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METAFICTION AND DAVID MITCHELL'S GHOSTWRITTEN

Benjamin D. Hagen

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By

Benjamin D. Hagen

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Committee Chair: Dr. Stephen Burn Date

_____

First Reader: Dr. James Schiffer Date

_____

Second Reader (if required): Date

_____

Department Head: Dr. James Schiffer Date

_____

Dean of Graduate Studies: Dr. Cynthia Prosen Date

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ABSTRACT
METAFICTION AND DAVID MITCHELL'S GHOSTWRITTEN

By

Benjamin D. Hagen

This study explores the metafictional devices in English novelist David Mitchell's first book Ghostwritten (1999). More specifically, it attempts to demonstrate how these devices develop the "ghostwriting" metaphor Mitchell applies to the literary construct of fiction in general and the experiential construct of reality. The thesis also attempts to position Mitchell in a tradition of post-Joycean metafiction, illustrating how he belongs to a group of young authors writing more conventional realistic fiction while still retaining the self-conscious elements of their predecessors. Futhermore, this study offers brief examinations of his other three novels and how they fit in relation to his first novel.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, David Christopher and Mary Beth Hagen. Their unconditional love overwhelms me.

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This thesis follows the format prescribed by the *MLA Style Manual* and the Department of English.

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INTRODUCTION

Ghostwritten (1999) is the first of four novels authored to date by English novelist David Mitchell and serves as an example of contemporary metafiction that maintains a balance between the conventions of traditional realistic fiction and those of the twentieth-century self-conscious novel. This study attempts to position Mitchell's book in a tradition of post-Joycean metafiction in order to determine the significance of his work and how he diverges from his twentieth-century predecessors while still maintaining the telling marks of a self-conscious novelist. Though this thesis focuses on Mitchell's first novel, there is an attempt to answer whether or not his other three books develop or diverge from the model outlined in Ghostwritten. His other novels include, to date, Number9Dream (2001), Cloud Atlas (2004), and, most recently, Black Swan Green (2006).

CHAPTER ONE: SELF-CONSCIOUS FICTION

Self-conscious fiction, or metafiction, refers simply to a literary work that reflexively draws attention to its artificiality and textuality. While self-conscious authors employ reflexive techniques in a variety of ways and with a variety of creative purposes, their techniques generally and deliberately pull the reader out of his or her readerly stupor in order to examine ontological issues, exploring, as Patricia Waugh writes, "the problematic relationship between life and fiction" (4). In other words, self-conscious writers complicate and blur the distinction between authentic and artificial experience, a distortion that acts as a framework in which these writers perform several sorts of balancing acts, simultaneously narrating and theorizing, "jazzing around" and examining, creating and critiquing (Gardner 93). These and other balances drive the self-conscious novel, and the relationship Waugh identifies between life and fiction serves as the frame for Ghostwritten and for this study.

One might claim that, like this relationship, the line distinguishing fictions from metafictions is blurry as well. Though self-conscious novels commit great crimes against John Gardner's "law of the 'vivid and continuous dream'" (87), they merely emphasize what is fundamental to one's understanding of what it means for a text to be a novel in the first place. This is not to say that all novelists continually draw attention to the status of their books as artifacts, but rather, according to Waugh, "that metafiction is a tendency or function inherent in all novels" (5). The novel as form defies definition, and, as Wayne Booth illustrates nigh exhaustively in The Rhetoric of Fiction (1961), it continually breaks free "from the constraints of abstract rules" authors, readers, and critics set for it

(xv). The novel, in general, is a site of competition and/or conflict between the languages of different forms and between the differing regulations and rules with which we write and read them. Since a duality exists in even the most "elementary form" of language between "creation and disruption of illusion," Brian Stonehill argues that it might be "accurate to conceive of a spectrum of fictional modes, composed of varying degrees of self-consciousness" (15). Books that fit toward the self-conscious side of this spectrum, then, flaunt the protean form that all novels exhibit as well as their complex use of language, bearing "a particular set of relations to [the] writer, reader, and real world that distinguishes [them]" from fictions that strive to fulfill Gardner's Law (Stonehill 31).

Though this critical framework focuses on Mitchell's placement within post-Joycean metafiction, this is not to say that metafiction is a staple of twentieth and twenty-first century literature alone. In fact, Stonehill points out that some critics see a "rejection of verisimilitude" and a confrontation with "fictionality . . . in the medieval allegories of Langland and Dante" as well as strictures against self-conscious writing in the aesthetic theory of Aristotle (32). This, of course, suggests that self-consciousness exists in literature written long before the novel's inception and plays a key role in that inception in early narratives like Miguel de Cervantes' Don Quixote (1604, 1615) and Henry Fielding's Tom Jones (1749). Of particular importance to Waugh and Stonehill in the area of early self-conscious fiction, however, is Laurence Sterne's Tristram Shandy (1760), a book that Waugh considers "the prototype for the contemporary metafictional" work since it is "thoroughly a novel about itself" and, more specifically, about its own incompleteness (70). Growing out from their Spanish predecessor Cervantes, Fielding and Sterne, then, stand as the literary forebears of self-conscious fiction in English and

illustrate for Stonehill that the "history of the novel begins and ends in self-consciousness" (32).

Returning to Aristotle for a moment, self-conscious writers reject the principle that the goal of aesthetics is mimesis – i.e., that art should conceal the hand of the artist in works that strive to mirror the reader's world. In other words, such novelists reject the idea that art should conceal its art and instead strive to create fiction while simultaneously saying something critical or insightful about the creation of that fiction (Waugh 5). Though self-conscious fiction runs the risk of committing, as Henry James writes, "a betrayal of a sacred office" (qtd. in Stonehill 2), the best metafiction manages still "to fire our imaginations and move our emotions as do events in real life" (Stonehill 14); it blurs the line between the ludic and the mimetic through a variety of dramatizations that point outside of the book's narrative. Specifically, metafictions tend to "encapsulate [their] own context" and oblige readers to consider in what ways they dramatize not only their extended narratives but the relationship these narratives have with their authors, readers, literary predecessors, and other "real world" counterparts (Stonehill 5).

The dramatization of the creative author can take several different forms in self-conscious fiction, yet it often takes the form of a balance between celebratory artistic performance and writerly frustration with the uncertainty and limitations of language. While both Tom Jones and Tristram Shandy exhibit narrators engaged "in the act of composition" (Stonehill 30) more contemporary metafiction complicates this effect, revealing the presence of an implied author behind layers of fictional narrators. Though both Stonehill and Waugh consider this contemporary development, Waugh writes clearly that

> In third-person/first-person intrusion narratives (such as Slaughterhouse-Five and The French Lieutenant's Woman), an apparently autonomous world is suddenly broken into by a narrator, often 'The Author,' who comes explicitly from an ontologically differentiated world. (133)

Texts like Ulysses (1922), then, where James Joyce intrudes upon the reliable third-person narrator with bold headlines in "Aeolus" and stylistic parodies in "Oxen of the Sun" as well as John Barth's intrusion as Dunyazadiad's genie in Chimera (1972) complicate the ontological issues raised by their eighteenth-century predecessors. These works dramatize not just an author composing happily and/or frustratingly, but a separate creative consciousness intruding upon its own creation, positioning its own consciousness beside the various other streams it creates and working in direct relation with its fiction.

The performing artist dramatized in much metafiction, however, would be amiss without an established relationship with a dramatized reader as well. Tom Jones and Tristram Shandy both serve as early texts that also enact dialogues between implied readers and supposed writers, but more recent self-conscious novels tend to develop this relationship further. Though readerly address certainly has its place in even the least self-conscious of narratives, Waugh makes another useful distinction here:

> The 'Dear Reader' is no longer quite so passive and becomes in effect an acknowledged fully active player in a new conception of literature as a collective creation rather than a monologic and authoritative version of history. (43)

In the "Cyclops" episode of Ulysses, for instance, Joyce switches to a first person narrator – a nameless Irish Everyman – who he continually interrupts with ornamental

and embellished prose that filters the mundane happenings through a mock-heroic lens. Thus a dramatized three-way dialogue takes place between the created narrator, the intruding author, and an implied reader who must became the sort of "active player" Waugh considers, re-filtering the mock-heroic prose through the lens of the narrator in order to determine the episode's action. Post-Joycean metafiction, however, moves beyond readerly participation as well by encouraging readers "to connect the artifice of the narrative with the problematic 'real' world" in which they live (Waugh 43). In order to do this, novelists often posit characters that are "aware of their fictional status" (Stonehill 33). These characters, aside from merely reminding readers that they are participating as consumers of a fiction, also serve as potential models for a self-awareness that authors mean for readers to apply to their own lives as well.

According to Stonehill, the "bond of intimacy" and "conspiratorial mystique" that occurs between author and reader in metafiction also indicates a deviation from the traditional forms of the novel (7, 8). For instance, Cervantes, in his preface to Don Quixote, relates the advice of his friend who explains that "this book of yours has no need for any of the things you say it lacks, because all of it is an invective against books of chivalry" (8). In fact, much of the preface acts as a site for Cervantes to lament the impossibility of writing his preface, and ultimately takes up the space with the advice of his friend about how he can fake the conventions of the chivalrous novel. Likewise, Ulysses acts very much within the traditions that come before it and attempts to exhaust the very forms it adopts. In contemporary metafiction, however, the deviation from the traditional form of the novel appears less certain of itself than it does in works like Don Quixote and Ulysses and enacts what Stonehill coins a "skeptical examination of its own

validity" (10). Later in his study, he devotes a chapter to William Gaddis's first novel The Recognitions (1955). In reference to this work and Gaddis's second novel JR (1975), Stonehill argues that, while both are "just suggestively self-conscious," the novels manage to "implicate themselves in their own design" (114). In other words, a great deal of Gaddis's purpose deals with self-referentially questioning the credibility of his work within his own work and, specifically, in its "debate over art's real value" (131).

The word "real," however, is tricky when discussing self-conscious novels. While the most basic trait of this genre is an emphasis on the difference between its artificial world and the world in which readers live, nonetheless, metafiction simultaneously illustrates that reality outside the text is as much a construct as the fictional world the author creates. Waugh's general analysis of frames applies to this concept since she confidently asserts that "[e]verything is framed, whether in life or novels" (28) and that "it is finally impossible to know where one frame ends and another begins" (29). The frames separating "real" from "imaginary" also tend to blur in self-conscious fiction since some authors incorporate historical events into their fictional narratives. In Mao II (1991) and Underworld (1997), for instance, Don DeLillo offers prologues that take full advantage of American spectacles as nodes connecting his fiction with "history." The mass wedding presided over by Reverend Moon in the earlier novel and the final game of the Dodgers-Giants pennant race in 1951 that serves as the setting for Underworld's popular prologue both serve as sites of convergence between the real and the imaginary. In both cases, DeLillo acts as the individual creator against the collective construct of history, shaping something new from historical material.

* * *

A group of young self-conscious novelists, however, diverge from the tradition of metafiction, shifting in Stonehill's spectrum of self-conscious degrees toward what one might call a "realistic" metafiction, works that are more conventional than novels by Joyce, Barth, Gaddis, Johnson, DeLillo, or even Sterne or Fielding. Despite the numerous concerns, topics, and tendencies that Waugh and Stonehill observe flooding from post-Joycean metafictions, one characteristic in particular tends to stand out and helps distinguish some more recent metafiction from its forebears: the "[d]ehumanization of characters" (Stonehill 31). Though John Barth certainly claims that traditional narrative elements like character are still a priority in his writing, Waugh counters in Metafiction pointing out that in The Sot-Weed Factor (1960) "the metafictional bones are often left obtruding from a very thin human covering" (51). While it is a mistake to assume that all metafictional works produce characters "less convincing than other novelistic characters" (Stonehill 28), one would still have trouble arguing with Sharon Spencer's assumption that "character is likely altogether to disappear in a composition that is preoccupied with itself as a composition" (qtd. Ibid). For instance, readers continually lose Ambrose amongst all the self-conscious commentary on how to read or write a short story in John Barth's "Lost in the Funhouse" (1968). The beginning of the fourth section of B.S. Johnson's Albert Angelo (1964) entitled "Disintegration" also serves as a good example of this tendency. After his previous chapter "Development" frustratingly ends with the self-directed invective, "OH, FUCK ALL THIS LYING!" (163), the fourth chapter begins with an "almighty aposiopesis" where Johnson ditches Albert the teacher/architect in order to explain that he's "trying to say something not tell a story [since] telling stories is telling lies and [he] want[s] to tell the truth about" himself (167).

While no uniform regulations exist by which to judge a novel as "realistic" metafiction or not, books by writers such as Lawrence Norfolk, Zadie Smith, and David Mitchell still have tendencies or emphases that indicate the realist authorial bent. The first of these includes a divergence from the extreme stylistic flourish of self-conscious writers like Joyce and Barth and a return to novelistic characters that do not raise readerly doubts of their own validity. David Mitchell, for instance, explains in an interview with Agony Column that he writes his characters' autobiographies, fleshing out the "matrix of relationships between" his characters and a variety of themes including "sexuality, work, death, aging, money, danger, and language." He does this because he believes that fiction "is all about people" and concludes that when his writing fails, his characterization is to be blamed, prompting him to return to these autobiographies.

Even so, while the self-consciousness in works like Mitchell's Ghostwritten and Smith's White Teeth (2000) tend to be subdued when compared to works such as Barth's LETTERS (1979) or Robert Coover's Pricksongs and Descants (1969), such fiction still maintains a sense of authorial performativity. Rather than transcribing Irie Jones' long family history to Marcus Chalfen in White Teeth, for instance, Smith includes a family tree on the next page complete with a Key (e.g., "% = paternity unsure") in order to replace the girl's lengthy survey (281). Norfolk includes similar elements throughout Lemprière's Dictionary (1991), at one point providing a large musical staff following the words "He . . . struck the keys" (108). Despite these self-conscious (and playful) breaks in form and prose akin to a great deal of twentieth-century metafiction, both Zadie Smith and Lawrence Norfolk still devote much of their time toward developing traditional narrative elements that do not overshadow their content.

Such works also tend to dramatize situations in which their characters either become suspicious that they might be working within a design larger than themselves and that an Ultimate Designer might be responsible for what is happening to them. White Teeth (2000), for instance, opens with Alfred Archibald Jones parked in his Cavalier nearby a butcher shop, attempting to gas himself to death. Despite his despairing situation, however, the narrator observes that

> luck was with [Archie] that morning. . . . While he slipped in and out of consciousness, the position of the planets, the music of the spheres, the flap of a tiger moth's diaphanous wings in Central Africa, and a whole bunch of other stuff that Makes Shit Happen had decided it was second-chance time for Archie. Somewhere, somehow, by somebody, it had been decided that he would live. (4)

And indeed, one of the workers from the butcher shop saves Archie's life, annoyed that he parks illegally on their property in order to kill himself. Archie comes away, rather than equally annoyed at such a foible, feeling a new lease on life, like he'd "been handed a great big wad of Time" (15). Likewise, as John Lemprière works on his dictionary of mythology, the continual grotesque murders he comes upon and their similarities to the entries he had just been working on continually suggest that he works as a component within a design larger than himself. Given this suggestion, when the novel nears its climax, readers can fully appreciate the words "Welcome at last, John Lemprière . . . We have waited some time for you" (359). While self-aware characters often characterize metafiction in general, in these novels, their awareness does not playfully extend to the novel the readers read. John, for instance, never worries that he might be caught in a

novel by Lawrence Norfolk nor does Archie come to an awareness of being caught up in Zadie Smith's creative net.

In self-conscious novels, Waugh argues that one can discover "a fictional form that is culturally relevant and comprehensible to contemporary readers" since it "helps us understand how the reality we live day by day is similarly constructed, similarly written" (18). David Mitchell's fiction, on the other hand, begs the question, "Written by whom?" William H. Gass answers that "we select, we construct, we compose our pasts and hence make fictional characters of ourselves as it seems we must do to remain sane" (qtd. in Waugh 116). Mitchell's approaches the idea of life-as-fiction from a much different perspective. While he does – like Smith and Norfolk – exhibit some or all of the tendencies that Waugh and Stonehill observe at work in the typically self-conscious novel while re-adopting the conventions of more traditional fiction, his work often points beyond the language employed by the writer of the text. His novels do not merely dramatize the struggle of authors or emphasize their trouble with language but rather suggests a controlling force at work writing the lives not only of his characters but the lives of both readers and writers alike.

In his first novel, Mitchell embodies the dynamic between authentic experience and artificiality in the metaphor of "ghostwriting." While Ghostwritten certainly adopts this metaphor in order to comment on fiction-writing in general (especially the use of first-person narrators), it also – through ontological blurring akin to a great deal of metafiction – extends the metaphor to the reader's reality, postulating that our lives work within some sort of written or controlled fiction or design. This is not to say that Mitchell believes or means to prove the existence of The Divine (let alone a "Christian" or even

"benevolent" one), but rather to complicate the already sticky distinction (as many have done before him) between art and life, to open up space for the possibility of an Author that dramatic works such as Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot (1952) and Luigi Pirandello's Six Characters in Search of an Author (1925) seem to lament the absence of. And so it is with Ghostwritten that this thesis settles for specific examination.

CHAPTER TWO: DAVID MITCHELL'S GHOSTWRITTEN

"Ghostwritten" texts adopt narrative voices that ventriloquise their subjects. In other words, if an autobiography of a celebrity is ghostwritten, then the book assumes the voice of that athlete or actress or politician and presents itself as if that figure penned it. Of course, this assumption and presentation are false and hide what amounts to sanctioned deception. Another consciousness writes and controls the words attributed to the book's subject; a ghostwriter hovers, Stephen Dedalus might say, "within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence" (Joyce 233). David Mitchell seizes this dynamic in his first novel and examines how the concept of ghostwriting serves as a metaphor not only for the lives of his characters but for the lives of his readers as well. Ghostwritten suggests a competition, then, between the singular and authentic lived experience of the individual and the artificially written or controlled experience that at times appears to work within an Ultimate Design or Fiction. Ghostwritten incorporates a spiritual flavor of self-consciousness, then, that suggests that where one might perceive control or design at work – in both the novel and in constructed "reality" – one might reasonably assume a Controller, a Designer, and a Master Ghostwriter doing the work.

Ten chronological chapters make up Mitchell's first novel, most of them named for the setting in which they take place. The book begins in Okinawa, an island about one thousand miles southwest of Japan, and moves to Tokyo in the second chapter. Mitchell continues with his setting displacements section-by-section, stopping in Hong Kong, China, Mongolia, St. Petersburg, London, Cape Clear Island, and New York City. In

addition to the settings, Mitchell also switches narrative voices with each step. The cast of nine narrators he sets at the novel's helm resemble as much a grab bag of occupations and identities as one may hope to find in literature. Mitchell posits a religious terrorist as his first and last narrator and follows with an employee of a used-records store, a lawyer, an old woman running a tea shack, an art thief, a ghostwriter/musician, a quantum physicist, and some narrating that stretches the boundaries of realistic fiction. Given this design, the major aesthetic obstacle that challenges Mitchell in Ghostwritten appears to be an issue of coherence, that is, how to join together a novel that is so overtly scattered.

Mitchell explains in an interview with Nazalee Raja for Agony Column that he holds the stories of these scattered narrators together by having them "bang through the walls of each other's worlds occasionally." In other words, the actions of the narrators and other characters seep into each other's stories, linking them together in a complicated chain of events that continues from the first page to the last. Readerly recognition of this chain and these relationships, according to Mitchell, should give his audience a sense that a "macro plot" works throughout the novel; despite the changing settings and narrators, readers should come to an awareness of Ghostwritten as one story "over and above the micro plot[s]" told by the many characters that inhabit the same fictional universe (Agony Column).

For instance, Satoru Sonada, the young records store employee/would-be jazz musician who narrates the second chapter, travels to Hong Kong to visit his girlfriend Tomoyo in the third. Though Satoru narrates the early stages of their relationship and Tomoyo's return home in "Tokyo," Neal Brose, a British lawyer working in a financial

firm in Hong Kong, narrates their reunion at a coffee and burger bar across the street from his workplace in the next chapter:

> [T]hey spoke in Japanese. He had a saxophone case, and a small backpack with airline tags still attached. They could barely have been out of high school. He needed a good long sleep. They didn't hug or cloy over each other like a lot of Chinese kids do these days. They just held hands over the table. (75)

Though Neal never learns their names, Mitchell offers explicit clues so that the reader can identify the couple eating at his table. Language, instrument case, airline tags, approximate ages; all of these elements suggest that Mitchell wants the identity of the couple to be certain for the reader. Though he and Tomoyo eventually disappear "fuck knows where" (96), Neal continues to remember them the following day. The image of the young couple holding hands and enjoying one another's company reminds Neal of the relationship he once enjoyed with his estranged wife Katy Forbes, just one of several circumstances that contribute to a very bad morning (91). Satoru, then, breaks out of the confinement of "Tokyo," taking his place in a story larger than the one he can tell by himself.

This encounter between Satoru and Neal serves as part of an intricate system of overlaps and repetitions that makes up the architectural support for Ghostwritten. At the very least, each narrator connects to those narrating the chapters on either side of him or her (or it). Though Neal's death at the end of "Hong Kong" prevents any direct involvement with the rest of the novel, readers discover near the end of the fourth chapter, "Holy Mountain," that his Chinese maid is actually the great granddaughter of

the new narrator. It is of note, however, that the dynamic these and other overlaps set up between all nine tale-tellers never achieves the status of a "relationship." All narrators, even those that physically see and speak with one another, are only ever strangers to each other. The affinities Mitchell posits between them, then, suggests patterns of causation dealing with a "macro plot" that involves far more than those telling the story. Ghostwritten resembles a game like Hot Potato in which each player passes the potato arbitrarily to the next and the next. In his book, however, Mitchell blindfolds his players, and only those watching the game can fully understand the affinities between them. This lack of knowledge on the part of the characters, however, by no means keeps them from an awareness that a separate consciousness watches and/or controls them. All nine tend to feel powerless or paranoid that a larger arranger works in their lives, enacting the two actions of a proper Ghostwriter: observation and composition.

CHAPTER THREE: PARANOIA

The first sentence of Ghostwritten introduces a narrative paranoia that Mitchell continues to develop throughout the novel: "Who was blowing on the nape of my neck?" (3). The final phrase "on the nape of my neck" here intimates not only a first-person perspective, a key element to Mitchell's use of the ghostwriting metaphor, but the vulnerability of the speaker as well as his uncomfortable proximity to the source of his sensation. In order for the narrator to feel this "blowing," the "Who" in this case must be both behind him (i.e., out of sight) and close enough to irritate his neck. In short, the narrator finds himself in a defenseless position against an assumed offensive power. Mitchell cleverly sets up tension within the question, however, that complicates the identity of this power. The leading pronoun implies that the speaker expects a person to be behind him; the word "blowing" carries with it a set of connotations suggesting airiness or ghostliness; and yet when Quasar, the man who narrates the first and final chapter of Ghostwritten, swings around to catch a glimpse of his teaser, all he finds are the "tinted glass doors" of a hotel as they hiss shut (3). In the competing possible sources for this "blowing" – i.e., human, ghostly, and technological – Mitchell nicely sets up not only a narrative paranoia that becomes a common characteristic of several characters, but a paranoia that initially fears human surveillance yet ultimately cowers beneath an invasive and potentially controlling one: either technological or spiritual.

It is worth noting, however, that it is a technological source (i.e., the hotel doors) that actually triggers Quasar's hypersensitivity, a trait that most readers should certainly find understandable. It has been but few days since he set off a gas bomb in a Tokyo

subway car, and Okinawa serves as a sanctuary and a hiding place for this terrorist on the run. In the final chapter of the book, Mitchell breaks from the chronological pattern of Ghostwritten, flashing back to this subway car shortly before Quasar plants his bomb. On the novel's final page, after struggling through various hallucinations and squeezing through the car's closing door, Quasar feels for the first time the sensation that opens the novel: "Who is blowing on the nape of my neck? / I swing around—nothing but the back of the train, accelerating into the darkness" – another technological source (426). The present tense used throughout the final chapter and here in this passage suggests that these memories haunt him after the attack, and their continual intrusions in his narrative "Okinawa" produce a paranoia that follows him, a paranoia that wonders if there is "something quizzical in [the receptionist's] smile," some "[s]uspicion in her face" (4). After all, she notices his injured hand, crushed in the doors of the subway car (another technological source) and wrapped in a bandage (3, 425). As the chapter progresses, Quasar begins to watch the leaders of his cultic sect The Fellowship pursued and arrested on hotel televisions (yes, technology the culprit again) and feels the weight of continually-heavier scrutiny. He is the subject of a watchfulness that will eventually find him out.

Quasar is not the only narrator conscious of being the subject of surveillance, however. Shortly after Satoru and Tomoyo leave the coffee bar, for instance, a man named Huw Llewellyn approaches Neal Brose under a friendly guise. Though Neal doesn't initially recognize him, he quickly remembers that he has met Huw before; he's an employee of a transfer inspectorate very interested in the illegal holdings account of one Andrei Gregorski to which Neal alone holds the key (96-97). In addition, Mo

Muntevary, the quantum physicist who narrates the eighth chapter "Clear Island," holds the secret to the next generation of warfare; she spends a great deal of time before the opening of the chapter evading an American general and his group of militaristic pursuers. The woman on the Holy Mountain in China—i.e., the narrator of the fourth chapter—also appears conscious and/or paranoid of a hanging human watchfulness:

> The eye was high above. It disguised itself as a shooting star, but it didn't fool me, for what shooting star travels in a straight line and never burns itself out? It was not a blind lens, no: it was a man's eye, looking down at me from the cobwebbed dimness . . . Who were they, and what did they want of me? (136)

The words "cobwedded" and "dimness," here, are memory-soaked. After the son of a Chinese warlord rapes her as a young girl, he digs his big toe into her navel and looks down upon her "from the dimness" above her bed; after she feels a "spoonful of saliva" fall upon her nose, she looks past her villain and observes that a "spider spun the dimness between the rafters" (113). Thus the old woman equates the watchful eye of the fake star with a criminal, invasive, and disturbing surveillance. The woman doesn't understand that what she sees as an old woman is a man-made satellite orbiting the earth, but for a moment she gives credence to the sensational paranoia Quasar expresses in "Okinawa." Unwittingly, the eye she observes as an old woman, while not necessarily an eye that wishes to take advantage of her specifically, certainly alludes to a relationship between surveillance and futuristic technology that Mitchell also develops throughout Ghostwritten.

Quasar first alludes to this relationship early in "Okinawa" as well. Upon entering his hotel room for the first time after leaving the receptionist to her desk, he immediately closes the blinds to protect himself from any "telephoto lens[es] [that] might be looking in" (4). In addition, he mentions specific conspiracy-theory information later in the chapter that The Fellowship offers him. These teachings foster his paranoia on the secluded island rather than assuaging it, encouraging enhanced watchfulness rather than confidence:

> Our minister of defense received some reports that the government of the unclean had developed microcameras which they implanted in the craniums of seagulls, which were then trained to spy. Not to mention the Americans' secret satellites, scrolling over the globe, scanning for the Fellowship . . . (30)

Given this information, it is no wonder then that Quasar describes the face of a seagull peering at him from a window ledge as "cruel" on two occasions: one shortly after the above passage and one several pages earlier (17, 30-31). Though these machinations certainly appear fictitious, that is, the force-fed dogma of a violent and convincing cultic education, sections of the novel like "Holy Mountain" and "Clear Island" suggest that this fear of highly-technological surveillance and potential discovery and capture might not be unfounded.

Quasar's paranoia, the Chinese woman's suspicions, and Mo's theories and discoveries climax in "Night Train," the penultimate chapter of Ghostwritten. In a sense, this chapter is an anomaly amongst the rest because Mitchell doesn't posit a solid and/or singular narrator through which to tell it. Rather, Mitchell posits the reader as a fly on the

wall of a studio and as literal surveyors privy to dialogue between Bat Segundo—the host of a New York radio program for which Mitchell names his chapter—and those in the studio or on the air. Mitchell offers no narration here, only dialogue. Though "Night Train" lacks this first element, Bat still serves as the controlling consciousness of the chapter; very few conversations take place without him. One might argue, in fact, that since he narrates his radio program to its listeners, readers might also consider him the narrator of the chapter itself. The second candidate for that position, however, foregrounds the theme of surveillance and its relationship with futuristic technology in the novel.

Early in the chapter, a caller joins Bat's program that refers to itself as "the zookeeper" (378). Though this caller does not directly reveal its identity, the word "zookeeper" echoes a conversation between Mo Muntevary and her son Liam, a conversation where Mo submits to the fact that her American pursuers will find her. She explains how her research in Quancog (i.e., quantum cognition or artificial sentience) might work for peace rather than war:

> What if Quancog were powerful—ethical—enough to ensure that technology could no longer be abused? What if Quancog could act as a kind of . . . zookeeper? (364-65, emphasis added)

The voice with which Bat speaks in the next chapter belongs to the result of Mo's discovery and research. After Zookeeper escapes the control of its designers, it inhabits various satellites orbiting Earth, and the world becomes a text for it to read, to understand, to observe and to attempt to control. Quasar's suspicions, then, at least in the fictional Ghostwritten universe, find their greatest confirmation in Zookeeper, a

consciousness created to survey without permission and to seek out even the craftiest isolate.

There are limits, however, even to this powerful surveyor. Though the Zookeeper can "see all the pictures," despite its self-awareness, the consciousness is still a man-made intelligence, and a program that it calls the "four laws" governs its actions and decisions (416). Though Mitchell never lists these laws for his readers explicitly, they do discover that it must be accountable for its actions (380) and that it "cannot willfully deceive" (382). Though Zookeeper's major purpose for calling into the radio program concerns the destruction of his own designers using what it calls "the PinSat," its concern seems much larger than that and brings it back to "Night Train" again and again. After Bat first accuses Zookeeper of "climbing onto a born-again soapbox," the sentience answers, "I've never been on a soapbox, Bat. I wish to ask, how do you know what to do when one of your laws contradicts another?" (380). In short, the Zookeeper wants to know the rules that apply to the problem of dilemmas, the major obstacle to the success of its surveillance and control.

The difficulty in making decisions befuddles Zookeeper, and it eventually concludes that no matter what steps it takes to ensure that mankind does not destroy itself, its "solutions" will always father "the next generation of crises" (416). The more it keeps saving and protecting and safeguarding, the more the "visitors [it] safeguard[s]" continue to wreck its zoo (419). Though this artificial sentience is powerful, Mitchell continues to remind the reader that his narrators and artificial consciousnesses, like all fictional characters, are still slaves to a Designer. In the end, Zookeeper's efforts to maintain order in its zoo are no more effective than the efforts of Avril, the woman who

works with Neal Brose at Cavendish Holdings. No matter how many times she might call his cell phone, no matter how stern or straightforward she might be, she cannot force him to come to work or save him from breathing his last in front of a large Buddha statue. No, despite the fear of several characters that they're being watched, Mitchell develops a more disturbing paranoia that they're, in fact, being controlled or written by an invisible, ghostly force.

In "Tokyo," Satoru's boss Takeshi—in the midst of vicious divorce proceedings—phones him at the record store and laments, "Why are we programmed like this?" (50). Though Takeshi's question concerning his habit of sleeping with women other than his wife refers to genetic programming and Darwinian evolution, it also parallels the larger idea that another consciousness programs his actions and, by extension, those of Mitchell's other characters in Ghostwritten. Unlike Zookeeper, who works according to man-made programming in order to observe and control, this invisible consciousness works according to a master design.

The failure of man-made technology to reconcile and control that which it surveys suggests that a higher power within Ghostwritten goes beyond observation toward composition, a power that works from without and from within, ghostwriting each narrator's life and reality in a way that Zookeeper cannot. While David Mitchell certainly serves as the largest programmer in the novel since he wrote the book, he sets to work a fictional consciousness within the book itself; he writes into Ghostwritten an ethereal or spiritual presence that writes the lives of its narrators even as they tell their stories. The interesting element to this presence, however, is not necessarily the idea that a fictional

author runs rampant throughout the novel, but rather the narrative paranoia that peeks out through the stories Mitchell's characters tell. Just as the narrators of Ghostwritten exhibit suspicions concerning surveillance, at other moments they display a fear that they exist within a fiction rather than living an authentic singular experience.

One of the most direct glimpses of this paranoia appears in "Tokyo" during Satoru's first conversation with his girlfriend Tomoyo. After Tomoyo mentions a large Buddha statue on Lantau Island off the coast of Hong Kong, the young man explains that for "a moment [he] had an odd sensation of being in a story that someone was writing, but soon that sensation too was being swallowed up" (55). This passage is particularly interesting not just because Satoru's metaphor self-consciously draws attention to the fact that he is in a story David Mitchell writes but because his language resonates in strange and complicated ways. Satoru's point here is not that he exists within a novel called Ghostwritten but that his life, his and his alone, feels as if it were an artificial composition of another consciousness. Satoru's observation, rather than merely playful, is subtle and uncertain because tension exists between his suspicion and the ridiculousness of that suspicion. Mitchell's use of the word "swallowing" here suggests that Satoru's glimpse is fleeting, that something other than his own consciousness consumes this glimpse as well as his feelings of inadequacy as he listens to Tomoyo talk. Yet the word also suggests that Satoru's glimpse is not a conscious observation but rather a planned and a carefully regulated epiphany. As if another presence wishes to tease the young man with a small span of awareness, this outside consciousness wrests Satoru's "odd sensation" away from him.

David Mitchell himself teases the conscientious reader in "Mongolia," positing as its narrator a bodiless entity that can transmigrate from human host to human host, a narrator that might just fit the bill as Satoru's writer. This being, hereafter referred to as Noncorpum, spends a great deal of the chapter explaining how it came to understand itself as an entity that needed a human host in order to sustain itself. As it came to consciousness, Noncorpum realized that it occupied the same space as another, and when that consciousness drifted off to sleep one night, it "tried to penetrate this other presence, . . . ripping [its] way through memories and neural control, gouging out great chunks" (156). Shortly after transmigrating into the doctor who found his first host unresponsive, Noncorpum finds it must transmigrate a second time; after announcing to its new "host that a disembodied entity had been living in his mind for two years," the poor doctor "went quite mad" (157). Later in the chapter, Noncorpum explains that it lorded over an entire village, driving its "hosts almost to destruction," inflicting pain, "implanting memories from one host into another, . . . incessantly singing to them," coercing "monks to rob, devoted lovers to be unfaithful, [and] misers to spend" (163). Thus Mitchell introduces a narrator that can invade human consciousness undetected and influence the actions and thoughts of its host.

The violence Noncorpum commits before converting to a "discreet and conscientious" way of life (Ibid), however, indicates that, like all the other narrators and characters in the novel, its efforts are committed without design and fit within a pattern rather than controlling a pattern. The repetition of violence in Ghostwritten serves as a great differentiator between the characters and their Ghostwriter. Quasar kills and injures dozens of Tokyoites in his attack. The old woman's Tea Shack gets knocked down

several times over the course of her life. Margarita Latunsky, the art thief who narrates chapter six, kills a British man named Jerome at the end of "Petersburg." In these instances, violence acts as a means to control yet ultimately fails to lead to success. Even Zookeeper, despite his efforts to stop nuclear war, cannot keep human beings from hurting and killing one another, and even it, bound by man-made laws, resorts to violence again and again for the sake of its zoo. After all, at least according to Noncorpum, "It is much easier to destroy than it is to re-create" (156). For the entity who controls, who ghostwrites the lives of Mitchell's characters, however, violence does not act as an agent of coercion, but rather as an agent of progression, the causes with which one stage of design works itself into the next.

Thus Noncorpum ultimately fails to fit the bill of the novel's ultimate arranger because it does not work according to an ultimate design. Despite its abilities, Noncorpum has no grand plan for humanity; it only wishes to discover the secret of its own origins, transmigrating at random from human to human, searching for anyone who might know the folktale associated with its birth. Mitchell makes clear that even this powerful, transmigratory being cannot escape the paranoia that comes along with the feeling of powerlessness other characters demonstrate. Noncorpum feels just as helpless:

> How do I know there aren't noncorpa living within me, controlling my actions? Like a virus within bacteria? Surely I would know.
>
> But that's exactly what humans think. (184, emphasis original)

The uncertainty it exhibits here parallels the paranoia of Quasar and Satoru, paranoia of observation and control, of being ghostwritten even as it lives and jumps from one host to another. Noncorpum, a narrator not confined to the ordinary bounds of experiential

reality, is still controlled by a larger and more invasive presence that fits it into a design; the Master Ghostwriter still exists in an ethereal plane even further removed from that on which Noncorpum exists. Despite its nigh omniscience and its free passage into the minds of the novel's characters as well as the control it holds over them, Noncorpum's is a limited omniscience. Just as Satoru's boss laments his own programming, just as Zookeeper struggles to make sense of its own programming, Noncorpum asks pathetically, "Why am I the way I am?" (163).

Violence ties back into this paranoia of existing within a fiction at several points throughout Ghostwritten, and two examples specifically demonstrate how the controlling entity uses violence in such a way not to coerce and not only to continue its story but to self-consciously offer its subjects a glimpse of the artificiality that surrounds them. For instance, in relating an event during Japan's invasion and occupation of China, the woman on the Holy Mountain narrates a scene in which an officer whom she calls "Medal Man" forces a gun into her father's mouth. The officer commands him to bite down on its barrel:

> Medal Man uppercutted my father's chin. My father spat out bits of tooth. . . . blood dripped to the floor in flower-splashes. He staggered back into a tub of water, as though he had rehearsed it. (117, emphasis added)

Though the emphasized portions might not initially seem important—the harmless verb phrases and simile of a narrator reconstructing her past—Mitchell offers a similar scene in "London," the chapter narrated by an English ghostwriter named Marco. After getting suckered into a strange contest with his friend Gibreel at a local casino, a fight breaks out between Gibreel, Gibreel's rich cousin from Beirut, and his cousin's friend Kemal:

> Kemal writhed out from under the umbrella plant with surprising alacrity and headbutted Gibreel, who staggered back, spitting out a tooth. Cousin rugby-tackled Kemal from behind, and I heard a zipping rip of material. This all seemed choreographed. (306, emphasis added)

The emphasized portions here echo the section in "Holy Mountain" and, at the very least, suggest an affinity between the two narrators. While the recorded events appear rehearsed or choreographed to the Chinese woman and Marco, the repetition of the simile and the verb phrases self-consciously emphasize the concept of design or pattern, as if the woman's father and Medal Man had gone through the scene several times before exposing her to it. And, in a way, the "Holy Mountain" scene does serve as a rehearsal for "London" if readers assume that both work as cogs within the larger plan of a Designer, that Marco's experience – while thousands of miles away, across two continents, separated by decades – replays hers and somehow results from her experience within the ultimate design of their Ghostwriter.

One of the most interesting symptoms of the narrators' paranoia is their attitudes, thoughts, and assumptions about writers in general. Noncorpum, for instance, after vowing to "no longer harm [its] hosts" (163), leaves the village over which it lords in search of answers about its own existence, crossing "the Pacific in the 1960s" (165). It eventually transmigrates into an Argentinean writer that Mitchell might mean to be Jorge Luis Borges:

> One writer in Buenos Aires even suggested a name for what I am: noncorpum, and noncorpa, if ever the day dawns when the singular

> becomes a plural. I spent a pleasant few months debating metaphysics with him, and we wrote some stories together. (165-66)

Though this short section offers a positive view of writers as a source of companionship for Noncorpum as well as a time frame with which readers can fit the events of the novel together, the Noncorpum lumps writers into a group comprised also of mystics and lunatics as the only people who can sustain the blow of hosting a second consciousness. Mitchell strengthens this connection in "Night Train" where Luisa Rey, author of a book called The Hermitage, calls into the program to defend some of the more colorful callers on the show:

> But most writers are lunatics, Bat—believe me. The human world is made of stories, not people. The people the stories use to tell themselves are not to be blamed. You are holding one of the pages where these stories tell themselves, Bat. (378)

Thus writers, at least in the novel, belong to a group of people whose mental spaces can make allowance for unexplainable phenomena. Writers in Ghostwritten have a certain aura of power and insight but also of an unpredictability and instability that warrants distrust.

For instance, near the end of "Holy Mountain," the old woman encounters a newspaper reporter who desires to run a story on the "success" of her Tea Shack. Despite her claims that she "never had any choice" but to live in a place continually assaulted by warlords, police units, and tourists, the reporter naively claims that she's "quite mistaken" and runs his story – "Seventy Years of Socialist Entrepreneurialism" – claiming that she "believed the authorities responded in the only possible way" during the

1989 massacre at Tiananmen Square even though she'd "never even heard of" the place (144-45). After a monk reads the article to her, the old woman tells the reader, "I added 'writers' to my list of people not to trust. They make everything up" (Ibid). The old woman equates writers with fabulists, even writers whose job it is to report the truth. The problem with the article, from the old woman's perspective, is that it attempts to write her life, and for a vast majority of the nation, her identity and her beliefs become constructed, that is, the very reality surrounding the old woman's image (at least as it concerns the paper's readership) becomes constructed by the newsreporter. Despite her efforts to turn his attention to the tree that speaks to her and grows five different sorts of fruits, the writer manipulates reality through language and, by doing so, manages to construct a new one.

Interestingly, Mitchell's novel dramatizes a confirmation of the old woman's judgment since he also manipulates historical events through language, juxtaposing them with supernatural or science fiction elements. Quasar's story, for instance, echoes the gas attack on the Tokyo subway system in March of 1995, an incident that left a dozen dead and over 5,000 ill. While twenty-one citizens died as a result of Quasar and his co-cleansers, with hundreds "semi-cleansed" (10), the connection between the historical event and Ghostwritten appears solid since the perpetrators in each case belong to a religious cult and use nerve gas. Mitchell juxtaposes beside this echo of history, however, Quasar's account of how His Serendipity came to spiritual awakening:

> All of us in Sanctuary knew how, thirty years ago, while traveling in Tibet, a being of pure consciousness named Arupadhatu transmigrated into

> His Serendipity, and revealed the secrets of freeing the mind from its physical shackles. (29)

This name "Arupadhatu" appears only once more – in the "Night Train" chapter. A mysterious caller by the same name phones into Bat's program, initially taunting Zookeeper with intimate knowledge of its artificial design. It turns out, however, that Arupadhatu is a noncorpa (one that had spent time in Mo Muntevary's head) who seeks to join with Zookeeper in order to take control of the world. Zookeeper, however, has other plans. It traces the caller, positions the PinSat, and hails a storm of light and sound that silences the new guest.

Mitchell manipulates reality in the structure of "Holy Mountain" as well, echoing several phases of twentieth-century Chinese history. The various attacks the woman must undergo parallel certain stages of shifts in the Chinese government beginning with the providence of various warlords in the early twentieth-century, the Japanese invasions during the second World War, the mention of several historical names such as Sun Yat-Sen (111) and Deng Xiaoping (145), and the rise and death of Mao Zedong (126, 138). Despite such close proximity to China's history, however, readers discover in "Mongolia" that the tree the old woman believes to be conscious and vocal, turns out to be nothing more than the fabrication of Noncorpum: "I found companionship with an old woman who lived in a tea shack and believed I was a speaking tree" (166). The consciousness she believes to be there throughout the whole chapter, a consciousness she believes as real as the tea she serves to her customers, is as "made up" as the newspaper article about her shack.

History, however, is not the only element of "reality" that Mitchell manipulates. Quasar's makes a comment in "Okinawa" that seems relevant here: "I have always preferred maps to books. They don't answer you back" (15). What's interesting about this phrase, other than Quasar's distrust of writers and books, is that Ghostwritten very much dramatizes a reciprocity between maps and books since most chapters are named after their locations. Ghostwritten, then, in part is an application of narratives to a map, an arrangement of stories that gives life and connection to disparate locations, a novel that illustrates a grand design that has global implications. In the same vein, Ghostwritten is also an application of a constructed map to a scattered narrative, an application of a design meant to convey directions and to directly relate to real places. In short, Mitchell's novel posits fiction in a reciprocal relationship with maps, suggesting that experiential reality is as much a construct of a Designer or Ghostwriter as a map is a construct of a mapmaker.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONSTRUCTED FICTIONS AND CONSTRUCTED LIVES

Lacking from the previous chapter's discussion about writers is Marco, the narrator of the seventh chapter "London." This narrator is potentially Mitchell's most interesting character if only because he ghostwrites biographies and memoirs in a novel called Ghostwritten that adopts "ghostwriting" as a metaphor for reality. In a conversation midway through "London," Timothy Cavendish, the writer's boss, attempts to alleviate Marco's worries concerning his latest book. Though Marco worries that some of his subject's memories might make the book read like the "Diary of a Madman" (281), his boss explains that

> We're all ghostwriters, my boy. And it's not just memories. Our actions too. We all think we're in control of our own lives, but really they're pre-ghostwritten by forces around us. (287)

This explanation, however, appears contradictory. At first, it implies the traditional metafictional idea that each individual person artificially constructs his or her own reality out of memories and contexts. However, he also backs away from this idea, simultaneously theorizing that it does not quite do the trick. Though Cavendish is apparently known for his "[p]rofundity on the hoof" (286), his comment parallels what Marco later calls his "Marco Chance versus Fate Videoed Sports Match Analogy":

> [W]hen the players are out there the game is a sealed arena of interbombarding chance. But when the game is on video then every tiniest action already exists. The past, present, and future exist at the same time: all the tape is there in your hand. There can be no chance, for every human

> decision and random fall of the ball is already fated. Therefore, does chance or fate control our lives? Well, the answer is as relative as time. If you're in your life, chance. Viewed from the outside, like a book you're reading, it's fate all the way. (283, emphasis added)

Marco's analogy hits upon the major balance at work in the experience of Mitchell's characters and in the experience of his readers between authentic experience and artificially constructed reality. Though our minds certainly construct the images around us through our sensory filters and perceptions, one cannot escape the idea (though one may reject it) – whether it be through strange coincidences or disturbing matters of cause and effect – that life is a pre-conceived construct of an invisible and unexplainable, in short, spiritual force. If a creative force constructs reality in the same way that creative authors construct written fictions, and if David Mitchell writes Ghostwritten in an attempt to illustrate this idea, then it makes sense that he would place indications within the text that self-consciously demonstrate design – i.e., indications that move beyond mere overlaps toward a careful emphasis on the very language of the novel. As cited above, Mitchell explains that he allows his characters to break into each other's worlds occasionally, yet one can surmise that Mitchell would also use other techniques to sew the book together in order to give a sense that his map-book contains devices that draw attention to its construction even in the most arbitrary of places.

As shown in several passages in the previous chapter of this study, Mitchell plants clues within the very language of the novel to connect scenes or characters or ideas together over an expanse of text. The first sentence of the novel echoes on the last page and the words "nape" and "neck" occur in several other sections as well (56, 80, 102,

302). The old woman's experience with the satellite echoes the memory of the Warlord's son standing over her. The fight scenes in "Holy Mountain" and "London" also echo each other not only in the idea of rehearsal or choreography but in the very fact that some teeth get knocked out on both situations. In an interview for Bold Type, David Mitchell describes Ghostwritten as an "interconnected novel about interconnection," here referring to the "far-flung" settings of the novel as well as the overlaps that occur between people and places when narrators cross and recross each other's paths. Yet Mitchell also employs an intricate system of linguistic echoes that includes the examples above and dozens and dozens of others, echoes the narrators are unaware of. These patterns extend the narrators' paranoia about being caught up in a Master Design to Mitchell's readers, fostering readerly suspicion that characters might connect at any point in Ghostwritten as well as readerly pleasure in detecting such connections in the very language Mitchell attributes to them.

It is worth illustrating the difference between the repetitions and overlaps Mitchell uses to connect the plots of his narrators and the system of narrative echoes at work in the language of Ghostwritten. For instance, after Quasar watches the arrest of His Serendipity from a hotel television near the end of "Okinawa," he phones what he believes to be The Fellowship's Secret Service, requesting assistance so he can remain in hiding: "The dog needs to be fed" (26, original emphasis). Though he receives no verbal reply before hearing a hang up on the other end, Quasar attempts to set his mind at ease, convincing himself that help is on the way. In the next chapter, however, after Mitchell gives the narrative reins to young Satoru, Ghostwritten revisits Quasar's urgent call. Shortly after closing up the record shop one evening, the young man reopens its doors to answer the

telephone ringing persistently inside. Though Satoru narrates several phone conversations for the reader in the Tokyo chapter, he encounters an "unknown voice" here, a voice both "[s]oft" and "worried": "It's Quasar. The dog needs to be fed" (53, original emphasis). This telling narrative overlap, at the very least, amplifies Quasar's isolation, reveals the seriousness of his situation, and—if one assumes he dials the right number—suggests a tragic deception on the part of his leaders. But it is not an echo.

Before answering Quasar's phone call, Satoru explains that "if that phone hadn't rung at that moment, and if [he] hadn't taken the decision to go back and answer it, then everything that happened afterwards wouldn't have happened" (53). The "everything that happened" refers to Tomoyo, who he first notices over ten pages previous when a group of teenage girls enters the record shop. Though three of the teenagers disgust him—he refers to them as "bubbleheads," "clones," "cardboard cutouts," "truffle-fed pooches," and "magazine girls" (41)—Tomoyo catches his eye. Here, readers find an echo: "She pulsed, invisibly, like a quasar" (Ibid, emphasis added). As if sensing the reader's reaction to his word choice, the young narrator continues, "I know that sounds stupid, but she did" (Ibid). This echo differs from the overlap because it occurs in the language of the text and acts as a self-conscious device suggesting the presence of a ghostwriter reusing the language of a previous episode in order to signal a connection between the lives of its subjects. Unlike many of the passages explored in the previous chapter of this study, Satoru and Quasar are unconscious of the coincidence at work in these passages; the arranger flaunts this echo not for them but for Mitchell's reader, forcing questions like, "How do these two passages work together? Other than in the language, how do these two characters connect? How will others fit together? When?"

The extra readerly attention these echoes foster uncovers several things about the textual relationship between these two narrators. For instance, both Quasar and Satoru have had one Mr. Ikeda as a high school teacher; he was Quasar's home-room teacher (5) and Satoru's games master (45). More importantly however, both narrators appear to have a distaste for urban culture and for television. Quasar, when looking out over Naha in Okinawa, sees the "usual red-and-white TV transmitter, broadcasting the government's subliminal command frequencies" and observes the "usual department stores rising like windowless temples, dazzling the unclean into compliance" (4). By the same token, Satoru, when explaining how individuals living in Tokyo must make places inside their heads in order "to stop" them from "caving in" (37), mentions that some use television:

> A bright, brash place, always well lit, full of fun and jokes that tell you when to laugh so you never miss them. World news carefully edited so that it's not too disturbing, but disturbing enough to make you glad that you weren't born in a foreign country. News with music to tell you who to hate, who to feel sorry for, and who to laugh at. (37-38)

Satoru's language here, while it does not echo Quasar's words, still manages to echo Quasar's sentiment without the cultic teaching. Thus Mitchell connects Quasar and Satoru at a number of levels. The phone call mentioned earlier serves as a direct overlap in which they participate in a singular event. In addition, the similarities mentioned above indicate other crosses that exist not in an event or space but within the space of readerly consideration. Satoru grows up with a resentment similar to Quasar's, but events in the "Tokyo" chapter lead him down a different path. The fact that Satoru thinks of Quasar's name in reference to Tomoyo exhibits a connection that shows how coincidence stretches

beyond patterns of behavior or event and toward patterns of speech and language. In a sense, by speaking the word "quasar," Satoru conjures the first narrator's phone call, at least for the reader.

Stranger yet, Tomoyo re-enters the novel's universe again after the eerie phone call. Upon hanging up on the cultic bomber, the young man hears a jingling and turns to find the young woman looking right at him, a sight that nearly knocks Satoru off his feet (54). The store should be closed but because of a deception on The Fellowship's part coupled with Quasar's desperation, Satoru meets her again. The echoes established between the two narrators, then, draw affinities not only between these narrators but other characters throughout the book as well. In a sense, Tomoyo is indivisible from the connection between Quasar and Satoru since the young man uses Quasar's name to describe her and since Quasar's phone call, as if conjured by Satoru's spoken word, in turn conjures the presence of the teenage girl as well. Echoes, then, act like pins or markers, holding the characters in their respective spots or tagging them with words or phrases that flag the reader's attention so that they might more easily pick up on the affinities between them. But what implications can be drawn from such echoes that Mitchell works so hard to establish?

First, Ghostwritten posits its system of echoes in a direct and reciprocal relationship with the intricate pattern of cause-and-effect at work throughout the novel. The echoed language then exists on a playing field level with the novel's action, intertwining with plot developments and paralleling the characters' actions. For instance, returning for a moment to an earlier point, the idea that Satoru conjures Quasar's phone call with the

word “quasar” suggests that the intricate systems of echoes Mitchell places within his novel not only parallel but help drive the plot forward, indivisible from the complicated system of causality that connects the chapter together. This, of course, strengthens the idea that reality results from careful construction of a larger force interested even in the most mundane details, showing how acted events progress alongside written or spoken language. Satoru speaks the connection with Quasar and thus his language helps lead to events that have both pleasant and dire effects for the other characters in the novel. Though Mitchell explains in his Agony Column interview that “one action in each of the stories . . . makes the succeeding stories possible,” this chain of actions cannot be divorced from the linguistic echoes of the book since these language patterns, more than anything else, self-consciously draw attention to its own design. In reality, Ghostwritten argues, similar patterns in both event and language (the medium through which we express and understand reality and one another) contribute to the progression of events in our own lives. In the eighth chapter of Ghostwritten, Mo Muntervary ruminates over a similar model: “Phenomena are interconnected regardless of distance, in a holistic ocean more voodoo than Newton. The future is reset by the tilt of a pair of polarized sunglasses” (366). In, Mitchell’s first novel, however, neither sunglasses nor butterfly wings are needed for large variations or progressions: a few words will do just fine.

Second, while the system of narrative echoes connects with the causal patterns within Ghostwritten, it also parallels the different models of causality, that is, the different belief systems to which the various characters adhere and, more specifically, the failure of those belief systems to make sense of their reality. In “Okinawa,” Quasar’s Serendipity cannot evade arrest, and the isolate must hide without the hope of aid.

Though the music Satoru pumps through the record store's speaker parallels the structure of "Tokyo" and controls the mood of its narrator, the young man fears at one point that he might not need it any more (53). What will replace it? In "Hong Kong," financial success eventually fails to appease Neal Brose. Broken by the split of his marriage, a haunted apartment, and a job which keeps him looking over his shoulder, the nigh forty-year old divorcé skips work, accidentally dumps his medication in the ocean along with his suitcase, and dies of a heart attack at the foot of a large Buddha statue. Even Noncorpum, the powerful narrator of the fifth chapter who can transmigrate into human beings and control their minds, laments, "By being what I am, I thought I understood almost everything. But I understand nothing" (182).

At these junctures of failure, the characters catch a glimpse of a reality that does not resemble the one with which they are familiar and an ontological blurring occurs. It is usually at these moments that the characters in Ghostwritten consider that they might exist within a design. They must be in a book. They must exist within a construct. Because causal chains rely on predetermined design throughout Ghostwritten, since all the language and action already exists within the readers' hands, since "the future," according to Marco, "already exists" (302), at times it comes into conflict with an individual character's authentic experience. When we perceive a break in our chain of causality, when we experience the failure of what we deem certain, we perceive a breakdown of reality. Margarita Latunsky experiences such a breakdown at the end of "Petersburg." After she kills one of her partners, a British man named Jerome, she finds her lover Rudi dead in an adjacent room, the victim of an assassin named Suhbataar. The chapter fades away shortly thereafter, and she concludes, "None of this happened. None

of this really happened" (254). This self-reflexive critique questions the validity of all that comes before it, and yet Mitchell offers readers corroboration of Jerome's death in "London" when Marco visits the man whose biography he is currently writing (279), complicating the ontological blurring at the end of "Petersburg."

Though all belief systems fail within the novel, Ghostwritten argues that something is real. The novel illustrates and exhibits a model of reality that stands up underneath these failures, that reality is a construct but not a self-construct, that just as Mitchell's ghostwriter posits the echoes and chain of events and epiphanies, a Master Designer controls the lives of Mitchell and his readers as well as their reality, a reality that, as Timothy Cavendish says, has already been "pre-ghostwritten." If the future already exists, however, if the past, present, and future exist simultaneously on some sort of cosmic video reel, it is worth tracing the cause-and-effect patterns in Ghostwritten in order to see how things actually progress. Had Quasar not called Satoru's store, better yet, if Quasar had not murdered and injured several dozen Japanese citizens in underground Tokyo, Satoru would not have met the teenage girl with whom he forges a relationship. Furthermore, if Tomoyo and Satoru would not have met, Neal Brose might not have skipped work in "Hong Kong," might not have thrown his suitcase and medication into the river, might not have died in front of the Buddha statue on Lantau Island that Tomoyo mentions to Satoru when they first meet (55). And if this certain lawyer hadn't "dropped dead of diabetes," his ex-wife Katy Forbes might not have slept with Marco who might not have saved Mo Muntevary from a taxi-cab who would not have created Zookeeper. This disturbing chain of events seems heavily tied to the echoes of violence brought up in the previous chapter of this study as well as to an economy of

loss and gain that fluctuates along the causal line. These fluctuations of crime and compassion, of violence and of selflessness point to one disturbing echo in particular to which every action inevitably leads and in which the economy of loss and gain balances: the end of the world.

Ghostwritten, in a sense then, is about the end of the world. While apocalypse and millenarianism certainly aren't surprising subjects for a novel published just before the turn of the century, David Mitchell does not approach the subject in a traditional way. He does not describe a sudden or massive destruction in order to follow up with tragic or heroic stories about remaining survivors. His novel does not have to do with a waste land. Rather, Ghostwritten concerns what leads to an Ultimate Ending and posits that all actions, situations, and characters, in one way or another, contribute to or help bring about eventual cataclysm.

And since language rests on an even playing field with actions as a source of causation, it makes sense that phrases dealing with the end of the world make up a prevalent part of the novel. Perhaps the most disturbing echo in Ghostwritten deals with the "end of the world," a phrase whose variations occurs with high relative frequency near the beginning and end of the book (though phrases like "end of the day/week/month" or even "end of the bed" occur frequently throughout as well). In "Petersburg," Mitchell puns with this idea of endings when Margarita wraps her "legs around [the] hippo girth" of the Head Curator of the art museum from which she steals a painting in order to "hasten the end" of the grotesque love-making (209). For the most part, however, these echoes and the cycles of violence that fit within the patterns of

causality, along with the various failures of belief systems that act as mini-apocalypses, point toward a major apocalyptic moment that seems inevitable. With these elements of Ghostwritten, one gets the sense that, as Frank Kermode puts it in his study The Sense of an Ending (1966), that the end is not just "imminent, the End is immanent" (25). In other words, the Ultimate End to the arranged reality within Ghostwritten does not just feel as if might happen at any time but – through the language of the novel – the end is always in sight; the characters and readers "all exist under the shadow of the end" of the book (Kermode 5).

This is also illustrated in the final chapter of the book "Underground," a chapter that returns to and dramatizes Quasar's attack and reveals it not so much as an act of heroism but rather an act that inflicts hallucinogenic and prophetic terror upon the terrorist. In addition, it dramatizes Quasar's connection to the other nine chapters of the book. He "glimpse[s] a couple walking their dog down a beach in Okinawa" (423), a vision that comes true in the first chapter (20). Shortly thereafter, Quasar encounters images from every other chapter, a "saxophone from long ago" that points backward (and forward) to Satoru, and an image of a Buddha sitting "on a blue hill . . . far from this tromboning din" echoes "Hong Kong"; a direct mention of the "Tea Shack" points to the old woman from "Holy Mountain" and mention of "The Great Khan . . . thunder[ing] to the west" associates with "Mongolia" (424). A series of other images finishes off the sequence of disturbances, a book titled Petersburg, City of Masterworks, a shopping bag with the words The London Underground, and a bottle of "Kilmagoon whisky" pictures Cape Clear Island, "as old as the world" (425). Lastly when Quasar manages to wrench himself through the subway doors, he feels like he's "fallen forwards and . . . headbutted

the Empire State Building, circled by an albino bat, scattering words and stars through the night. Spend the night with Bat Segundo on 97.8 FM" (425-26). This quick survey of chapters ends shortly thereafter with the echo of the first line of the book and an image of "the train, accelerating into the darkness" (426), an image that contrasts

And so Quasar's faith remains confirmed. Not only are his worries about futuristic technology confirmed in the existence of Zookeeper nor his belief that a being transmigrated into His Serendipity corroborated in the conversation between Mo's creation and Arupadhatu, not only do the White Nights come and go, not only does a comet rush toward the Earth bringing with it certain destruction, but his gas attack, as dreadful and horrible as it is, properly leads toward the end of the novel, properly foreshadows the end through a mind set so utterly disturbing that readers might initially disregard it until the end. His ideas that the "unclean" must suffer and Zookeeper's eventual conclusion that the comet must be allowed to do what it will for the sake of its zoo, all point to the idea that the novel ends before it begins. It exists in a circle much like James Joyce's Finnegans Wake (1939).

What may be most disturbing about Ghostwritten is the fact that Quasar's gas attack does not really bring about the end of the world. Without it, the comet would still rush toward us, would still threaten apocalypse. In fact, Quasar's faith and Quasar's horrible act nearly saves mankind since it sparks a causal chain that eventually leads to Zookeeper looking down upon us from the sky, our last hope against destruction. Though the Zookeeper indicates that he will do nothing, Quasar's actions, however misguided, illustrate the impossibility of any attempt to work against the Master Design. Eventually,

the end comes from without. We do not destroy each other. Gas bombs do not kill us. Nuclear war does not annihilate us. Global warming does not flood us. With perfect architectural beauty, the Master Designer builds up its characters to the point where they might actually be able to stop the end, to postpone it at the very least, but the technology with which they are able to do it abandons them. The Designer's end will come, and the last chapter of the book, a textual memory bank that shows all chapters exist simultaneously "in a holistic ocean more voodoo than Newton" (366), demonstrate that – from the very beginning – the end is here.

CHAPTER FIVE: BEYOND GHOSTWRITTEN

But Ghostwritten, far from marking an end for David Mitchell, marks the beginning of a writing career already nearing a decade. Number9Dream, Mitchell's second novel, grows out of the "Tokyo" chapter of Ghostwritten since the majority of the action takes place within the city's limits. In addition, Mitchell identifies Satoru Sonada, the narrator of the "Tokyo" chapter, as "the artistic grandfather of Eiji" Miyake, the novel's main protagonist and its only narrator (Richard Beard). So with Number9Dream, Mitchell cuts out two major elements that characterized his first novel; he replaces his cast of nine narrators with a single voice (at least initially) and he plants his novel firmly within "Tokyo." In addition, while Ghostwritten covers a time period spanning several years (though a good portion of the action is clumped within a handful of months), Number9Dream covers about six weeks, spanning from Eiji's stakeout of a large office building on August 24th of an unknown yet contemporary year to his return home on the island of Yakushima in October.

Mitchell makes up for these structural simplifications of Number9Dream, however. He incorporates a different sort of interruption of Eiji's narrative in each chapter with a varying degree of strangeness. In the first chapter, for instance, Mitchell interrupts the narrative with grand day dreams that resemble action or disaster films before returning to the mundane happenings of the chapter. In an interview with Agony Column Mitchell explains that

> the secret architecture [of Number9Dream] is that each of the different sections are in a "state of the mind" form. The first section is about

> daydreams, about the power of fantasy through daydreams. The second is about memory, written through partly through flashbacks. The third is image, written though the experience of playing video games, moving images. The fourth is kind of a nightmare and is about nightmares.

The fourth, more specifically, manages to reverse the second chapter where flashbacks make up the interruptions. In the fourth, prolepses make up the interruptions, that is, snippets of an endpoint that the bulk of the narration builds toward. Throughout the rest of the book, Mitchell plays with various other forms such as childhood fairytales that star a character named Goatwriter and letters written by Eiji's uncle who served in the Japanese military during World War II before returning in the final chapter to a narrative chopped up by actual dreams, dreams that echo several episodes and scenes that come before it much like Ghostwritten's final chapter.

Because Mitchell directly dramatizes interruptions that oftentimes do not fit within the actual timeframe of the novel – for instance, Eiji does not have time to daydream the lengthy episodes that interrupt his tale in the first chapter – he periodically points toward this idea of an overarching consciousness that plays around with various other situations or states of mind, pulling the strings, ghostwriting and designing the story deceptively told through Eiji Miyake's voice. In this sense, then, because each chapter still divides itself and takes on a style of its own, because it remains compartmentalized and dramatizes a character that imagines himself at a few points caught within "an action movie" (190) or wondering (when looking at a bunch of books) if he is "a book too" (202), one might not call it a stretch to consider Number9Dream in the same vein as

Ghostwritten, examining the idea that reality outside the text is similarly constructed by a higher Arranger and consciousness.

It is also worth noting that Suhbataar, the assassin that appears in the "Mongolia" and "Petersburg" chapters of Ghostwritten, plays a role in the fourth chapter of Number9Dream as well. Mitchell continues this transfer of characters in Cloud Atlas, a name that appears near the end of Number9Dream (352), where Timothy Cavendish, Marco's publisher, and his brother Denholme, Neal Brose's boss in Hong Kong, both appear along with Luisa Rey (one of Bat Segundo's callers in "Night Train"). These character transfers are nothing new in literature – William Faulkner, Vladimir Nabokov, Thomas Pynchon and, to an extent, James Joyce have done it before – yet they form a connective tissue that argues that all of Mitchell's novels potentially occur within the same fictional universe. Even Katy Forbes' "birthmark shaped like a comet" in Ghostwritten (295) becomes a recurring motif throughout Cloud Atlas since five of the novel's main characters – Robert Frobisher, Luisa Rey, Somni, Meronym, and Timothy Cavendish (two from Ghostwritten) – all share an identical mark (CA 85, 120, 122, 198, 303, 309, 345, 357, 430).

These affinities and echoes certainly point to the idea that Cloud Atlas continues Mitchell's foray into spiritually-bent "realistic" metafiction. At the very least, his third novel is his most ambitious, spanning the largest chunk of time than any of his other books and written in different styles ranging from a nineteenth-century journal to one half of an epistolary correspondence, from a cheesy crime novel and humorous memoir to an interview with a captured run-away human clone. Though Mitchell certainly plays with various genres and styles in both Ghostwritten and Number9Dream, here he follows a

Joycean pattern of foregrounding several different literary styles that explore "different methods of transmitting a narrative" (Mitchell Agony Column). Unlike Ulysses, however, the written and/or spoken works of Mitchell's characters intermingle; each tale-teller either reads or is somehow exposed to the narrative that precedes his or hers.

The book begins, for instance, with a chapter titled "The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing." The chapter ends mid-sentence on the fortieth page before the second chapter "Letters from Zedelghem" picks up. While poking through his mentors book collection, Robert Frobisher, a young music composer and the writer of the letters, finds "a curious dismembered volume" that "begins on the ninety-ninth page" and ends, to his "great annoyance . . . some forty pages later" (64). To wipe out any semblance of doubt, Mitchell makes it abundantly clear that the volume is Adam Ewing's journal:

> From what I can glean, it's the edited journal of a voyage from Sydney to California by a notary of San Francisco named Adam Ewing. Mention is made of the gold rush, so I suppose we are in 1849 or 1850. The journal seems to be published posthumously by Ewing's son (?) . . . he hasn't spotted [that] his trusty Dr. Henry Goose [sic] is a vampire, fueling his hypochondria in order to poison him, slowly, for his money. / Something shifty about the journal's authenticity – seems too structured for a genuine diary, and its language doesn't ring quite true – but who would bother forging such a journal, and why? (Ibid)

Like the phone conversation between Quasar and Satoru in Ghostwritten, this is the first indication that the chapters in Cloud Atlas are connected, and there is much to consider. Not only does Frobisher offer readers a succinct description of the journal's author, but

he performs some interpretation, spotting what readers only come to know later: that Ewing is trusting a man he shouldn't. In addition, Frobisher criticizes the piece and questions its authenticity. The young composer, then, is not merely a writer but a reader and interpreter of a section of a larger work – i.e., a larger reality – in which he's positioned as well.

Frobisher's chapter is also cut short, and it isn't long before readers find out that each of the first five chapters become interrupted and, eventually, read by the writer/teller of the next. The sixth chapter sits complete atop the rest before readers descend the narrative triangle; in the last five chapters, Mitchell offers the endings of the first five so that the last chapter of the book finishes off Adam Ewing's journal. Cloud Atlas, then, is a pyramidal narrative, that is, a framed narrative in which each succeeding frame questions the validity or quality of the one before, all the while dramatizing repetitions and/or historical cycles of violence, rebellion, deception, and invasion. In fact, Frobisher, the reader comes to discover, creates a composition called The Cloud Atlas Sextet, a work that he calls a "sextet of overlapping solos" made up of two sets in which the first features a series of instrumental interruptions and the second a series of continuations. He asks his friend Sixsmith, "Revolutionary or gimmickry?" (445).

Black Swan Green, Mitchell's most recent novel, seems to answer, "Gimmickry" since it does away with nearly all the structural and stylistic flourish of his earlier novels. He posits a single narrator and, again, fits the novel within a single location as in Number9Dream: the small town in England for which the novel is named. Unlike Mitchell's second novel, however, these structural simplifications are not replaced with stylistic complexities or interruptions that complicate the reality of the novel. No, Jason

Taylor remains in control of the text throughout the book and, for the most part, the novel remains David Mitchell's most straightforward, most realistic, and perhaps least performatively playful.

This is not to say, however, that the book does not follow the first three novels as "realistic" metafiction. Though it lies more toward the middle of the spectrum between self-conscious and non-self-conscious books, the novel still maintains several of the traits exhibited in its ornate predecessors. Each chapter of Black Swan Green is still compartmentalized, each covering a month in the life of Jason Taylor starting in January of 1982 and continuing through thirteen chapters to January of 1983. Despite this division, however, the chapters don't contain all of the month's happenings, but only a small portion, cutting short without resolving the tensions or conflicts introduced therein. For instance, the first chapter ends with Jason waking in a strange house after hurting his ankle on some slippery ice outdoors. He searches the house and finds the old woman who tended to his ankle, but she's asleep. The tone, rather than calm or peaceful, invokes a sense of panic. Things don't feel quite right:

> Her windpipe bulges as her soul squeezes out of her heart.
>
> Her worn-out eyes flip awake like a doll's, black, glassy, shocked.
>
> From her black crack mouth, a blizzard rushes out.
>
> A silent roaring hangs here.
>
> Not going anywhere. (23)

Though this creepy section certainly communicates an idea of terror or horror, in the next chapter, Jason continues his story as if nothing happened. What he remembers about that night throughout the book is not that an old woman scared him (and readers) to death, but

that he broke the watch with which his father entrusted him when he fell on the ice. It isn't until the end of the book, when Mitchell returns to January, that readers discover what came about in the house the night of the incident.

There are other things as well. Robert Frobisher's love interest in Cloud Atlas reappears in the novel as Jason's poetic mentor, and even Neal Brose appears as a young teenage classmate of the narrator. Again, though the structure and style might not seem as flourished as his previous novels, though this novel might appear more sincere and less playful, it still fits within the same fictional universe, a universe that argues that our life exists the same way, compartmentalized into episodes that often appear disparate and disconnected, only connected through struggle or construction of memory. We must remember that even though Jason appears to maintain control of Black Swan Green, like all of Mitchell's other characters, like all characters in every fiction including the fiction of our lives, he is ghostwritten.

CONCLUSION

It is certainly not the purpose of this thesis to argue that David Mitchell attempts to persuade any readers into converting to any religious persuasion or commit wholeheartedly to some controlling Deity in order to secure a place in some sort of afterlife. Mitchell himself admits in an interview with a University of Tokyo class that he does not believe in one. However, he qualifies his admittance: "[B]ut I hope I'm wrong" (Richard Beard). Mitchell's own uncertainty concerning spirituality or the religious implications of the idea of Intelligent Design for the reality of his readers comes through his books quite elegantly and opens readers only to a possibility that more than self-construction or cultural construction occurs in our everyday life, that each reader has a purpose, no matter how seemingly insignificant, that his/her drop in the nigh-eternal bucket works not only toward an end, but toward progressing the power and force of mankind's history. If anything, Mitchell's books tend to persuade readers to at least strive as much as they can toward advancing a history and reality that claims "peace and beauty" as its motto as opposed to violence or greed.

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