One is reminded of the Solzhenitsyn hero who exclaims of the Gulag: "Thank God for prison! It gave me the chance to think."²² One is also reminded of what Franco Moretti has called "the great Stendhalian image of the happy prison," which concludes both *The Red and the Black* and *The Charterhouse of Parma*: "for a culture which has produced an uncompromising desire for freedom, happiness is only conceivable in prison."²³ As Moretti observes, Julien and Fabrizio have both led somehow pointless and historically belated lives (119). To my mind, the reason they find happiness only in prison is that their lives can be recuperated from meaninglessness *only as narrative*: this recuperation demands a time of writing, which is symbolically "accounted for" by hard time in the prison or monastery.

The topos of the "happy prison" is already present in the figure of Ginés de Pasamonte, a figure with two derivations: not only the parodic derivation from *Guzmán de Alfarache*, but also a real, serious derivation from the life of Cervantes, who really did learn to write in prison. When the young Cervantes was kidnapped by corsairs and imprisoned for five years in the bagnios of Algiers, he not only organized four highly complicated, though unsuccessful, escape attempts; he also *composed verses*.²⁴ In the prologue to *Don Quijote*, Cervantes claims to have thought of his hero in a prison cell²⁵—presumably referring to his incarceration for several months of 1597 in the royal prison of Seville. Cervantes was imprisoned at least

²¹ Eugène François Vidocq, *Memoirs of Vidocq: Master of Crime*, trans. Edwin Giles Rich, ed. Bruno Ruhland (Edinburgh: AK, 2003).

²² "Благословение тюрьме!! Она дала мне задуматься." Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *V krughe pervom* (Moscow: Khud. Lit., 1990), 46.

²³ Franco Moretti, *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture*, 117–18.

²⁴ According to the Portuguese cleric and Cervantes's fellow-prisoner, Antonio de Sosa, "[Cervantes] se ocupaba muchas veces de componer versos en alabaza de Nuestro Señor y de su bendita Madre y... otras cosas santas devotas": María Antonía Garcés, *Cervantes in Algiers: A Captive's Tale*, 127. Jean Canavaggio speculates that Cervantes, while in the bagnios, began working on "*Life in Algiers*, which ends with a prayer to the Virgin Mary recited by a chorus of captives" (Canavaggio, *Cervantes*, 92).

²⁵ "...bien como quien se engendró en una cárcel, donde toda incomodidad tiene su asiento y donde todo triste ruido hace su habitación..." (1, Prologue). Some critics have interpreted Cervantes's claim that *Don Quijote* was "engendered" in a jail cell as a metaphor; but surely, as Emilio Orozco Díaz puts it, when a "writer who was twice incarcerated in both Castro del Río and Seville" mentions a prison, he is on some level thinking of a prison (quoted and discussed in Garcés, 182.)

twice for mismanaging funds in his capacity as a commissary agent for the Spanish Armada, and once, due to a misunderstanding, in Valladolid.²⁶

How, then, can we reconcile the parodic nature of Ginés's "solution," with Cervantes's real, numerous, and no doubt difficult experiences as a writer in prison? To put it differently, why is it laughable to think of Ginés writing his memoirs in the galley—but not to think of Cervantes composing verses during his Algerian captivity? The answer, I propose, is that *only a writer* could conceive of captivity as an asset for writing. Ginés and Guzmán are first and foremost, con artists, not writers; writing has become, by Cervantes's lifetime, a full-time and specialized profession. For a picaro, a Casanova, or a Saint Augustine, writing is only a belated and secondary vocation; the existence of more-or-less completed material—the completed career in crime or sin—predates their decision to write. The inherently biographical fluctuation between life and writing is encountered only by full-time writers; this is why it seldom manifests itself in *autobiography*.

By the time a "man of action" writes his memoirs, the material is already on hand; the man of letters, by contrast, seldom writes a full-scale autobiography, because his very life consists of writing. It is significant that, as Maurice Blanchot points out, no novelist has ever kept a journal about the composition of a great novel: "it seems that the experience unique to the work, the vision by which it begins, 'the sort of wandering' that it provokes, and... the relationship between the work and the act of writing it... must remain incommunicable."²⁷ My claim is that, in certain works, the story of this relationship is not "incommunicable," but already communicated: it exists in the text itself. As Blanchot himself observes, the book chronicling the "relationship between the work and the act of writing," would be identical, for Proust, with "the work of Proust" itself (262n4); this identity, I argue, holds not only in the masterpiece of modernism, but in "big books" ever since the beginning of the writer's profession (Cervantes, Boswell). Later in this study, I discuss the Levin strand in *Anna Karenina* as a diary of the writing of the novel; so thoroughly did Tolstoy exhaust the material of his working life in this novel, that he stopped keeping his diary: "I wrote it all in *Anna Karenina*—nothing was left over."²⁸

But, returning to Cervantes in jail: the claim that Cervantes wrote in jail because he was already a writer, may strike the reader as circular. How could Cervantes be a writer, before he had written scarcely

²⁶ Canavaggio, 145, 159, 169–72, 177, 223–24. The 1597–98 incarceration appears to have lasted between four and seven months (from September 1597 to either January or April 1598). Cervantes may have been incarcerated a second time in Seville in 1601 (196). According to Canavaggio, Cervantes's account books testify equally to their author's "scrupulous honesty," and to "his total incapacity for juggling figures."

²⁷ Maurice Blanchot, *The Book to Come*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2003), 187.

²⁸ "Я все написал в *Анне Карениной*... ничего не осталось." See Chapter 5, n22.

anything at all?²⁹ And how could Casanova *not* be “a writer,” when he wrote so very much—according to his own account, “ten or twelve hours a day” for seven years? This question may be answered by recourse to Proust’s *À la recherche du temps perdu*. One of the key ideas in the *Recherche* is that Marcel sees himself, from earliest childhood, as a writer, even before he has written anything—even before he has anything to write about; writing remains, for six long volumes, “an invisible vocation.”³⁰ Marcel becomes conscious of this problem at a very early age, in *Swann’s Way*: “Since I wished, some day, to become a writer,” he reasons,

it was time I knew what I was going to write. But as soon as I asked myself the question, trying to find some subject... my mind would cease to function, my consciousness would be faced with a blank, I would feel either that I was wholly devoid of talent or that perhaps a malady of the brain was hindering its development.”³¹

This is the “invisible vocation”: the plight of a writer who has not yet written his great work, and who has nothing to write. Where Casanova is inspired to write in order to relive his memories, Marcel wants to write almost before he has any memories at all.

With time, the material materializes; Marcel encounters the twin linchpins of the French novel, women and high society. But a new set of problems presents itself: love affairs and social life take weeks, months, years to progress. Writing, once impeded by a lack of material, is now impeded by the relentless diachronicity of that material itself. In *A l’ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*, Marcel is finally accepted into the Swanns’ home and gains free access to his beloved Gilberte; but any desire to write the story of his loves is now in direct conflict with his desire to see Gilberte again: “scarcely had I sat at my desk, than I would get up and hurry round to [the Swanns].”³² As when Guzmán de Alfarache is prevented from writing about con artistry by the opportunity to perpetrate another con, as when Boswell is prevented from writing

²⁹ It is, of course, impossible to determine the extent to which Cervantes considered himself a writer at the time of his first captivity. In *Viage del Parnaso*, he writes “Desde mis tiernos años amé el arte/ dulce de la agradable poésia” (IV: 30); he published his first poem in 1567, at age twenty. Cervantes is known to have frequented literary circles and to have studied with the humanist López de Hoyos; in 1568, he published four elegiac poems inspired by the death of Queen Elizabeth of Valois (Canavaggio 40–42).

³⁰ “...la vocation invisible dont cet ouvrage est l’histoire...” (3, 385).

³¹ Marcel Proust, *Swann’s Way*, 243–44. English quotations from the six-volume 2003 Modern Library edition are cited by the initials of each volume (see Selected Bibliography). Original text: “...puisque je voulais un jour être un écrivain, il était temps de savoir ce que je comptais écrire. Mais dès que je me le demandais, tâchant de trouver un sujet... mon esprit s’arrêtait de fonctionner, je ne voyais plus que le vide en face de mon attention, je sentais que je n’avais pas de génie ou peut-être une maladie cérébrale l’empêchait de naître” (1,170–71).

³² WBG 210. “Mais quand leur demeure me fut ouverte, à peine je m’étais assis à mon bureau de travail que je me levais et courais chez eux” (2,149).

about Johnson by an appointment to dine with the Great Man, so is Marcel's writing interrupted by its own material.

In *The Captive*, the cohabitation with Albertine puts a still more effective stop to Marcel's literary exertions: even when Albertine leaves the house, the very fact of her existing elsewhere propels him into a full-time program of moping and sleuth-work. Marcel secretly agrees that it would be better for his writing if, as Françoise suggests, the time-wasting Albertine were replaced by "a nicely brought up young secretary who would have sorted Monsieur's 'paperoles'." Only after he is liberated by Albertine's death does Marcel realize that time *had* to be wasted (*perdu*), before it could be redeemed by the novel: "By making me waste my time, by causing me unhappiness, Albertine had been more useful to me, even from a literary point of view, than a secretary."³³ Albertine was more useful than a secretary because, as Marcel grasps in *Time Regained*, the true "materials for a work of literature were simply my past life" (in which Albertine plays such a large role): "they had come to me, in frivolous pleasures, in laziness, in tenderness, in unhappiness... my whole life up to the present day might and yet might not have been summed up under the title: A Vocation."³⁴ It is only with the discovery of lived time as material that "*la vocation invisible*" finally becomes "*Une Vocation*."

Time Regained does not, however, end with this triumphant revelation, but in the shadow of the final, non-negotiable time constraint: death itself. Housebound by ill health, Marcel finally has the leisure time to work—but will he live long enough to finish his book? And is there enough room left for writing, in the space between social life and death? Some eight pages before the end, Marcel finally sits at his desk:

Unfortunately, as I took up a note-book to write, Mme Molé's invitation card slipped out in front of my eyes. Immediately the forgetful self [*le moi oublieux*], which nevertheless was able to dominate the other [*l'autre moi*]... pushed away the note-book and wrote to Mme Molé.... Suddenly, a word in my letter reminded me that Mme Sazerat has lost her son and I wrote to her as well, after which... I fell back exhausted and closed my eyes, not to emerge from a purely vegetal existence for eight days.³⁵

³³ CF 319. "Ah! si Monsieur à la place de cette fille qui lui fait perdre tout son temps avait pris un petit secrétaire bien élevé qui aurait classé toutes les paperoles de Monsieur! J'avais peut-être tort de trouver qu'elle parlait sagement. En me faisant perdre mon temps, en me faisant du chagrin Albertine m'avait peut-être été plus utile, même au point de vue littéraire qu'un secrétaire qui eût rangé mes paperoles..." (6, 216).

³⁴ TR 304. "[J]e compris que tous ces matériaux de l'oeuvre littéraire, c'était ma vie passée... qu'ils étaient venus à moi, dans les plaisirs frivoles, dans la paresse, dans la tendresse, dans la douleur... toute ma vie jusqu'à ce jour aurait pu et n'aurait pas pu être résumée sous ce titre: Une vocation" (7, 205).

³⁵ TR 520. "Malheureusement en prenant un cahier pour écrire, la carte d'invitation de Mme Molé glissait près de moi. Aussitôt le moi oublieux mais qui avait la prééminence sur l'autre... repoussait le cahier, écrivait à Mme Molé... Brusquement un mot de ma réponse me rappelait que Mme Sazerat avait perdu son fils, je lui écrivais aussi, puis... je tombais sans forces, je fermais les yeux, ne devant plus que végéter pour huit jours" (7, 345).

This is the zero-sum of the time of writing: one self craves dinner-parties; the other wants to write. If *le moi oublieux* seizes total control, the book will never be written; but if it had never existed, *l'autre moi*, the writing self, would have nothing to write about: would confront, once more, the “black hole” of contentlessness. We find here an inversion of Ginés’s riddle: not “How can it be finished when my life isn’t?”, but “Can my life really be finished, when my book isn’t?”; a particularly poignant reversal, considering that Proust had not finished editing *Temps retrouvé* at the time of his death.

2. Balancing the Books: Research and Writing

The time of writing is not problematic for *all* novelists; only for 1) professional, full-time writers, who 2) maintain a strict allegiance to the raw material of lived experience. The time of writing is not problematic for Casanova, because he takes up writing only in his retirement: far from scribbling his memoirs in the fear that he would die before completing his work, he actually tried to draw out his writing as long as possible, to fill his remaining years. At the opposite end of the spectrum, metaliterary gamesters like Sterne or Diderot feel no epistemological responsibility to base their works on real experiences; to the contrary, epistemological self-sufficiency becomes for them a point of pride. A much-cited passage from *Tristram Shandy*, for instance, testifies equally to a vivid awareness of the time of writing and a complete indifference towards “research”:

I am this month one whole year older than I was this time twelve-month; and having got... almost into the middle of my fourth volume—and no farther than to my first day’s life—’tis demonstrative that I have three hundred and sixty-four days more life to write... so that instead of advancing, as a common writer, in my work... I am just thrown so many volumes back.³⁶

Shandy delights precisely in his own ability to keep writing with no new material at all. Life does not interrupt Shandy’s writing; Shandy interrupts his own writing, congratulating himself on the inexhaustible nature of his new amusement (“I shall lead a fine life out of this self-same life of mine”), and on its capability to stimulate the “manufactures of paper.” He is not battling an inescapable condition, but inventing a gratuitous obstacle, protracting his “Life” with digressions, deferrals and ruptures. That Shandy himself

³⁶ Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1996), 197–98.

sees these obstacles as voluntary is borne out by his claim that they were “never applicable before to any one biographical writer since the creation of the world,” and would “never hold good to any other, until its final destruction” (198): engaged in willful play, he has no idea of having stumbled onto an inherent novelistic problem.

In similar fashion, Diderot gleefully protracts the story of Jacques’s loves: “What is there to prevent me from marrying off the master and having him cuckolded? Or sending Jacques off to the Indies? And leading his master there? And bringing them both back to France on the same vessel? How easy it is to make up stories!”³⁷ “*Qu’il est facile de faire des contes*”: for Cervantes or Boswell or Proust, it is not so easy. The artificial hurdle becomes, in their works, an organic barrier. Play becomes work—or at least a more arduous game, with a stringent new rule: the epistemological obligation to “make up” stories *from* something, some real material. “*Faire des contes*” becomes, in this way, “*faire des comptes*”: each narrative element—each obstacle, separation and reunion—is a debit which must be balanced, in the credit column, with some experiential knowledge.

To introduce the central metaphor of this dissertation, I propose that this balance can be construed as such an account in the style of double-entry bookkeeping:

Table 0.1

Double Entry: Research and Writing

Debit	Credit
The time of research, lived experience	The time of writing
Material for a book	Unhappiness, knowledge, experience
Ginés’s crimes	Ginés’s terms in the galleys
Marcel’s experiences; the dinner invitation	Marcel’s solitude; the writing notebook.

If in this light we reconsider Boswell’s metaphor of reaping no more than he can sow—living no more than he can record—we see that it is essentially an economical one: if his experiences are too numerous to write about in the remaining time, Boswell will have misspent his life. But now we can see a benefit in the credit side of the ledger: every experience, no matter how tiresome, yields a return in terms of literature. We find the same, more-or-less optimistic thought expressed in the *Recherche* when Marcel reflects that after all

³⁷ Denis Diderot, *Jacques the Fatalist and His Master*, trans. Michael Henry, ed. Martin Hall (New York: Penguin, 1986), 22.

Albertine was more useful than a secretary, not *despite* but *because of* the suffering she caused him: “happy years are wasted years; one must wait for suffering before one can work.”³⁸

Readers may wonder why Proust has to make everything so difficult. Without wishing to stray too far into psychoanalysis, I would suggest that the generic difference separating Cervantes, Boswell or Proust from Sterne and Diderot reflects a difference in temperament and biography. Cervantes, the harassed “Manco de Lepanto”; Boswell, with his melancholy and hypochondria (and, like Cervantes, his vain quest for a government post); Proust with his asthma, neurasthenia, and hyperaesthesia: these authors combine a love of wit and conversation with a propensity for deep gloom. It is apt that their “double-entry” genre should seek neither to distance suffering through comedy, nor to elevate it to tragic nobility—should seek to elicit from the reader not necessarily laughter or tears, but *interest*. According to the laws of such literary works, suffering is redeemed as a form of knowledge and a source of narrative; all that remains is to hope that enough time remains for that writing. “Happy are those... for whom... the hour of truth has struck before the hour of death!”³⁹ as Proust put it; to paraphrase the Chorus’s final lines in *Oedipus Rex*: Count no man happy until he has crossed the final boundary of life, without leaving any suffering unwritten.

3. Balancing the Books: Reading/ Living; Imitatio/ Mimesis

The double-entry of experience and writing yields an understanding of the novel as a fundamentally double genre: a balance between experience and writing—which is also a balance between experience and *reading*: between a writer’s real life and the books he admires. As the concept of the “invisible vocation” shows, the desire to “be a writer” does not come from the act of writing itself; nor does it come from unmediated life. As Jameson puts it, “the novel, as an attempt to give meaning to the outside world and to human experience, is always the result of subjective will, subjective willfulness. It is not the world from which such unity springs... but rather the mind of the novelist which attempts to impose it, by fiat.”⁴⁰ Given that nobody actually experiences the real world as a meaningful totality, the desire to portray it as one cannot come from unmediated experience. It must come from *other books*.

³⁸ CF 319. “Les années heureuses sont les années perdues, on attend une souffrance pour travailler” (6, 216).

³⁹ TR 320. “Heureux ceux... pour qui...l’heure de la vérité a sonné avant l’heure de la mort!” (7, 216).

⁴⁰ Frederic Jameson, *Marxism and Form* (MF), 173.

This derivation is also described in Proust's *Recherche*, in the treatment of Marcel's progression from reading to writing. So strongly does Marcel wish to write a book resembling two of his favorite *oeuvres*, the *Arabian Nights* and Saint-Simon's *Memoirs*, that he cannot "imagine without horror [writing] any work which should be unlike them." In *Time Regained*, he finally realizes that, in order to be a writer, he must sacrifice this "superstitious attachment":

You can make a new version of what you love only by first renouncing it.... When you are in love with some particular book, you would like yourself to write something that closely resembles it, but this love of the moment must be sacrificed, you must think not of your own taste but of a truth which far from asking you what your preferences are forbids you to pay attention to them. And only if you faithfully follow this truth will you sometimes find that you have stumbled again on what you renounced, find that, by forgetting these works themselves, you have written the *Arabian Nights* or the *Memoirs* of Saint-Simon of another age.⁴¹

The "invisible vocation" is the struggle of a reader to equate his arbitrary, fragmented experience of the world with the already-meaningful narratives of his favorite books. But the epistemological rules prohibit him from abstractly recreating those favorite books "by fiat." The would-be novelist must transcend his love of preexisting books, and follow the "truth" straight into the arbitrary world; he must find some epistemological point of access, in his own experience, to the world of literature.

This journey from the preexisting truth of literature to the arbitrariness of life is dramatized, in the *Recherche*, by Marcel's relationship with Bergotte. As a child Marcel is infatuated by Bergotte's novels, longing for "some opinion, some metaphor of his, upon everything in the world"⁴²: only through the lens of Bergotte's writing will the world be endowed with "significance and beauty." Over time, Marcel actually meets Bergotte, becomes his friend, joins his *milieu*, and forms close personal ties with the very same people who have "posed" as characters in Bergotte's novels. Gradually, Marcel is cured of his "superstitious regard": he witness the transformation of the significant, beautiful elements of Bergotte's

⁴¹ TR 525. "Non pas que je prétendisse refaire en quoi que ce fut les Mille et une Nuits, pas plus que les Mémoires de Saint-Simon... pas plus qu'aucun des livres que j'avais tant aimés et desquels, dans ma naïveté d'enfant, superstitieusement attaché à eux comme à mes amours je ne pouvais sans horreur imaginer une oeuvre qui serait différente. Mais... on ne peut refaire ce qu'on aime qu'en le renonçant.... [Q]uand on est amoureux d'une oeuvre, on voudrait faire quelque chose de tout pareil, mais il faut sacrifier son amour du moment, et ne pas penser à son goût mais à une vérité qui ne nous demande pas nos préférences et nous défend d'y songer. Et c'est seulement si on la suit qu'on se trouve parfois rencontrer ce qu'on a abandonné, et avoir écrit en les oubliant les *Contes arabes* ou les *Mémoires* de Saint-Simon d'une autre époque" (6, 348-49).

⁴² SW, 132. "...j'aurais voulu posséder une opinion de lui, une métaphore de lui, sur toutes choses, surtout sur celles que j'aurais l'occasion de voir moi-même... Malheureusement sur presque toutes choses j'ignorais son opinion. Je ne doutais pas qu'elle ne fût entièrement différente des miennes, puisqu'elle descendait d'un monde inconnu vers lequel je cherchais à m'élever..." (1, 94).

world into the apparently contingent elements of the real world which he, Marcel, inhabits. Marcel must renounce Bergotte—Bergotte must, even, die—before he can write his own book.

Marcel's relationship with Bergotte restages the novelistic dialectic between the particular and the universal: the great books are universal and meaningful; my life is particular and arbitrary. This dialectic is inherent to the novel, which must in its form and content traverse what Lukács has called the "unbridgeable chasm" (TN 78): the "opposition between essence (*Wesen*) and life," "between meaningfulness on the one hand and the events and raw materials of daily existence on the other" (MF 169-70). Lived experience in its arbitrariness must somehow be transformed into resemblance to literature.

The dialectic of "meaningfulness" and "raw materials" in artistic form is beautifully encapsulated by Michel Jeanneret's dichotomy of the two artistic modes of *imitatio* and mimesis. Jeanneret defines *imitatio* as the imitation of canonical discourses ("the operation of rewriting which legitimizes all classical literature"), and mimesis as the replication of nature: the creation of a duplicate world "which is realistic enough for the imagination to go along with it," and which is recognizable as "a universe which is coextensive with the world of actual experience."⁴³ The dialectical interdependence of the two forms is such that, without mimesis, *imitatio* is "mere formal acrobatics"; without *imitatio*, mimesis is meaningless, a shopping list: "the raw object taken from the world of phenomena has no meaning as such ... Just as mimesis must give the illusion of life to *imitatio*, so *imitatio* must give mimesis form and meaning" (274–75).

The Proustian "invisible vocation"—the block of the aspiring writer—may be understood as a deficiency of mimesis and a surplus of *imitatio*: a lack of affinity with the real world, and an excessive regard for one's favorite books. Marcel is the most convinced of his "lack of talent for literature" at the moment when he finds himself incapable of mimesis, of describing the natural vegetation of Combray:⁴⁴ the trees have "nothing to say" to him, while the *Arabian Nights* and Saint-Simon have too much to say.

Marcel, like Proust, is the kind of writer who feels a "responsibility" towards mimesis, towards the observed truth of his lived experience; he can only remake what he loves by renouncing it. This sense of epistemological responsibility is one of the key themes in this study, and it originates, I propose, in *Don Quijote*. Cervantes's knight, longing for everything in his own world to be as "lofty, resonant, and meaningful" ("*alto, sonoro y significativo*," 1,1) as the things in the world of knight errantry, turns his life into

⁴³ Michel Jeanneret, *A Feast of Words: Banquets and Table Talk in the Renaissance*, 260–61.

⁴⁴ "If I really had the soul of an artist, surely I would be feeling pleasure at the sight of this curtain of trees," etc.: TR, 238–39. A similar problem afflicts Isaac Babel's narrator in "The Awakening," who wishes to become a writer but is lacking in a "feel for nature": his "landscapes resemble descriptions of stage sets." Babel, *The Complete Works*, trans. Peter Constantine, ed. Nathalie Babel (New York: Norton, 2002), 633–34. For a discussion of Babel in terms of *imitatio*, mimesis, and double-entry bookkeeping, see my forthcoming paper, "Pan Pizar: Clerk and Writer in Babel's Metaliterary Stories," in Gregory Freidin, ed., *The Enigma of Isaac Babel* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2008).

an *imitatio* of *Amadís of Gaul*. He makes himself a knight costume out of cardboard and old armor and walks out the door, confident of “running into a giant somewhere around here, as usually happens to knights errant.”⁴⁵ What he actually “runs into” is a windmill: an embodiment the “raw materials of daily existence.” As mills transform wheat into flour, Don Quijote transforms the mill into a giant. The giant, a figure of *imitatio*, borrowed from the chivalric romance, gives meaning to the windmill; the story of the giant, transformed by a sorcerer into a windmill, incorporates the data of observed existence into a recognizable story. Reciprocally, the windmill accounts for the giant: it provides the mimetic, material basis—it is large, it waves its arms—from which to construct the ideal knightly adventure. Cervantes refuses to simply invent a giant from thin air; the giant must be reached through the raw materials of contingent reality.

Table 0.2.

Double Entry: Giant and Windmill

Debit	Credit
The giant	The windmill
<i>Imitatio</i>	Mimesis
Lukács’s <i>Wesen</i> (essence)	Lukács’s “practice” (daily life)
The book I want to write	The material I have
The meaningful and universal	The meaningless and particular

“*On ne peut refaire ce qu’on aime qu’en le renonçant*”: the doubleness of the novel lies in this dialectic between love and renunciation. In this light we may understand Tatiana’s parting words to Eugene Onegin—“I love you (why dissimulate?); but to another I’ve been given away”:⁴⁶ notwithstanding their love for the Byronic hero, fate has given Pushkin and Tatiana to a different time and a different place, and they will be faithful to the truth of their reality. Pushkin turns a Byronic “parody” into the hero of a novel; Cervantes performs the same service for the parody of a knight. As Américo Castro points out, “*Don Quijote* was neither written against books of chivalry nor was it *not* written against them”⁴⁷: inveighing against knight errantry, Cervantes writes a book which is, in its way, all about knight errantry.

⁴⁵ “me [encontrar] por ahí con algún gigante, como de ordinario les acontece a los caballeros andantes...” I:1, 66.

⁴⁶ Alexander Pushkin, *Evgenii Onegin*, in Vol. 4 of *Sobranie sochinenii* (10 vol.). Further references to *Onegin* are by chapter and stanza. “Я вас люблю (к чему лукавить?), / Но я другому отдана; / Я буду век ему верна” (4, 9).

⁴⁷ Américo Castro, *An Idea of History: Selected Essays* (IH), 65.

4. Critical Perspectives: Shklovsky and Jameson

Having outlined the textual problem and my formal framework, I now present some of the existing critical work on the time of writing and epistemological accounting in the novel. This project has been greatly informed by the “dialectical criticism” outlined by Frederic Jameson in *Marxism and Form*. Awareness of the time of writing has some status for Marxist criticism, as a bulwark against *mauvaise foi*: the mistaken belief in the literary work as a thing, rather than a process. However, Jameson’s position is that the erasure of this time actually occurs within the text itself: “the fact of work and of production—the very key to genuine historical thinking—is a secret as carefully concealed as anything else in our culture” (MF 408). The novelist himself censors his bouts of procrastination, writer’s block, “vegetal existence,” and late nights. For Jameson, the novelist, like all workers, represses the “traces of labor on the product.”

My claim is that some works *do* include an account of the time and material that went into their writing. In researching this thesis, it seemed to me logical to turn to Russian Formalism, with its focus on the “making” of literature. The Formalists, however, go too far in the other direction, in their insistence that the literary work is always and “only about” its own production;⁴⁸ my argument is merely that certain works are *also* about their own production. In such works, the story of writing (what the Formalists called the *siuzhet*) runs alongside the story that is written (the *fabula*). For extremists like Viktor Shklovsky, the *fabula* is always only a decoy: the love between Eugene Onegin and Tatiana, for example, is merely a pretext for Pushkin’s authorial digressions (TP 170). But if *fabula* and literary content are, as Shklovsky implies, more-or-less arbitrary and given, this does not mean that they are *unimportant*, or powerless to influence form; still less, that they are some kind of coded expression of form.

Shklovsky’s theory works admirably on “contentless” works like *Tristram Shandy*, because the primary subject matter of such works really *is* the formal technique of narration itself. *Don Quijote*, however, is another story, and Shklovsky’s article on “How *Don Quijote* Was Made” falls short precisely because of his insistent subordination of content to form. Shklovsky claims that the “duality” of Don Quijote’s character, which readers consider to be the essential content of *Don Quijote*, was actually discovered by Cervantes only “towards the middle of the novel”: belatedly, accidentally, and as a function of form. Cervantes realized that the madman’s “wise sayings” were necessary to hold together the otherwise

⁴⁸ The position I have in mind is stated in Viktor Shklovsky’s “Plot Construction and Style”: “The content of a work of art is invariably manipulated, it is isolated, ‘silenced.’... The new [literary] form makes its appearance not in order to express a new content, but rather, to replace an old form that has already outlived its artistic usefulness” (in *Theory of Prose* (TP), 200).

disparate inset stories (TP 80). For Shklovsky, the duality of Don Quijote's madness and sanity thus turns out to be a formal principle.

One problem with this reading is its implication that, not only the inset stories, but even Don Quijote's own adventures may be imagined as existing independently of Don Quijote himself: that "Don Quijote" may be appended to them post facto, like a frame narrative placed around a collection of pre-existing tales. Shklovsky even compares *Don Quijote* to *A Thousand and One Nights*—"with the difference," Shklovsky acknowledges, "that in Cervantes's novel these characters coexist... while in *A Thousand and One Nights* they are co-narrated. But," he continues, "this is not a fundamental distinction... because the whole novel is incorporated within the feebly perceived framework of the 'found manuscript' of one Cide Hamete Benengeli, an Arab storyteller" (TP 90).

To my mind, the distinction between coexistence and co-narration *is* fundamental in *Don Quijote*—as it is not, perhaps, in *Tristram Shandy*. "Tristram Shandy" in *Tristram Shandy* really does function much like a frame story: the distinctive feature of Tristram is how he writes, rather than how he acts or what happens to him. Much of the "material" of *Tristram Shandy* is *supposed* to be irrelevant to the "story" of Shandy's life, and could just as well have happened to somebody else. *Don Quijote*, on the other hand, is conditioned throughout by "Don Quijote," whose adventures are always *his* adventures, and could only happen to a madman who believes himself to be a knight.

It is also problematic that Shklovsky equates Cide Hamete, "an Arab storyteller," with Shahrazade: although Cervantes's novel does occasionally echo the *Arabian Nights*, it is important that Cervantes characterizes Cide Hamete as a *historian*, not a storyteller. A storyteller makes stories up ("*qu'il est facile...!*"); a historian must have material. The special talent of Shahrazade is her Shandyesque ability to spin out stories for as long as necessary—for, literally, 1,001 nights—with no new material. Cide Hamete Benengeli's special talent is, rather, the one-to-one correspondence between his writing and Don Quijote's life: "For me alone was Don Quijote born, and I for him; he knew how to act [*obrar*], and I how to write; only we two are a unity, in spite of that fake Tordesillan scribbler..."⁴⁹ The "Tordesillan scribbler" (Avellaneda) is a phony precisely because he lacked epistemological access to the real knight; by contrast, Cide Hamete's literary work (*obra*) coincides exactly with Quijote's deeds (*obras*). Jameson characterizes the novel as "an invention of content simultaneous with the invention of the form" (PH 75); this is literally true of *Don Quijote*, wherein the invention of Don Quijote is simultaneous with that of Cide Hamete.

⁴⁹ "Para mí sola nació don Quijote, y yo para él; él supo obrar y yo escribir; solos los dos somos para en uno, a despecho y pesar del escritor fingido y tordesillesco..." (2, 74).

This simultaneity is vital to the problem of the time of writing and research: a problem of balancing form (the act of writing, *siuzhet*) with content (experience, *fabula*). Like the chicken and the egg, neither form nor content has clear ontological primacy. The “invisible vocation” destabilizes, in just this chicken-or-egg manner, the sequence between “writing” and “being a writer.” Russian Formalism, with its insistence on the primacy of form, negates the time of research altogether: writers first reach a formal intention and only then “look around for the appropriate material,” using whatever happens to be handy at the moment (PH 84).

The problem with the Marxist theorists, on the other hand, is that they privilege *fabula* (narrated content) over *siuzhet* (narration): in *Marxism and Form*, Jameson ends up neglecting the time of writing in favor of the time of the plot itself. According to Jameson (citing Lukács), novelistic accounting is a phenomenon of late capitalism: the middle classes have been severed from productive labor, so that the things in the world are “no longer felt as the results of immediate human activity” (MF 168). As a result of this “centrifugal dispersal... into the contingent,” people as well as objects have lost their transparent meanings and require explanations; literary characters now “have *personalities*,” and the hero’s particular personality must be “justified” with recourse to either his “father and his family situation” or his relationship to society. If the hero’s personality “remains unjustified,” then the novel “sink[s] to the level of accident... of case history” (MF 166). This justification clearly takes place in the content of the novel itself—as does the Marxist justification of the “time of the work”: “The story must find its elbowroom,” Jameson explains,

in a world in which men’s lives are divided between routine drudgery and sleep. So the novelist arranges his plot to take place on weekends (Camus’ *Stranger*), during vacations (Mann’s *Magic Mountain*), during great crises in which the routine breaks down (war literature). If the hero’s profession leaves him enough free time for his private life (Joyce’s *Ulysses*), then... the profession must be justified in its turn (advertising as work with language). Where there is inherited wealth and leisure... it remains a mere family accident, and the problem is not solved, but only thrust... into earlier generations (and here the very emblem of the process might well be that unmentioned chamber pot which Henry James privately admitted to have been at the origin of the Newsome fortune in *The Ambassadors*). (MF 167)

For Jameson, the time of the work is justified if it coincides with the vacation, weekends, or war experiences of a working person. The time is *not* justified if it is a product of inherited leisure, an accident of birth—if one’s father, say, made a fortune in chamber pots. (Curiously, Jameson counts inherited wealth as a “family accident”—whereas, a few paragraphs earlier, he counted “family situation” as a legitimate justification of personality. Is it really any more “accidental” to be born with ten thousand pounds a year,

than it is to be born Jewish, or in turn-of-the-century Paris, or with a predisposition for alcoholism—to be born, that is, any way at all?)

To my mind, the really interesting problem is not how the working man in the *fabula*, consumed by work and sleep, can find the leisure for having adventures. Work may prevent people from writing novels—that is, one kind of work may preclude another kind—but it doesn't categorically prevent narratable experiences;⁵⁰ moreover, the “centrifugal dispersion” of the modern age has *widened* the range of kinds of work, kinds of experience, kinds of knowledge, and indeed the amount of knowledge in the world: as such, it is a generator of, rather than an obstacle to, novelistic narrative. That said, the division of labor does pose an epistemological problem: as the spheres of experience, as all the professions, including that of the novelist, grow narrower and more specialized, it becomes impossible to conceive of a Renaissance Man, a master of all human disciplines.⁵¹ The question I investigate is, then, how any given writer can access a narratable story, without thereby forfeiting the conditions that allowed the novel to come into being in the first place.

Bearing this in mind, let us briefly consider Jameson's four examples of justification in four twentieth-century novels: *The Stranger*, *The Magic Mountain*, *Ulysses*, and *The Ambassadors*. To my ear at least, something “rings true” in this enumeration; and I propose that justification really *does* occur in all four of these novels: not only socioeconomically, in the time of the *fabula* (as Jameson suggests), but also epistemologically, in the time of *siuzhet*. In all four books, this justification is enabled by the same device: an *extra, tertiary character*. Each novel contains one character who is enmeshed in affairs, and one who is, to appropriate Turgenev's epithet, a “superfluous man”⁵²: not a love interest, an enemy, or any of the staple

⁵⁰ Shklovsky has pointed out that the picaresque form, like Octave Mirbeau's *Diary of a Chambermaid* and Maxim Gorky's *In the World*, is largely governed by “the device of a job hunt” (TP 84); *Moby Dick* is largely about the sperm oil industry, and half of *Illusions perdues* is about the manufacture of paper. Many present-day television shows testify to the coexistence of narrative and work, by centering on the work lives of medical residents (*Grey's Anatomy*), defense attorneys (*Boston Legal*), plastic surgeons (*Nip/Tuck*), and undertakers (*Six Feet Under*).

⁵¹ Nostalgia for the possibility of the Renaissance Man might explain the present-day obsession with Leonardo Da Vinci and, more specifically, the best-selling status of Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* (2003): a novel in which Da Vinci's paintings turn out to be ciphers in a massive conspiracy theory, whereby the Merovingian kings are direct lineal descendants of Jesus Christ. Da Vinci, the archetypal Renaissance Man, becomes the site of a whole, total knowledge of Western European culture, whose paintings are somehow inherently meaningful. The enigmatic smile of the Mona Lisa, a conventional symbol for the impenetrability of the aesthetic object, turns out to be a densely encoded message about the real world. The fantasy of *The Da Vinci Code* is that the Lukácsian totality of knowledge was once available to individuals (Renaissance Men), who enciphered it in their works of art, whence it can be restored to us by Harvard professors and the French secret police.

⁵² In the Preface to *The Portrait of a Lady*, James admiringly quotes a comment by Turgenev, author of “The Diary of a Superfluous Man,” to the effect that his stories always began from an “unattached character,” one who is “*disponible*.” James goes on to say that the character Isabel Archer, occurred to him in this Turgenevian fashion: “unattached” to any plot, but “bent upon its fate—some fate or other; *which*, among the possibilities, being precisely the question”: Henry James, *The Art of the Novel* (AN), 327.

“others” of novelistic discourse, but a neighbor or cousin. Camus’s *étranger* is sucked into the affairs of a neighbor; the hero of *The Magic Mountain*, himself a “disinterested spectator,” has come to Davos only to visit a tubercular step-cousin. Leopold Bloom is a friend of Stephen Dedalus’s father; and Lambert Strether, the eponymous “Ambassador,” is Chad Newsome’s prospective step-father.

The stranger, the spectator, the step-relation, the ambassador, all serve as a point of epistemological access to the plot, while accounting for the time of narration. The epistemological problem caused by the division of labor is actually solved by a narratological “division of labor.” The epistemological accounting is most explicit in *The Ambassadors*, whose protagonist spends much of his time adding up “sums” (a favorite metaphor with James).⁵³ In Paris, the hitherto overworked Strether takes inordinate pains to “justify” the free time he suddenly has on his hands: he spends an entire morning in the Luxembourg Gardens, “turning over... the strange logic of his finding himself so free. He felt it in a manner his duty to think out his state, to approve the process, and when he came in fact to trace the steps and add up the items they sufficiently accounted for the sum.”⁵⁴ (Strether, unlike Jameson, finds the time of *The Ambassadors* to be adequately justified.) Gradually, this free time is taken up almost entirely by the composition of news bulletins for Mrs. Newsome: “he was of course always writing. Wasn’t he writing against time?” (237).

Strether is constantly postponing his and Chad’s return to America; similarly, *The Magic Mountain*—a long novel initially conceived as a short story—narrates a two-week vacation which somehow lasts seven years. *The Stranger* begins with a very short time horizon—“*Aujourd’hui Maman est morte*”—and ends with an indeterminately long jail term. All of these novels exceed their allotted time; they are written *against* time. Time in these works is consumed by events which seem exterior to the “superfluous man,” who is nonetheless compelled to stay on and observe them.⁵⁵

⁵³ In *The Golden Bowl*, the “*ficelle*” Fanny Assingham is particularly given to this activity. The Mrs. Assingham scenes involve much play on the word “figures,” which designates alternately the four main characters (the Prince, Maggie, Maggie’s father, and Charlotte), and their recombinations: Fanny voices her hypotheses “as she might have quoted from a slate, after adding up the items, the sum of a column of figures.” *The Golden Bowl*, ed. Virginia Llewellyn Smith (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999), 56. The chemical metaphor with which Goethe describes the permutations between the four central characters in *Elective Affinities* is replaced, in *The Golden Bowl*, by a metaphor from commercial accountancy.

⁵⁴ Henry James, *The Ambassadors* (TA), 57.

⁵⁵ Unlike Lambert Strether or Hans Castorp, Camus’s Mersault “stays on” not out of curiosity, but because he is caught up in a murder and put in jail: he is a prisoner of his own *lack* of curiosity and affect. This seeming lack of interest does not, however, prevent him from being a highly observant narrator.

5. Bakhtin and the "Third Man"

The figure of the superfluous man—someone standing a “knight’s move” away, to use Shklovsky’s term—is a common element in theories of narrative. As Jameson observes of Vladimir Propp’s morphology of the folktale, “the basic interpersonal and dramatic relationship turns out to be neither the head-on direct one of love nor that of hatred and conflict, but rather [the] lateral relationship of the hero to the ex-centric figure of the donor” (PH 68). Propp’s donor is analogous to the “mediator” in René Girard’s mimetic triangles (PH 68n21): for Girard, *desire itself* needs a point of epistemological access, and must be learned from some “third party” (a figure who also plays an important role for Sartre).⁵⁶

Particularly interesting is Mikhail Bakhtin’s characterization of “the third [man] in private life [*tret’ii v chastnoi zhizni*]”: “a person who knows only private life and craves it alone, but who does not participate in it, who has no place in it—and therefore sees it in sharp focus, as a whole, in all its nakedness” (DI 126). The “third man” is explicitly linked to the problem of epistemological access in the novel. For Bakhtin, novelistic material consists of “private life,” which “takes place between four walls and for only two pairs of eyes”: the novel is “essentially a literature of snooping about, of overhearing ‘how others live’” (DI 122). The third man is the necessary outsider who, lacking his own private life, devotes himself to the observation of others.

Interestingly, although Bakhtin is clearly aware of the problem of access to novelistic material, and to the treatment of “forms of time” in the novel, he is not particularly concerned by the time of writing or researching. (Perhaps, for Bakhtin, the diversity of *spoken* language in the novel—heteroglossia, dialogism—overrides the novel’s material writtenness.) The epistemological problem is spatial rather than temporal: Bakhtin asks, not how writers find time to both write *and* “snoop about,” but only how they manage to get their eyes inside those walls in the first place. He thus considers the problem to be solved in Apuleius’s *Golden Ass* because, as an ass, Lucius has an untrammelled field for eavesdropping.

To Bakhtin’s considerations, I add that of *leisure*: the “third man” must be, not only objective enough to see the lives of others in all their “nakedness,” but “superfluous” enough to have time for writing. After all, given all the time in the world, people *do* quite often penetrate the lives and homes of others. Marcel infiltrates the Guermantes salon; Boswell insinuates himself into Johnson’s life. The question again is, how are the necessary *recherches* balanced with the act of writing.

⁵⁶ See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectic Reason*, discussed in Jameson, MF 242.

The Golden Ass renders no account of its time of composition: Lucius’s career as an ass is fully as eventful as Guzmán’s career on the galleys. But one does, I think, glimpse a solution in Bakhtin’s mention of the role of the servant in literature: “the eternal ‘third man’ in the private life of his lords” and “the most privileged witness to private life.” The question unanswerable by a beast of burden or a galley slave does begin to be answered by the figure of the graphomaniac servant: Leporello, with his “catalogue” of Don Giovanni’s conquests; or Richardson’s Pamela (“I have got such a knack of writing, that when I am by myself, I cannot sit without a pen in my hand.—But I am now called to breakfast”⁵⁷). Domestic servants and personal attendants combine epistemological access—constant, intimate proximity with a living source of narrative—with some amount of the leisure necessary for literary activity.⁵⁸

These eighteenth-century servants, prototypes of the “third man,” are descended from the “clever slave” of classical comedy, who alternately outwits the master (like Pamela) or abets his intrigues (like Leporello). In the nineteenth century, as novels become more “psychological” and class conflicts intensify, literary servants gradually cease to be as clever as their masters; by the twentieth century, the role of “third man” is—as in the novels cited by Jameson—played by someone with a similar level of education to the hero: a neighbor, cousin, step-relation, or family friend.

Table 0.3

Double Entry: Hero and Third Man

Debit	Credit
<i>Fabula</i>	<i>Siuzhet</i>
Content	Form
Hero	“Third man” (neighbor, cousin, etc.)
Master	Servant

Form and content, abstract and concrete, particular and universal: the double-entry comes down, in large part, to Hegelian dialectics. The Marxists’ insistence upon diachronicity, and Bakhtin’s treatment of the servant as a point of access to real life, are both traceable to Hegel—particularly, I propose, to the Master-Slave dialectic. I therefore conclude this introductory chapter by discussing the role of this dialectic, and its influential interpretation by Alexandre Kojève, in the current study.

⁵⁷ Samuel Richardson, *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*, ed. Peter Sabor (New York: Penguin, 1980), 372. In *Pamela*, the role of the “clever servant” actually merges in a single character with that of the love interest.

⁵⁸ According to Ian Watt, footmen and waiting-maids in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England were the first working people who regularly read romances, because of their leisure and literacy; Pamela was then the “culture-heroine” of a large and very real “sisterhood of literate and leisured waiting-maids.” *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (RN), 47.

6. The Master-Slave Dialectic: Hegel and Kojève

As outlined in Hegel's *Phenomenology*, The Master-Slave dialectic begins with the primal encounter between two "separate consciousnesses." Because human consciousness is predicated upon external acknowledgement, each of these consciousnesses demands recognition by the other, but neither wants to do the recognizing himself. In the ensuing "life-or-death struggle," one consciousness, filled with mortal fear, surrenders to and becomes the servant of the other. The victor, the master, has won autonomy and "pure self-consciousness"; the slave is now dependent for his very existence upon the master. But, paradoxically, the master's ostensibly "independent consciousness" turns out to depend on the slave's recognition—while the slave has, through his experience of mortal fear, reached a negative awareness of his own consciousness, which is independent of the master. The slave further cements his self-consciousness through the act of work: only work changes objects in the world, and enables the worker to understand himself as a force in the world. "Fear and service" thereby lead the slave to "self-enfranchisement": "the independent consciousness is accordingly the consciousness of the slave," not the master.⁵⁹

Alexander Kojève's reading of the dialectic is especially useful for my purposes because Kojève represents the slave's self-enfranchisement as a triumph of dynamism over the master's stasis. According to Kojève, the slave consciously rejects the "given, fixed, and stable condition" of the master, and embodies in himself "change, transcendence, transformation, 'education'; he is historical becoming at his origin, in his essence, in his very existence." The "warlike Master" does not work, and only consumes: because work is the only way to change nature and the world, he himself is incapable of change. If the master tries to change, he will find himself "at variance with the World, which has not changed" and will become "a madman or a criminal," soon to be destroyed by "the natural and social objective reality."⁶⁰ This is the basic scenario of *Don Quijote*, whose hero is unable to exist in concert with the world, and remains trapped in an expired script.

A second interesting feature of Kojève's reading is the alignment of the slave and the writer, which occurs during his discussion of the dialectical relationship between Hegel and Napoleon as co-authors of the end of history.⁶¹ History, Kojève explains, consists of a series of interactions "between warlike Masters

⁵⁹ G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans., ed. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford UP), ¶193.

⁶⁰ Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, 28–29.

⁶¹ For an interesting discussion of Kojève's identification of Napoleon and Hegel with Christ and Logos, see Patrick Riley, "Introduction to the Reading of Alexandre Kojève," *Political Theory* 9.1 (February, 1981): 5-48. Riley quotes a passage on this

and working Slaves,” and will therefore end with the “synthesis of the Master and the Slave.” This “synthetic” man, the “Whole man,” is “the Citizen of the universal and homogenous State created by Napoleon”: it is thus Napoleon who “completes the course of the historical evolution of humanity” (44–45). But there is a catch: Napoleon lacks self-consciousness:

[H]e is the perfect Man, but he does not yet know it, and that is why Man is not fully “satisfied” in him alone. He cannot say of himself all that I have just said. Now, I [Kojève] have said it because I read it in the *Phenomenology*. Therefore it is Hegel, the author of the *Phenomenology*, who is somehow Napoleon’s Self-Consciousness.... This dyad, formed by Napoleon and Hegel, is the perfect Man, fully and definitively satisfied by what he *is* and by what he *knows* himself to be. (Kojève, 69–70).

Napoleon, the “warlike master,” having no independent self-consciousness, depends on Hegel’s Napoleon-consciousness: “He cannot say of himself all that I have just said.”⁶² Hegel’s consciousness, on the other hand, has been acquired through work in the world—specifically, through the work of writing the *Phenomenology*. This work causes Hegel to realize that he is “a man of flesh and blood,” who “does not float in empty space,” but is, rather, “seated on a chair, at a table, writing with a pen on paper.” Hegel also realizes that these implements “did not fall from the sky,” but are “the products of something called human work.” Sitting at the table, writing with a pen, Hegel “hears sounds from afar”—and knows that they are not “mere sounds,” but cannon shots, and “that the cannons too are products of some *Work*, manufactured... for a *Fight* to the death between men... [and that] he is hearing shots from Napoleon’s cannons at the Battle of Jena” (Kojève, 34). Napoleon, ordering the cannons to be fired, has little thought of the circumstances of their manufacture; he certainly has no concept of the material constructedness of Hegel’s writing-table. The history of fighting and work has culminated not with “the wars of Napoleon,” but with “the table on which Hegel wrote the *Phenomenology* in order to *understand* both those wars and that table” (Kojève, 43).

History is not completed in the battlefield of Jena, or even in “Hegel’s consciousness,” but *in the very pages of the Phenomenology*, thanks to real work—the kind of work that takes place in a chair, at a table, with a pen and paper. The Napoleon-Hegel division of labor here parallels the running debate in *Don Quixote* between “arms and letters”; an account may be drawn as follows:

subject from the original French edition of Kojève’s *Introduction*, which was, for whatever reason, omitted from the English edition, and which terminates with the following equation: “the true, real Christ = Napoleon-Jesus + Hegel-Logos” (Riley, 10).

⁶² These words are not written by Hegel about Napoleon, but by Kojève about Hegel: Hegel couldn’t—or, at any rate, didn’t—say of himself all that Kojève said about him. Insofar as Hegel’s *Phenomenology* needs Kojève’s interpretation—insofar as it depends on Kojève’s “recognition” for the fulfillment of its meaning—Kojève is the Slave to Hegel’s Master.

Table 0.5

Double Entry: Master and Slave

Debit	Credit
Hegel's Master	Hegel's Slave
Kojève's Napoleon	Kojève's Hegel
Fighting	Work
Arms	Letters
Action	Consciousness

The Master-Slave dialectic is, on many levels, an apt model for the credits and debits in the “big book.” First, on the level of character, it embodies credit and debit as two people—which is often how the novelistic “division of labor” really is effected, as I have suggested using examples from *Don Quijote* to *The Ambassadors*—and it portrays these characters as dynamic pairs, whose relationship is in constant flux.

On the level of language, the Master-Slave dialectic elucidates the workings of Bakhtinian dialogism. For example, the conflict between the courtly chivalric language and the language of everyday life in *Don Quijote* is dramatized between Don Quijote and Sancho Panza, and the dialectic reveals these languages as not two static contrasting elements in some kind of montage, but as mutually determining processes. Don Quijote's Latinate language is, like the Hegelian Master, “given” (by chivalric romances), “fixed” (by its own historical expiration), and “stable” (by virtue of Don Quijote's linguistic prescriptivism).⁶³ But it is Sancho Panza's neologisms and malapropisms which give Quijote the opportunity to cement the rules of his code. At the same time, Quijote also depends on Sancho's recognition and comprehension: if Sancho never understood anything that Quijote said, he would be useless as a squire. (In several scenes, Quijote directs his knightly orations at some uninitiated farmer or shepherd, whose passive incomprehension is contrasted with Sancho's active appreciation.⁶⁴) If Don Quijote's language and *Bildung* are complete at the start of the novel, the reader actually witnesses Sancho learning a new vocabulary and, like a good servant, *working* on it, mangling it, to cushion Quijote's contact with the real world. When Quijote steals a barber's basin, believing it to be the mythical golden helmet of Mambrino, and is pursued by the angry barber and the police, Sancho coins the ingenious and conciliatory neologism, “baciyelmo,” to describe a basin (*bacía*) which is simultaneously a helmet (*yelmo*).

⁶³ For a discussion of Quijote's prescriptivism, see Ramón Saldivar, *Figural Language in the Novel*, 36–38.

⁶⁴ In 2, 58, for example, Don Quijote delivers a discourse on sainthood versus knight errantry, to Sancho Panza and some farmers. Sancho immediately concurs with Quijote's fine speech, but the farmers have no idea what is going on: “Sin entender la mitad de lo que [Don Quijote] decir quería, [los labradores] acabaron de comer... y, despidiéndose de don Quijote, siguieron su viaje. Quedó Sancho de nuevo como si jamás hubiera conocido a su señor, admirado de lo que sabía ...”

This linguistic dialogism is mirrored by a dialogism of worldviews. The knightly and mundane worldviews, represented by the characters of the knight and his squire, are not just static “high” and “low” comic registers; Sancho’s worldview actually synthesizes Quijote’s chivalric fantasy with Alonso Quijana’s agricultural reality. This synthesis can be seen in Sancho’s words at Quijote’s deathbed:

“Oh!” replied Sancho, weeping: “don’t die your grace, my lord, but take my advice and live for many more years, because the greatest madness a man can commit in this life is to let himself die, for no real reason, without anybody killing him, or any other hands taking his life but those of melancholy. Look, don’t be lazy, but get out of bed, and let’s go out into the fields dressed as shepherds, the way we agreed to: maybe we’ll find my lady Doña Dulcinea behind some bush, disenchanted, and what could be better than that?”⁶⁵

Nearly identical words have just been spoken by Sansón Carrasco, who also refers to Dulcinea’s disenchantment and reminds the knight of their plans to impersonate princely shepherds; but where Sansón is clearly just trying to humor and placate his sick friend, Sancho is in tears, trying to drag Quijote out of bed for more adventures. Sancho might not actually believe that Dulcinea will be discovered in the bushes, but his skepticism is more ambiguous than Sansón’s. Sancho believes in the real world, but he also believes that there is some truth in knight errantry, as a slave both believes and does not believe in his master.

On the intratextual level, on the level of literary history, Cervantes himself is a kind of slave of Montalvo and the great chivalric writers: as Kojève’s Hegel, firmly enmeshed in the space-time continuum, understands and contextualizes a cartoonish, rather Tolstovan Napoleon,⁶⁶ so does Cervantes, from his arbitrary and particular historical vantage point, understand and contextualize the cartoonish conventions of the chivalric romance. We have seen that the initial motivation for writing a novel is the subservient reading, the Hegelian “acknowledgement,” of the master texts; the master, like these texts, must be renounced. “The transformation of the Slave, which will allow him to surmount his dread,” writes Kojève, “is long and painful” (53): Sancho’s tears at Quijote’s deathbed represent a step in the painful progression

⁶⁵ “No se muera vuestra merced, señor mío, sino tome mi consejo y viva muchos años, porque la mayor locura que puede hacer un hombre en esta vida es dejarse morir, sin más ni más, sin que nadie le mate, ni otras manos le acaben que las de la melancolía. Mire no sea perezoso, sino levántese desa cama, y vámonos al campo vestidos de pastores, como tenemos concertado: quizá tras de alguna mata hallaremos a la señora doña Dulcinea desencantada, que no haya más que ver” (2, 74).

⁶⁶ Kojève’s Napoleon bears more than a passing resemblance to the Napoleon of *War and Peace*: both the comically self-absorbed cog in the giant machine of history (“Napoleon rode over the plain, surveying the terrain with a look of profound thoughtfulness...”), and the eschatological Anti-Christ conceived by Pierre. Kojève’s mathematical equation, “the true, real Christ = Napoleon-Jesus + Hegel-Logos,” brings to mind Pierre’s cabalistic “calculation” that both “L’russe Besuhof” and “Napoleon Bonaparte” correspond to 666, the Number of the Beast, and that therefore he, Pierre, “must meet Napoleon and kill him, and either perish or put an end to the misery of all Europe” (*War and Peace*, book 11, chapter 14).

from fearfulness to autonomy. The same fearfulness is observed in servants like Leporello or Sganarelle, and is akin to the “horror” of young Marcel, confronted with the task of writing a book which is not identical to the *Memoirs* of Saint-Simon.

7. Metaphor and Instantiation

I conclude this introduction by answering a potential objection regarding my use of metaphor. The reader will have noted that the two main metaphors in use—double-entry bookkeeping and the Master-Slave dialectic—represent not just literary form and literary history, but also literary “content,” where they are instantiated as literal account books, and actual masters and slaves. The Master-Slave dialectic figuratively represents how each novel accounts for its own “self-enfranchisement,” and literally represents the relationships between actual knights and squires, Dons and servants. Double-entry bookkeeping figuratively represents formal doubleness, epistemological accounting, and a certain kind of literary history (in which each work must “pay off” its debts to *imitatio*, in terms of mimesis); but I also consider double-entry bookkeeping as *an actual historical practice*.

The risks attendant on using a single concept to describe both form and content are instructively identified by Jameson in his introductions to Formalism and Structuralism.⁶⁷ My hope is that it is possible to avoid these dangers—as Bakhtin does in his work on “dialogism.” Like defamiliarization, dialogism is a formal device which turns out to imply a literary history: defamiliarization leads Shklovsky from Sterne to Rozanov, each work defamiliarizing the one before; dialogism leads Bakhtin from Rabelais to Dostoevsky, each work in “dialogue” with the one before. In Bakhtin’s work on Dostoevsky, dialogism turns out to be not only a formal technique, but a genuine literary content: this is because of the enormous role played in Dostoevsky’s novels by literal conversations, in salons and criminal courts, at sick-beds, funerals and dinner tables.

Theoretically, formal “dialogism”—the bringing into contact of different linguistic registers—is in no way limited to literal dialogue. Melville mobilizes natural-historical and biblical language to create a polemic

⁶⁷ As Jameson observes, Formalist “baring the device”—initially described as a formal technique—turns out to be a model of literary history (each work bares the device of the one before) and is finally equated, in the discussion of Sterne, with novelistic content itself: “it is never clear in Shklovsky’s writings whether it is the content or the form itself which is defamiliarized” (PH 75). Jameson identifies a similar problem in Lévi-Strauss’s theory of signification: “a formalism in which the ‘content’ is precisely the form itself: myths are *about* the mythological process” (PH 198): having made a case for the emptiness of the signifier, Lévi-Strauss fills the vacuum with the emptiness of signification itself, which becomes the content of myth.

around Moby Dick; Dickens uses the language of Chancery to describe London life; innumerable novelists use “free indirect discourse” to portray the thoughts of their characters in language which is “both represented and representing.” Is it not, then, problematic to privilege Dostoevsky’s use of dialogism, which centers on actual dialogues?⁶⁸

In fact, Bakhtin’s historical approach circumnavigates the problem. Because the history of dialogism begins in Menippean satire, Dostoevsky’s use of Satyricon-style “scandal” scenes becomes *relevant* both as a form and a content—not least because Dostoevsky read the *Satyricon*. Bakhtin does not argue that *all* literature is dialogic, much less that dialogism governs the cognitive laws of artistic perception; rather, he presents a genealogy of texts which converse about conversation. Shklovsky, by contrast, identifies defamiliarization all at once, as a universal principle, turning up in the *Decameron*, Tolstoy’s “Kholstomer,” *Great Russian Tales of the Perm Province*, erotic riddles, Japanese poetry, legends from Zanzibar, and so on. He goes so far as to deny literary influence, in favor of universal cognitive “laws of plot formation”: “Even the admission of borrowings does not explain the existence of identical stories separated by thousands of years and tens of thousands of miles” (TP 17). Having postulated a universal law, Shklovsky ends up having to argue that all literature works in the same way.

In his critique of Shklovsky, Jameson writes: “the novels which do exist in the world are not exemplars of some universal, but are related to each other according to a historical rather than a logical and analytical mode” (PH 73). The idea of a historical, metonymic influence, rather than a kind of logical metaphoric necessity, is central to my project—as it is, I think, to Bakhtin’s dialogism. I am not claiming that double-entry bookkeeping works as a metaphor for all novels; still less, that the novel form itself is governed by the same “universal” laws that govern the form of accounting. I am, rather, tracing a genealogy of works which “account for” their influences and their production.

This genealogy, I propose, really does have its roots in the historic practice of double-entry bookkeeping, which is the subject of Chapter One. Double-entry bookkeeping, and the concurrent rise of the European paper industry led to new writing practices—graphomania, diarism, and obsessive spiritual confession—and to a balance-oriented worldview which influenced both science and literature.

⁶⁸ Bakhtin himself addresses this conflation of form and content in his notes “Toward a Reworking of the Dostoevsky Book,” with reference to “Thomas Mann’s *Doktor Faustus* as an indirect confirmation of my idea. Dostoevsky’s influence. Conversation with the devil ... these discoveries affect both form and content.” As the devil in *Brothers Karamazov* quotes Descartes and speak liturgical Slavonic, so does the devil in *Faustus* quote Aristotle and talk like “Luther’s devil.” Mann’s dialogue is itself in unmistakable dialogue with Dostoevsky’s dialogue: the content of this dialogism is dialogue itself. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, Appendix II, 284–85.