Arcadia Disjointed: Confrontations With Texts, Polemical, Utopian, and Picaresque.

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Arcadia disjointed: Confrontations with texts, polemical, utopian, and picaresque

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Arcadia Disjointed: Confrontations with Texts, Polemical, Utopian, and Picaresque

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in

The Department of English

by

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I - The Narrator/Narrative Disjunction: An Historical View</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER II - Critiquing the Text of the Popish Plot</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER III - Manipulating Readers: the Narrative Voice in Sidney's Old Arcadia</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER IV - The Narrator/Narrative Disjunction and the Problemization of Texts: Defoe's Moll Flanders</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

Arcadia Disjointed: Confrontations with Texts. Polemical, Utopian, and Picaresque. Beginning with the historical example provided by the extended text of the Popish Plot, that is, by the polemical press battle which raged during this major threat to Charles II’s Restoration government, I identify what I term a narrator/narrative disjunction. The narrator/narrative disjunction occurs when the narrator or teller relates one story, while the narrative he or she relates suggests or strongly intimates that the narrator should be adjudged less than reliable. In the course of this exploration, I read several Tory polemical texts on the Popish Plot, including Dryden’s Absalom and Achitophel, not as literary works, but rather as literary critiques of the extended text of the Popish Plot. Turning my attentions to two admittedly fictional narratives, Sidney’s Old Arcadia and Defoe’s Moll Flanders, I then explore the ways in which these works, and any literary text displaying a narrator/narrative disjunction, may be critiqued according to the same rules established by Tory polemicists during their "readings" of the narrator/narrative disjunction present in the extended text of the Popish Plot.
Chapter I - The Narrator/Narrative Disjunction: An Historical View

"What is a Narrative?" Roger L'Estrange inquired of his audience in the opening of his narrative on the Popish Plot. Written in 1680, at the height of the turmoil created by the information supplied by Titus Oates and the other plot witnesses, L'Estrange's narrative sought to expose the fictionality of Oates's narrative. Like L'Estrange, I have chosen to focus upon narratives, but upon narratives of a particular kind -- those narratives which display what I term a narrator/narrative disjunction. A narrator/narrative disjunction occurs when an essential conflict exists between the explicit claims made by the narrator and the implicit or explicit claims made by the narrative. Moll Flanders, for instance, insists she is a reformed sinner; the narrative she relates, however, fails to convince many critics of the validity of that alleged reformation. Faced with a narrator/narrative disjunction, readers and critics must discover some means of reconciling the opposing claims made by the narrator with those made by the narrative.

While it might be argued, perhaps cogently, that virtually all literary narratives display some degree of narrator/narrative disjunction, I have limited my investigation to a select number of works in which the narrator/narrative disjunction is textually provided and of
such import to the tale, that the presence of the disjunction in the story cannot possibly be construed as mere critical invention. Furthermore, in order to avoid any possible misunderstanding, I will, in each chapter, clearly identify that which I construe to be the applicable narrator/narrative disjunction. My purpose is to define what I term the narrator/narrative disjunction and to note its presence and effect upon the output of literature during the period of the Popish Plot. I will then note and examine the four strategies available to critics whereby the apparent conflict between the narrator and the narrative which the narrrator/narrative disjunction announces may be reconciled. Turning to four literary works [two polemical texts published during the Popish Plot which include John Dryden’s Absalom and Achitophel and an anonymous prose narrative entitled The Plot in a Dream, one sixteenth-century narrative, Sidney’s Old Arcadia, and one eighteenth-century narrative, Daniel Defoe’s Moll Flanders] I will note how each text illustrates one of the four critics strategies that I have identified. I will argue that the narrator/narrative disjunction challenges reader credulity, demanding that readers actively confront and take part in the authorship of the text as they attempt a reconciliation of the conflicting narratorial and narratival claims made apparent by the presence of a narrator/narrative disjunction. I will argue further that it is in this
reconciliation process (whether formal, that is, written; or informal, that is, an intellectual process only) that all discrete texts are destined to become extended texts. Thus, I hope to demonstrate two things: 1) that texts are dynamic entities, ever in the process of being re-inscribed by and through an audience; and 2) that extension of the text (any text) is both necessary and desireable.

Within any given text, certain claims are made by the narrator and by the narrative — claims upon which audience members eventually judge the narrative in question. Audience members, in fact, should judge texts based upon the terms established by and set forth within a discrete text. The presence of a narrator/narrative disjunction alerts audience members to the fact that an essential conflict exists between the claims made by the narrator and those made by the narrative. Audience members (whether they be readers or auditors) must then discover some means of reconciling these conflicting claims. There are, in fact, four ways of effecting such a reconciliation. Audience members may judge: 1) the narrator; 2) the narrative; or 3) both narrator and narrative unreliable; or 4) audience members may find both narrator and narrative reliable after having discovered (or invented) exceptions necessary to account for the presence of the narrator/narrative disjunction within the text.

My argument will proceed in the following manner. I
will examine both the discrete and the extended narratives of the Popish Plot, providing evidence for the existence of numerous narrator/narrative disjunctions within these narratives, and I will identify various instances of narrator/narrative disjunction present in these narratives which led readers to an active confrontation with (and a further extension of) the text of the Popish Plot. In the second chapter I will evaluate this confrontational pattern through the example provided by the polemical literature of the Popish Plot, and by two works in particular, Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* and an anonymous work on the Plot entitled *The Plot in a Dream; or the Discoverer in Masquerade*. I will then examine one sixteenth century narrative, Sir Philip Sidney's *Old Arcadia*, and an eighteenth-century narrative, Defoe's *Moll Flanders*, explaining how each author has employed the narrator/narrative disjunction to sanction reader involvement with his respective text and to invite readers and critics to extend the text.

Several terms will require differentiation. As I employ the terms "reader" and "critic," they are virtually synonymous with the following qualifications. "Readers" and "critics" perform virtually identical critical acts which vary in extent but not in kind. Readers perform informal, that is, unwritten, critical acts, while critics perform corresponding, although formal critical acts which, because
of their written format, appear (but may, in fact, not be) more complex than the critical acts performed by readers. "Readers" and "Critics" may refer either to the seventeenth-century reader/critic, the twentieth-century reader/critic, or to both.

"Writer," as I employ the term, refers to the polemical writers of the Popish Plot, whose texts, I am arguing, constitute formal critiques of the Plot as well as further extensions of the text of the Popish Plot. "Writer," thus, proves synonymous with the term "critic." Many Tory polemicists proved critical readers of the text of the Popish Plot, and the writings they produced, although often highly imaginative, may best be viewed as formal critiques of the narrator/narrative disjunction present in the text of the Popish Plot. Narratives which display a narrator/narrative disjunction such as that present in the extended text of the Popish Plot encourage readers to make the leap from reader (or informal critic) to (formal) critic; such texts force readers to confront texts actively and in the process of providing a formal critique, to become co-inscribers of the extended text.

A "narrator" is that entity who relates a story. In the text of the Popish Plot, Titus Oates was the initial narrator. Later, the text of the Popish Plot was extended to include other narrators, narrators such as the additional Plot witnesses and Whig and Tory pamphleteers anxious to
comment upon the extended text of the Popish Plot. Thus, I will demonstrate that in the process of critiquing a text, critics become narrators, that is, co-narrators of the extended text.

"Narrative" includes the tale or tales related by one or more narrators. Narrative may be found in the testimony given in court, broadsides, ballads, news sheets, books (including personal diaries), and pamphlets. In its broadest signification, narrative includes personal experiences (including previous encounters with other discrete texts) instrumental in causing readers or critics to question any explicit or implicit claims made by a given narrator. Consequently, narrative may be (and frequently is) extra-textual; that is, it may be found outside the discrete text.

A "discrete text" is the term by which I signify a given text identified by author, title, and edition. The "discrete text" of the Popish Plot is that found in the original forty-three item deposition Titus Oates swore before Judge Edmundbury Godfrey. Oates's original deposition soon expanded to sixty-six items. This revised deposition suggests that Oates was already at the mercy of an audience bent upon becoming active co-inscribers of Oates's narrative.3 "Discrete text" thus implies the state in which a text exists before encounters with an audience have led to an extension of the text. However, because no
text can be totally devoid of audience influence, "discrete text" is understood primarily as a term of convenience only, a means of discussing a single text without making reference to other editions of that text or to other texts which may have influenced the composition of that text.

The "extended text" is that text which results when audience members (readers and/or critics) comment upon a discrete text or elicit from the author a significant revision of a discrete text. Any audience interference which alters a discrete text gives rise to an "extended text." Later editions of a given author's work, if they result in authorial or editorial alterations, constitute a part of the extended text. If the original forty-three item deposition of Titus Oates represents the "discrete text" of the Popish Plot, Oates's additional deposition, his court and Parliamentary testimonies, and his publications, the testimonies of other alleged Plot witnesses and their publications, and all written responses which any of those testimonies elicited (from 1678 until the present time) constitute part of the extended text of the Popish Plot.

I begin with the "discrete text" of the Popish Plot, for, as I will demonstrate, this discrete text displayed a narrator/narrative disjunction quite similar to that found in the two fictional narratives I have chosen to examine. Extension of the text of the Popish Plot served only to multiply the instances of narrator/narrative disjunction
within the text. Although the text of the Popish Plot remains only partially retrievable, most critics now contend that the plot described by Titus Oates and his fellow informants may best be defined as the fictional invention of fertile, and devious, imaginations.\textsuperscript{4}

The most plausible scenario through which the inscription of the discrete text of the Popish Plot may be explained is that Titus Oates constructed his account to satisfy the demands of a well-defined audience, an audience consisting of but one individual, the fanatical Puritan divine, Israel Tonge. Reduced to beggary, Oates probably listened to Tonge's anti-Catholic diatribe while dining at Tonge's table. Returning to Tonge's table for additional meals, Oates flattered his host by embellishing upon Tonge's prejudicial statements and repeating them to the maniacal minister, who then failed to recognize the narrative as his own. Oates's original tale took into account audience desires, for the tale addressed itself to Tonge's hatred of Roman Catholics and answered the Puritan divine's desire to discover some means of revenging himself upon Catholics;\textsuperscript{5} impressed by Oates's narrative, Tonge insisted upon broadening Oates's audience. The next audience member afforded access to Oates's tale was a friend of Israel Tonge, one Christopher Kirby, a chemist in the employ of Charles II. Through Kirby, Charles was told of the alleged Plot. The day before Oates was to testify before the King's
Council regarding the Plot, Tonge brought Oates before Judge Edmundbury Godfrey and had Oates sign a deposition which contained details of the alleged Plot. Few members of Oates's newly expanded audience seemed inclined to accept Oates's claims fully, although Godfrey's murder was to alter radically audience response to Oates's narrative.

In his original forty-three item deposition sworn before Judge Edmundbury Godfrey, Oates claimed that no less than three sets of assassins sought the death of Charles II and the return of England to the Catholic fold. Oates related three failed assassination attempts, attempts to which all of England, including those closest to Charles, remained oblivious. Despite the implausibility of Oates's account, Opposition forces, led by Anthony Ashley Cooper, the first Earl of Shaftesbury, embraced Oates's narrative and threw their support behind Oates, a fact readily apparent in Oates's expanded sixty-six item deposition; although Oates offered to name no additional conspirators, the expanded account relates additional failed assassination attempts and includes code names which gave the alleged Plot a more frightening and conspiratorial tone. Each time Oates appeared by the Privy Council, one of the Houses of Parliament, or the Parliamentary investigatory committee, Oates's narrative expanded further. Oates's "convenient memory," in fact, proved to be one of the more disturbing aspects of his narrative, as I will describe shortly. In
the beginning, however, Oates was a lone witness to treason, a crime which in the seventeenth century required two witnesses for conviction. Oates, consequently, experienced little success with his narrative until the disappearance and death of Judge Godfrey, an event which triggered among the London crowds a reaction which can only be described as mass-hysteria.

Following Godfrey's death, other witnesses such as William Bedloe, Robert Jenison, and John Scott came forth, each providing testimony which seemed to corroborate Oates's claims. And additional witnesses such as Miles Prance and William Smith were suborned into offering trial testimony. The reliability of the various plot witnesses and of the testimonies they provided became the subject of Whig and Tory polemics which accompanied the popular publications of trial testimonies, confessional accounts, or the narratives provided by alleged Plot witnesses. Oates's narratives and the trials generated as a result of those narratives ground English government to a virtual halt as Opposition forces seized practical control of the government and demanded that Parliament consider no business which was not directly related to the narratives of Titus Oates or those of the other Plot witnesses. From 1678-1681, thirty-seven Englishmen lost their lives as a direct or an indirect result of the testimony Titus Oates provided.

Through a lively polemical exchange and crowd
manipulation, the Opposition succeeded in maintaining a strong hold over English government until promises of financial assistance from the French government enabled Charles to prorogue Parliament for the remainder of his monarchy. Exposure of the Rye House Plot appeared to substantiate royalist claims that the Popish Plot was little more than an earlier attempt by these same members of the Opposition to overthrow the English government and to place the blame for that overthrow upon Roman Catholics.

While it is true that correspondence found in the possession of Edward Coleman, secretary to James, Duke of York, was incriminating, there is no evidence to link that correspondence to the plot Titus Oates described. And while a contemporary chronicler, Bishop Gilbert Burnet, reveals that many Englishmen looked upon Coleman’s letters as a confirmation of the plot Oates was describing, a twentieth-century historian, David Ogg, dismisses Coleman’s letters, concluding they probably indicated nothing more sinister than Coleman’s attempt to secure for James the same kind of considerations Charles II had secured for himself through the secret treaty of Dover.

The Popish Plot may best be described as self-fulfilling prophecy. As Robert McHenry, Jr. notes, Andrew Marvell’s An Account of the Growth of Popery and Arbitrary Government in England, published the year before Oates came forth with his revelations, appeared to be "an harbinger of
fear," a work which "seemed to anticipate the revelations delivered later in 1678 by Titus Oates." Other critics, such as Richard Ashcraft, recognize that the forces which insured that the Popish Plot would come into existence evolved much earlier than 1678. Court suspicions regarding the religious convictions and intentions of both Charles and James began surfacing in the early 1670's, once the terms of the supposedly secret Treaty of Dover began circulating among courtiers. Even if those secret terms had not been made public, many Protestant courtiers nevertheless deeply resented the treaty in which Charles had consented to join Catholic France in making war against a Protestant nation. Charles's Declaration of Indulgence, issued in 1672, created additional suspicions. Finally, James's conversion to Catholicism, made public knowledge on Easter Sunday, 1673, when York refused to accept communion in the Church of England, coupled with James' marriage to Mary of Modena, fueled a growing opposition to the heir apparent and to his royal brother. In introducing the Popish Plot, Bishop Gilbert Burnet reveals that Opposition interests were anxious to discover some expediency which would effectively shackle the then burgeoning powers of the Court:

...all people look'd on the next session [of Parliament] as very critical. The party against the Court gave all for lost. They believed the
Lord Danby, who had so often brought his party to be very near the majority, would now lay matters so well as to be able to balance his numbers that they resolved to come up no more, and reckoned that all opposition would be fruitless, and serve only to expose themselves to the fury of the Court. But of a sudden an unlooked for accident changed all their measures, and put the Kingdom into so great a fermentation, that it well deserves to be opened very particularly....the History of that called the Popish Plot.  

i. The narrator/narrative disjunction and the Popish Plot

Various instances of narrator/narrative disjunction present in the discrete and particularly in the extended text of the Popish Plot fall into three broad categories, each of which, in turn, will be examined. These include: 1) the character of the plot witnesses, 2) logical inconsistencies present in the testimonies of the plot witnesses or in the conduct of the investigation of the plot, and 3) the disturbingly convenient nature of the witnesses' memories.
a. the character of plot witnesses

The character of major plot witnesses proved to be an impediment to attempts to convince many Englishmen that the Popish Plot existed in fact and was not simply a fabrication. The primary witness, Titus Oates, the grandson of a ribbon weaver and the son of clergyman who kept changing church affiliation, had been expelled from a total of five schools and the English navy for "unnatural practices, not to be named,"14 a clumsy euphemism Bishop Gilbert Burnet used to describe Oates's overt homosexual preferences.15 Charles II, in his initial interview of Oates, caught the self-professed "Saviour of Three Nations"16 in a lie.17 Oates, a convicted perjurer, had testified at Hastings against schoolmaster William Parker, whose job Oates wished to secure, that he had witnessed Parker sexually molesting a young schoolboy. Parker, fortunately, had an air tight alibi -- he had been eating supper with the parents of several of his pupils during the time period in which Oates claimed to have witnessed the molestation. Charges against Parker were dropped, and Parker promptly filed suit against Oates, who was found guilty of perjury.18 During the trial of the five Jesuits, the defendants requested that Oates be disqualified as a witness because of his previous conviction for perjury. Judge Scroggs denied the defendants' request, ruling that
Oates's previous conviction for perjury was immaterial to the trial in question. More demanding critics of the extended text of the Popish Plot, however, found it difficult to concur with Scrogg's judgment.  

Bishop Burnet describes Oates as "proud and ill natured, haughty, but ignorant." Burnet's account provides insight into Oates's character:

But I... asked him, what were the arguments that prevailed on him to change his Religion, and to go over to the Church of Rome. He upon that stood up, and laid his hands on his breast; and said, God and his holy Angels knew that he had never changed, but that he had gone among them on purpose to betray them. This gave me such a character of him, that I could have no regard to any thing he either said or swore after that.

Physically unattractive, Oates possessed a flushed face and an enormous chin which made his mouth seem to be situated in the center of his face. He dribbled saliva almost constantly. He was given to the use of profanities, a habit which estranged Oates from many pious churchgoers. Titus Oates, a pariah in English society, was repeatedly shunned and abused; by adulthood, Elaine K. Dekers argues, Oates had developed a desire to revenge himself upon
society, a desire which made him the ideal subject to play the role of plot informer. \textsuperscript{24} Sadly enough, the only time Oates appears to have experienced social acceptance was during the time Opposition forces embraced him as their savior.

Titus Oates, however, was not the only plot witness whose character hindered popular acceptance of the testimony he provided. William Bedloe, for instance, had a reputation as a cheat and a fraud which extended throughout most of Europe. \textsuperscript{25} One of those whom Bedloe informed against, Lord Bellasis, had formerly employed Bedloe; Bellasis, apparently, had earned Bedloe's enmity for firing Bedloe after catching him embezzling funds from the Bellasis estate. Undaunted by his reputation, Bedloe offered his questionable past as proof of the special knowledge he claimed to possess concerning the murder of Judge Edmundbury Godfrey. In his first interview before Parliament Bedloe told the peers, "I have been a great rogue, but, had I not been so, I could not have known those things I am now about to tell you." \textsuperscript{26}

So tainted was the past of a third plot witness, John Scott, that even the Opposition despaired of exposing it to public scrutiny. Wanted in New England, Barbados, and Flanders for bigamy, murder, rape, fraud, real estate fraud, forgery, and theft, \textsuperscript{27} Scott, who was to have testified against Samuel Pepys, \textsuperscript{28} was dismissed by the Opposition
after attempts to implicate Pepys miscarried.

Unable to implicate James, through Samuel Pepys, of Judge Godfrey's murder, the Opposition suborned a frightened Roman Catholic goldsmith, Miles Prance, into testifying against five men Prance claimed had murdered Godfrey. This was but one of the ways in which the Opposition actively participated in inscribing the extended text of the Popish Plot and proved partially responsible for creating some of the narrator/narrative disjunctions which marked the extended text of the plot. Once arrested, Miles Prance was taken to Newgate where he was "interviewed" by the special Parliamentary investigative committee headed by Shaftesbury; after refusing to sign a deposition, Prance was placed in solitary confinement, in a basement cell, in the middle of December, without food, water, light, fire, or blankets. After three days, Prance "remembered" his part in Godfrey's murder. Later, Prance retracted his testimony, claiming, in an audience with Charles, that his previous testimony had been suborned. Charles, fearful of a Parliamentary trap or fearful of being accused of tampering with Prance's testimony, refused to aid the frightened goldsmith. Prance was returned to Newgate and placed once again in a basement cell. After an additional ten days of confinement, Prance retracted his retraction, swearing that his original deposition had been the truth. Royalist propagandists, however, took great pains to highlight the disjunctive
aspects of Prance's testimony as they unmercifully mocked
the witness who claimed one thing one day and another thing
on another day.

The one prosecution witness who enjoyed any social
standing at all was Robert Jenison, whom Opposition
propagandist Henry Care described as "a gentleman within the
prospect of a fair estate."29 Having informed against his
elder brother Thomas, Robert Jenison had successfully placed
himself within the prospect of a fair estate. Care records
that Jenison heroically refused to provide testimony in the
plot until he had secured a pardon for his brother. Thomas,
however, Care reports, was "unrepentant," forcing his
subsequent rearrest and incarceration in Newgate prison
where he "died of natural causes."30 Tory propagandists,
however, successfully depicted Robert Jenison as an
opportunist who had employed the English legal system to
frustrate English laws of primogeniture.31

b. logical inconsistencies

Logical inconsistencies present in the testimonies of
the plot witnesses or in the conduct of the committee
investigating the plot provided additional evidence of the
presence of a narrator/narrative disjunction in the extended
text of the Popish Plot. While the total number of such
logical inconsistencies was quite large, an abbreviated
survey of them will serve to demonstrate the kinds of problems their presence in the plot created for critical readers of the extended text of the Popish Plot.

Titus Oates strained audience credulity when he claimed in his original deposition that no less than three sets of assassins were seeking to terminate King Charles II's reign. These included: 1) Sir George Wakeman, hired to poison Charles; 2) four "Irish ruffians," paid to stab Charles at Windsor; and 3) two Jesuits, Grove and Pickering, charged with shooting Charles with silver bullets especially consecrated for that purpose. According to Oates, these three groups of assassins had been at work for at least six months prior to the time Oates provided his first narrative of the plot. Because Charles was often surrounded by members of his Court, particularly during his walks through St. James' Park (a place in which Oates claimed several failed assassination attempts had occurred), critics of the discrete text of the Popish Plot naturally wondered why no members of the Court had noticed these assassins. Gilbert Burnet records Oates's explanation for two Jesuits' failure to assassinate Charles:

They attempted three several times with a pistol: Once the flint was loose: At another time there was no powder in the pan: And a third time the pistol was charged only with bullets.\textsuperscript{32}
Burnet also extends the text of the Popish Plot, offering the following critique of Oates's claim:

This was strange stuff; But all was imputed to a special providence of God: And this whole evidence was believed.33

Even critics who accepted this particular claim wondered why Oates had allowed the alleged assassins to operate for six months before informing against them.

Burnet records other logical inconsistencies which bothered him and no doubt many other critics of Oates's tale. "Many other things in the discovery made it seemed ill digested, and not credible," Burnet reports. "Bellasis [whom Oates claimed had been named commander of the new Catholic army] was almost perpetually ill of the gout."34 Other leading army commanders named by Oates included Lord Petre and regicide John Lambert. Burnet questions both of these appointments as well. "Petre," Burnet notes, "was a weak man, and had never any military command," while Lambert "had been kept in prison ever since the Restoration; and by that time had lost his memory and sense."35 More disturbing than such claims, Burnet reveals, was Oates's inability to produce any physical evidence to support his accusations:
But it was thought strange, that since Oates had so often said, what I once heard him say, that he had gone in among them on design to betray them, that he had not kept any one of all these commissions to be real proof in support of his evidence.36

Titus Oates was not the only plot witness whose narrative tested the credulity of his audience. Stephen Dugdale, another witness who claimed to have been a messenger for Catholic conspirators, testified at the trial of Sir George Wakeman that he had been sent, by common post, letters which contained treasonous statements. So preposterous was this assertion that trial spectators, noted for their unflinching support of plot witnesses, disrupted the trial with hoots and shouts of laughter, forcing Judge William Scroggs to quiet the courtroom before the trial could resume.37

While Titus Oates and the other plot witnesses, together with Opposition forces, attempted to frighten Londoners with tales of the strength of Roman Catholic forces, Roger L’Estrange recommended that his readers allow experience to demonstrate the size and strength of the Roman faction:

Is it not a wonderful thing (I say) that these men
with all the **Interest**, are not able to save a
**Priest** from the Gallows; or a **single** person of the
**Party** from the Exact **Rigour** of the **Law**. Have they
only a **Power** to do the **Government** **mischief**, and
themselves no **Good**?38

No logical inconsistency seemed too excessive for Opposition
propagandists to embrace. Not only was there a conspiracy
against the King’s life, but, according to some Whig
polemicists, Charles II, although ignorant of the plot
against his life, was himself party to the conspiracy
against his government. The anonymous author of *The True
Protestants Appeal to the City and the Country* appears to
have been heartedly offended by the logic governing such
reasoning:

> Now, for my part, I believe the Popish Plot; but
whosoever believes the other [the plot to kill the
King], whatever he pretends, cannot believe that,
for they make admirable and incomprehensible
Nonsense of it, that the **Papists** should be
plotting to ruine their own Interest and Design,
to subvert a Government that was endeavouring to
bring in Popery.39

Alleged conspirators’ refusal to accept offers of
pardon created additional logical inconsistencies which the
Opposition struggled to explain, for although a number of
the convicted prisoners were offered pardons if they would
confess their own guilt and name their co-conspirators, none
of them accepted this expediency. Opposition polemicists
responded by claiming promises of sainthood prevented Roman
Catholics from betraying their fellow conspirators. During
his trial, Lord Stafford attempted to capitalize on the
fidelity of those who went to their deaths rather than
confess to crimes they had not committed. In his defense,
Burnet relates, Stafford "observed a great difference
between the gunpowder plot and that which was now on foot:
That in the former all the chief conspirators died
confessing the fact; but that now all died with the
solemnest protestations of their innocence."\(^{40}\)

Referring to the trial of the five Jesuits, Gilbert
Burnet likens the public executions of alleged plot
conspirators to "the letting [of] blood...which abates a
fever. Every execution, like a new bleeding, abated the
heat that the Nation was in; and threw us into a cold
deadness...."\(^{41}\) Shaftesbury, known as a bloodthirsty
individual,\(^{42}\) had overplayed his hand. Instead of enraging
the London crowd, the executions, submitted to meekly, were
being viewed with increasing antipathy. Bloodletting, of
course, often killed the patient it was intended to cure.
In like manner, the Opposition's bloodletting experiment
deadened anti-Catholic sentiments among much of the London populace rather than sharpening those sentiments.

There were also logical inconsistencies present in the way in which the Parliamentary committee conducted its investigation of the plot. For instance, Edward Coleman insisted that Charles II was aware of his correspondence and offered to provide the Committee with a full disclosure of that correspondence and of the King's part in it. Coleman having made this offer, the investigative committee demurred. Burnet explains:

...tho' he seemed willing to be questioned concerning the King, the Committee did not think fit to do it, nor to report what he said concerning it: Only in general they reported, that he spoke of another matter, about which they did not think fit to interrogate him, nor to mention it.43

The "matter" about which the Parliamentary investigative committee "did not think fit to interrogate" Coleman, "nor to mention," was Coleman's offer to provide a list of members of Parliament whom he had personally bribed to support legislation beneficial to Roman Catholics.44 By accepting bribes from Roman Catholics and/or from pro-Catholic forces, members of the Opposition contributed
directly to the strengthening of the English monarchy which historians note took place during the decade of the 1670's. And it was this strengthening of the monarchy (if we accept Bishop Burnet's accounting) which preceded (one might even say which necessitated) the "discovery" of the Popish Plot. Because the members of Parliament bribed included most of those who served on the Parliamentary investigatory committee, Coleman's confessions were officially suppressed. Such eclectic investigative procedures, aimed not at discovering truth, but rather at fastidious disclosure, damaged Opposition claims that it sought a full disclosure of the truth.

c. convenient memories

Despite the numerous logical inconsistencies present in the testimonies of plot witnesses, had those witnesses stuck by their original declarations, all Englishmen might have believed their stories. Plot witnesses, however, possessed such convenient memories that many Englishmen were disturbed by their ever-increasing capacities to recall events which those witnesses had denied being able to remember a few days earlier. The convenient nature of the memories of key Plot witnesses forms the third major category of evidence of the existence of narrator/narrative disjunctions within the extended text of the Popish Plot.
Critics never cease to be amazed by the convenient nature of Titus Oates's memory. A summary of Oates's testimony against the Queen's physician, Sir George Wakeman, illustrates how disconcerting Oates's recollections could be. Oates's original deposition, sworn before Judge Edmundbury Godfrey on September 6, 1978, contained forty-three articles. Article thirty-three relates that Wakeman was to be offered £10000 to poison Charles II, but does not indicate that such an offer had been made to Wakeman. Article thirty-seven relates that Wakeman's fee was to be raised to £15000, but still makes no mention of Wakeman having been made privy to this information. Before the Privy Council, Oates specifically denied having any testimony to make concerning Sir George Wakeman. When Wakeman was brought before Oates during Oates's testimony to the House of Commons, Oates failed to recognize Wakeman. Later, however, Oates claimed that Wakeman had agreed to poison Charles and that the physician had been given £15000 for his efforts. During his trial, Wakeman relentlessly returned to the inconsistencies in Oates's testimony concerning Wakeman's alleged part in the conspiracy and succeeded in winning an acquittal on all charges.

Had the English audience's reaction to Oates's informations proceeded as the Opposition had planned, Oates may have had the opportunity to refresh his memory concerning James, Duke of York. As things stood, however,
Oates overplayed his hand with regard to the heir apparent, for article numbers XXIX and LX of Oates's printed depositions clearly indicated James to be a victim, not a beneficiary of the Popish Plot. Oates's testimony, consequently, proved of little use against the Duke. Interestingly enough, however, James's involvement in Roman Catholic activities taking place in England testify to the limits of Oates's actual knowledge of Catholic activities. The Grand Consult Oates described, a triennial business meeting, was, in 1678, held at James's apartments in Whitehall Palace, not in the White Horse Tavern as Oates had testified. If Oates had had knowledge of this fact, it is possible the Opposition party might have succeeded in passing the exclusion bill in both houses of Parliament.

After testifying to both houses of Parliament that "he had named all the persons of note" involved in the Popish Plot, Oates later sent word to Charles II that he "had somewhat to swear against the Queen, if he would give way to it." In Charles's presence, Oates claimed to have overheard Catherine of Braganza plotting Charles's death with several Jesuits, as the door to the room in which they had been meeting had been inadvertently left ajar. The room Oates described was quite large, and many Englishmen, who knew Catherine to be a "woman of low voice," questioned the validity of Oates's claim. When questioned as to why he had claimed before Parliament to know of no additional
conspirators, Oates insisted "that he thought then it was not lawful to accuse the Queen." But according to Bishop Burnet, few people believed Oates's belated assertions concerning the Queen.

Titus Oates, however, was not the only plot witness noted for his ability to remember additional information when given a chance to recount his evidence. Plot witness William Bedloe proved equally capable of enlarging upon his assertions. Wanted for theft, William Bedloe turned himself in to the sheriff of Bristol. In order to get himself transferred to London, Bedloe claimed to have knowledge of the Popish Plot. Once in London, Bedloe, in an interview with Lord Treasurer Danby, denied knowledge of the plot. After an interview with Shaftesbury, however, Bedloe knew all about the plot, claiming to have seen Judge Edmundbury Godfrey's body at Somerset House, the official residence of Catherine of Braganza.

A third plot witness, Stephen Dugdale, revealed in 1680 that the Duke of York had sent him to Newgate to find out if Edward Coleman had told anyone about the plot. Coleman sent word back that the only one who had been made privy to the plot was Judge Edmundbury Godfrey. Dugdale further claimed that upon hearing this James ordered Godfrey's execution. But if Bishop Burnet is to be believed, many Englishmen were disturbed by the tardiness of Dugdale's revelation, tendered not during Coleman's trial, but over a year after Coleman's
execution. "This was never made publick, till the Lord Stafford's trial," Bishop Burnet relates; "And I was amazed to see such a thing break out after so long a silence."55

The recall of such pertinent information, only a short while after the principals had testified that they had no additional information to offer, has unnerved many critics of the extended text of the Popish Plot. Human memories, admittedly, may prove fragile and fragmentary, yet it seems unlikely that anyone, privy to information of such magnitude, of such import to the lives of all his or her countrymen, would simply forget this type of information.56

As the preceding examples demonstrate, the discrete text of the Popish Plot, that is, Titus Oates's original forty-three item deposition sworn before Judge Edmundbury Godfrey, was marked by the presence of a narrator/narrative disjunction. Instances of narrator/narrative disjunction multiplied as Oates's narrative of the Plot was extended by and through audience participation in that text. In the next chapter, I will explain how texts marked by a narrator/narrative disjunction elicit audience confrontations with those texts, and I will argue that certain texts on the Popish Plot may be read not only as literary works in their own right but also as literary critiques of the narrator/narrative disjunction present in the discrete and extended texts of the Popish Plot.
1. L’Estrange eases the discomfort in which he has placed his audience by answering for them the question he has posed. A narrative, he says, may relate an actual event ("a Relation of something that may be seen, felt, heard, or understood"), or a narrative may relate an imaginary event ("a Relation of something than [sic] Can neither be seen, felt, heard, nor understood"). There are many kinds of narratives, L’Estrange avers, narratives of "things Visible and Invisible, Possible and Impossible; True and False," "Narratives of Fact, and our Narratives of Imagination." L’Estrange concludes by instructing his audience in the task which lay before them; "...the only point," L’Estrange directs, "will be out of This Infinite Diversity of Narratives, Which is the Narrative here in question." Roger L’Estrange. L’Estrange’s Narrative of the Plot Set Forth for the Edification of His Majesties Liege-People. 2nd. ed. London, 1680. p. 1.

2. One might be tempted to identify the narrator of Absalom and Achitophel as John Dryden. Although Dryden’s poem was quickly identified as his work and reprinted under his name, the poem was originally published anonymously, so
I am personally uncomfortable with the idea of identifying the narrator of Absalom and Achitophel as John Dryden. I am equally uncomfortable with critics such as Ian Watt who identify Daniel Defoe as the narrator of Moll Flanders. As far as I am concerned, "narrator" refers to a fictional persona, one who may or may not espouse the ideals and beliefs of the author responsible for that narrator's existence. Identifying the author of a work as the narrator of that work, in my opinion, complicates (and probably taints) the critical process. In The Plot in a Dream, the narrator is identified as one "Philopatris," the pseudonym which the author has assigned to the author/narrator of his discrete text. In the Old Arcadia, the narrator has not been identified by name and will be referred to simply as Sidney's narrator. Moll Flanders boasts two narrators: 1) the editor-narrator who, in the text's preface, confesses editorial interference with the text of Moll Flanders; and 2) Moll Flanders, who provides the initial biographical account. I am identifying neither of Defoe's narrators as Daniel Defoe.

4. While certain historians still insist that some Roman Catholic lords were involved in a conspiracy whose object was to re-establish Catholicism as the state religion, most agree, as Raman Selden contends, that the plot described by Titus Oates was, nevertheless, "to a great extent a fiction." See Raman Selden. *John Dryden-Absalom and Achitophel: A Critical Study*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986. p. 17.

5. Tonge blamed Roman Catholics for the firing of London in 1666. The conflagration destroyed Tonge's church and school, that is, his means of livelihood. By the year 1678, when Titus Oates first came forth with his information on the Popish Plot, Israel Tonge was already well-known for his views of the Great Fire. See Lane. *Titus Oates*. p. 22.


17. Titus Oates claimed to have personally delivered a letter to Don John of Austria. Charles, who knew Don John well, asked Oates to describe the Austrian prince. Oates claimed the short, overweight prince was a "tall" and "lean" man. See Bishop Burnet's History of His Own Time.... London: for Thomas Ward, 1724. Vol. I, p. 427.


28. Arthur Bryant claims the Opposition originally intended to suborn Pepys’s clerk, Sam Atkins, on promise of a pardon, into testifying against Pepys in court. Shaftesbury and his cohorts wished to implicate Pepys, through his clerk, in the murder of Edmundbury Godfrey. Using Pepys, the Opposition hoped to implicate James in Godfrey’s murder (p. 35). The plan fell apart, however, when both Pepys and Atkins offered alibis for their whereabouts on the day Godfrey disappeared (p. 162). See Arthur Bryant. *Years*. 


34. *Ibid*.

35. *Ibid*.

36. *Ibid*.


42. W. K. Thomas relates the following anecdote concerning Anthony Ashley Cooper's war record:

While in command of 1500 Parliamentary soldiers in 1644, he besieged and stormed a countryhouse held by a Royalist garrison. In the process he displayed considerable bravery and also, by his own admission, a desire to deny quarter to the Royalists when, the house in flames, they offered to surrender.


48. Although Wakeman's strategy assisted in his defense, the major reason Wakeman received an acquittal was due to the fact that Wakeman's trial "was looked on, as the Queen's trial." See *Burnet's History*. Vol. I, p. 468. Once the Opposition's attack reached so close to the King, many former supporters of the Opposition began withdrawing their support. Halifax, for instance, spoke eloquently against the Exclusion Bill after the Queen's physician became the object of a Parliamentary investigation.

49. Item XXIX of Oates's original deposition says the following:
...the Society [of Jesus] need not fear, for he (that is the King) was grown secure, and would bear no complaints against them, and if the Duke should set his face in the least measures to follow his Brothers Foot-steps, his passport was made to lay him to sleep.

Item LX indicates Roman Catholic forces are unsure of James's support:

And withal the Deponent urged, that he feared the Death of the King would scarcely do the business and effect the Design, unless his R. Highness would pardon those that did the business, and stand by them in it. To which the said Keines reply'd that the Duke was not the strength of their Trust, for they had another way to effect the setting up the Catholic Religion: For when they had destroyed the King, they had a List of 20000 Catholics in London, that were substantial persons and fit for Arms, that would Rise in twenty four hours time and less: And if James did not comply with them, the Pot must go also.


52. Ibid.

53. Ibid.


55. Ibid. pp. 444-5.

56. As for Dugdale's information regarding James's order to execute Godfrey, Essex claimed that Dugdale had testified to this during his first examination by the Privy Council, but that Charles II had ordered the testimony suppressed. See Burnet's History. Vol. I. p. 445. Throughout the plot, however, both Charles and James repeatedly insisted on full disclosure of information, even when that information proved embarrassing to the Court.
Chapter II - Critiquing the Text of the Popish Plot

For seventeenth-century Londoners who participated in and experienced the earliest stages of the extension of the text of the Popish Plot, who discovered themselves to be, quite literally, the captives of Titus Oates's fiction, the Popish Plot possessed nightmarish qualities. Roger L'Estrange described the experience this way:

_We are come to govern our selves by Dreams and Imagination; We make every Coffee-House Tale an Article of Our Faith; and from incredible Fables we raise Invincible Arguments._

As the critiques of Dryden's _Absalom and Achitophel_ and the anonymous _The Plot in a Dream_ will demonstrate, Roger L'Estrange was not the only Londoner struck by the raw power of Oates's narrative, by the ability of that narrative to alter the course of English government and jurisprudence and to order the lives of individual Londoners.

In this chapter I will argue that in responding to the narrator/narrative disjunction present in the extended text of the Popish Plot, seventeenth-century polemicists have historically validated some of the effects which a narrator/narrative disjunction may have upon an audience and that these polemicists have also provided evidence regarding
I acknowledge that some critics may find disturbing the ease with which I conflate the historical and the literary. My choice of the Popish Plot, in fact, tacitly acknowledges both the existence and the virtue of such a resistance. However, I feel justified in this endeavor because virtually every critic (historical and literary) now acknowledges that Titus Oates’s testimony was essentially a fictional invention, a fabrication. Even historians such as John Pollock (who insist that Roman Catholics were plotting to return England to the Catholic fold during the period of the Popish Plot) admit that Titus Oates’s personal knowledge of such a plot was minimal at best. Consequently, I am convinced that I am doing nothing more than reading one fiction (Sidney’s Old Arcadia or Defoe’s Moll Flanders) in light of another fiction (the extended text of the Popish Plot). I feel similarly justified in identifying Dryden’s Absalom and Achitophel and the anonymous The Plot in a Dream as literary critiques of a fictional narrative (that is, of the extended text of the Popish Plot); and I likewise feel justified in seizing upon the critical methods apparent from reviewing these critiques of the [extended] text of the Popish Plot and employing those techniques in my own critiques of the other fictional narratives that I consider. Furthermore, I am convinced that the enlightenment gained from such an eclectic enterprise far outweighs any
objections which might be raised concerning my methodology.

As I revealed in Chapter I, four separate strategies enable critics to provide an adequate rationale for the presence of a narrator/narrative disjunction within a given text. Critics faced with a text which displays a narrator/narrative disjunction may question the reliability of 1) the narrator, 2) the narrative, or 3) of both; 4) If both narrator and narrative are judged reliable, then critics must discover (or invent) exceptions sufficient to account for the disjunction.

Faced with a narrator/narrative disjunction, critics may find the narrator or narrators reliable but dismiss the narrative as unreliable. This is the apparent strategy employed by the anonymous author of *The Plot in a Dream*, one of the two works on the Popish Plot I will examine in detail. This strategy is "apparent" only, for the work relies heavily upon irony and satire. The narrator of the work, Philopatris, offers a narrative which coincides precisely with the various narratives delivered by Plot witnesses. On the surface, then, Philopatris's narrative validates the narratives provided by various Plot witnesses. The narrative Philopatris offers, however, is undermined by the admitted source of his inspiration -- his dreams. The author of *The Plot in a Dream* is careful to avoid attacking the character of plot witnesses directly; he could not afford to attack plot witnesses directly, for such an attack
might well prove tantamount to suicide; the author, manages to attack plot witnesses indirectly and by implication, however, when his own inspirations, provided by his dreams, coincide precisely with the accounts offered by plot witnesses. This particular strategy, of finding the narrator reliable but the narrative he or she provides to be unreliable, is particularly difficult to sustain (and probably requires the mask of irony or satire), for the narrator provides much of the narrative. If the narrative provided proves unreliable, reader acceptance of the narrator who has provided the unreliable narrative is collaterally problemized. This, in fact, is one of the strengths of The Plot in a Dream -- the author's apparent recognition that in discrediting the source of the narrative (and consequently, the narrative as well) he thereby collaterally discredits the narrators.

The second means of providing an adequate rationale for the presence of a narrator/narrative disjunction is to find the narrative reliable and the narrator unreliable. Tory propagandists' attempts to insist upon a correspondence between the crisis of the Popish Plot and the crisis which had led to the first English civil war were employing this strategy to significant advantage. Tory propagandists asked members of the English audience to remember the last time they had heard a narrative of this kind, to remember that in that instance the narrators had proven unreliable, and to
remember the consequences to which such narratives had led in the past. In answering Whig charges that Roman Catholics, not Protestants, were (and had been) responsible for the nation's woes, Roger L'Estrange provides an excellent example of this critical strategy:

I have run through the List of the Regicides; I have had opportunities of knowing the Principal men of the Party; and tracing all their Committees; I cannot say that I found any one man upon That Roll whom I so much as suspected for a Papist. So long as the work went smoothly on, they call'd themselves (I remember) a Conventing, a Fasting and a Praying People: But so soon as ever the Wind Turn'd, the Godly Party was presently Transform'd; and those I took before for Dissenting Protestants, are now made to appear to have been, the greater Part of them, Priests, and Jesuits.4

The boldface emphasis here is mine. By the simple demonstrative, "I remember," L'Estrange invites members of his audience to remember as well -- to remember the claims made by the Parliamentary party in 1641 and to remember that the government established by Oliver Cromwell had violated those claims. The narrative thus proves reliable not in the
claims it makes, but rather because the narrative is recognizable extra-textually, that is, from previous experience, and that previous experience suggests to audience members where narratives of this particular kind will lead. This strategy proves effective because audience members approach all texts with certain pre-conceived notions and expectations. Admittedly, audience members may seldom be consciously aware of what those notions and expectations are, but the success (or failure) of any narrative rests upon its ability to satisfy (or upon its failure to satisfy) whatever notions or expectations various members of the audience bring with them to the text in question.

This second critical strategy, of finding the narrator unreliable and the narrative reliable, is the approach I will employ in critiquing Defoe’s *Moll Flanders*. As I read Defoe’s text, the narrator/narrative disjunction involves the question of whether, in fact, Moll reforms her life. Just as members of an audience bring certain pre-conceived notions and expectations with them to a text, texts (through the narrator(s) and/or the narrative(s) posit for readers certain expectations by which texts expect themselves to be judged. For instance, Defoe’s narrator-editor claims that the elderly Moll repents her former life of immorality. Moll repeats this narratorial claim. Readers, then, ask themselves "Does Moll reform?" Readers who ask themselves
"Does Moll's life require reform?" or "Has Moll lived a life of immorality?" proves guilty of violating the terms upon which the text specifies that a judgment is to be rendered. In his framing device, Defoe's editor-narrator claims that Moll has reformed her life. As narrator, Moll repeats this claim. The narrative Moll relates, however, argues that Moll, in her declining years, abandons the sinful ways of her youth not out of a desire to reform her life, but rather because she has been forced to do so by physical infirmities of old age which prevent her continued effective commission of such indiscretions.

Faced with a narrator/narrative disjunction, readers may decide to judge both the narrator and the narrative unreliable. This is strategy the Dryden has elected in his critique of the Popish Plot, Absalom and Achitophel. In exposing the character of plot witness Titus Oates and of various members of the Opposition party who supported Oates, Dryden simultaneously calls into question the value of all plot testimony.

The final strategy critics may use in their attempts to provide an adequate rationale for the presence of a narrator/narrative disjunction is to find both narrator and narrative to be essentially reliable after having made whatever exceptions are necessary to account for the existence of the narrator/narrative disjunction. This is the preferred strategy of Whig propagandists during the
Popish Plot, and was, frankly, grossly ineffective. For much imaginative literature, however, this can be an effective strategy. It is, I will argue, the most appropriate strategy to employ in critiquing Sidney’s Old Arcadia.

I have established the presence of a narrator/narrative disjunction in the extended text of the Popish Plot. Plot witnesses made certain claims; other evidence suggested those claims could not stand up to close scrutiny. The extended text of the Popish Plot, with its narrator/narrative disjunction, demanded a critique, and a critique, in the form of a polemical exchange of unprecedented proportions (a further extending of the text of the Popish Plot), is precisely what the narrator/narrative disjunctions of the Popish Plot elicited. Yet because this critique was polemical, the critique itself both encouraged and obstructed meaningful inquiry, much in the same way that literary texts marked by a narrator/narrative disjunction both encourage and simultaneously frustrate the critic’s attempts to elaborate upon the text.

i. Dryden’s Absalom and Achitophel as literary critique

Dryden’s masterful polemic on the Popish Plot continues to defy critics’ attempts to define its genre. Dryden’s
A significant number of modern critics insist that topical references in Dryden’s poem are superfluous and interfere with an appreciation of the poem as a work of art. David Hopkins goes so far as to argue that parts of Dryden’s poem are of interest primarily to the “historian or the chronicler of changing literary taste, while other sections of the poem “leap from propaganda, documentary, or fashion into the imaginative independence of art.”

Hopkins’ praise of Absalom and Achitophel damns Dryden’s poetic effort by insisting that since the topical interest has worn off the success of Dryden’s poem now rests upon “the excellence of some of its parts.” Other critics have allowed their own ideological prejudices to overinform their critiques of Dryden’s poem. Laura Brown, for instance, refers to Absalom and Achitophel as “abruptly truncated” and insists that the truncation “results not from the artfulness of the work itself but from the incongruity between contemporary events and biblical history.”

Brown’s judgment that Absalom and Achitophel is "abruptly truncated" is understandable, for Brown has not been the only critic to discuss the poem’s truncated form. George Saintsbury, for instance, referred to Absalom and Achitophel as a "string" of "prose portraits....connected together by the very slenderest thread of narrative." The ingenious conclusions which Saintsbury and Brown draw from
the poem's readily apparent truncation, however, discomfits more discriminating critics. Saintsbury argues the truncation affords little more than the presentation of speeches whose purpose is to place Tory characters in the best possible light. Brown's Marxist reading, on the other hand, blinds Brown's recognition of Dryden's critical achievement: the best known topical poem of the Restoration period is not simply a poem; it is a literary critique of the extended text of the Popish Plot! Once one acknowledges this fact, one recognizes that to ignore the poem's topicality is to emasculate both the poem and the reader of the poem, to rob them of a desirable and necessary generative power.

Other critics have recognized Dryden's interest in critical reading readily apparent in much of Dryden's oeuvre, if not immediately apparent in this particular poem. John Collins, for instance, has called Dryden "the father of English criticism." W. K. Thomas, on the other hand, has noted that Dryden's choice of a "motto" for his poem, taken from Horace, encourages a "close" reading of the poem. For Dryden, it was the Englishman's inability to assess critically the [extended] text of the Popish Plot which accounted for the predicament in which the English nation found itself in 1681. Dryden asserts the following concerning the plot:
Bad in itself, but represented worse;
Raised in extremes, and in extremes decried;
With oaths affirmed, with dying vows denied.
Not weighed or winnowed by the multitude;
But swallowed in the mass, unchewed and crude.
Some truth there was, but dashed and brewed with lies.
To please the fools, and puzzle all the wise.
Succeeding times did equal folly call,
Believing nothing, or believing all.

(11. 109-117)\(^\text{16}\)

Englishmen, Dryden insists, have not been critical readers of the [extended] text of the Popish Plot. Dryden’s critique, offered by a discriminating reader, exemplifies critical reading and demonstrates the benefits of critical reading. Dryden seeks to educate, to develop a more critical audience, a more discriminating reader.

As Popish Plot polemic, Dryden’s text, to those readers familiar with the polemical literature generated by the Popish Plot, reminds one of Horatio’s response to the appearance of Hamlet’s ghost; that is, it is "wondrous strange."\(^\text{17}\) Although ostensibly dealing with the Popish Plot, Dryden’s text offers few comments upon either the Plot itself or the alleged plot witnesses. On the other hand, what Dryden neglects to say about the Popish Plot speaks
volumes. Dryden ignores plot witnesses such as William Bedloe, John Scott, Stephen Dugdale, and Robert Jenison, men whose past or whose present actions afforded little challenge for a skilled satirist such as Dryden. Rationalizing the omission of certain members of the Opposition from his poem, Dryden insists that these members of the minor gentry are "below the dignity of verse" (l. 570). Is this the reason for Dryden's omission of most of the plot witnesses? Although this is possible, it is highly doubtful. Dryden seizes upon one of the most popular forms of his day, the character, and employs it to discredit both the plot witnesses and the Popish Plot itself.

Dryden takes a calculated risk in ignoring plot witnesses and in concentrating instead upon the political leaders active in the Exclusion Crisis. In so doing, however, Dryden benefits his cause in two ways. First, by ignoring plot witnesses whose tainted pasts made them easy targets for satirical attack and by concentrating instead upon upper class members of the Opposition, Dryden exposes the weakness of the Whig faction. Secondly, by concentrating on the constitutional crisis and ignoring the Opposition's claim that the nation was facing a religious crisis, Dryden exposes the Popish Plot as a political expediency. Dryden's poem deals not with the Popish Plot, but rather with the Exclusion Crisis and with, as Francis Rolands has entitled it, "The Attempted Whig Revolution of
Responding to the Opposition's demand to exclude the Duke of York from succession, Charles II agreed to legislate limitations upon the power of any future Roman Catholic monarchs. So potentially beneficial were the limitations offered that Bishop Burnet has reported them sufficient to make one "wish for a Popish King." Burnet reveals that it was the constitutional prerogative which caused Charles to reject the idea of exclusion, for the exclusion of even one rightful monarch would "change the nature of the English monarchy." Charles was convinced that the Opposition wished to make the monarchy an elective position and that "if Acts of Exclusion were once begun, it would not be easy to stop them." Like Dryden, Charles knew the Opposition to be "a headstrong, moody, murmuring race" (1. 45), who "upon any discontent at the next heir they would set on: religion was now the pretence: But other pretenses would be found out, when there was need of them." As Louis I. Bredvold has explained, "The Exclusion Bill raised all the sleeping dogs of political theory, and served to make the public more aware of political divergences that had been developing for a century or longer, and to combine and organize the many shades of radical and conservative opinion into two well-defined hostile groups."

Relying upon the support of biblical and Miltonic allusions, Dryden divides the nation into two camps: the
godly and those who are but parodies of godliness. Dryden's godlike David stands apart from his supporters. Dryden establishes the association between God and David early through, in the words of Stephen Zwicker, a "witty juxtaposition of divine and human fertility." Charles's libertinism was a frequent subject mentioned by Charles's supporters and detractors alike. Samuel Pepys, for instance, includes several frank references to Charles's sexual exploits in his diary. Rochester, too, commented upon Charles's libidinous impulses, although with considerably less tact than Pepys had employed. Rather than surrender a point to the Opposition, Dryden turns Charles's libertinism into generative urges, an act which enables Dryden to imply a unique relationship between Charles and the universal Creator. Charles's godlike qualities become more apparent as the poem progresses. By the end of poem, as W. K. Thomas argues, Charles "emerges as a credible vice-regent of God."

Although Dryden names few of Charles's supporters, the men whom he names share common virtues and graces which mark them as godly men. The Duke of York "Of every royal virtue stands possessed" (l. 355). The Duke of Ormonde (Barzillai) "appears...crowned with honour and with years" (ll. 817-8). Ormonde's recently deceased son, the Earl of Ossory, is "with every grace adorned...always mourned, And always honoured" (ll. 831-2). Archbishop Sandcroft of Canterbury
(Zadoc) "advanced to David's grace" (l. 865), while Henry Compton, the Bishop of London (Sagan of Jerusalem), proves himself "Of hospitable soul, and noble stem" (l. 867) and John Dolben, the Dean of Westminster (Him of the western dome), is gifted with "heavenly eloquence" (ll. 868-9).

The King's opponents, on the other hand, are but parodies of godliness, and this parodic aspect of their characters, so artfully drawn in verse, enables Dryden to deflate systematically and uniformly the King's opposition.

Dryden's attack upon Shaftesbury is two-pronged. Beginning with a physical description, Dryden likens the drain attached to Shaftesbury's side to safety valve:

A fiery soul, which, working out its way,
Fretted the pigmy body to decay,
And o'er-informed the tenement of clay.
A daring pilot in extremity;
Pleased with the danger, when the waves went high,
He sought the storms, but for a calm unfit,
Would steer too nigh the sands, to boast his wit.

(ll. 156-62)

In the process of describing Shaftesbury's well-known artificial appendage, Dryden simultaneously suggests that Shaftesbury is past redemption; that is, that he is rotten to the core. Here, Dryden follows closely a broadside
entitled *The Deliquium* in which Shaftesbury’s drain was viewed as evidence of a thoroughly rotten interior:

Hell’s in his Body, and his shrivl’d Skin
Seems dropping from his rotten Bones within:
His Corrupt Tortur’d Body does convey
Fresh Spleen and Rancour to his Heart each day;
Which lest it shou’d o’reflow, or by mishap
Be over-charg’d from Sun or Fleece, a Tap
Is in his Body fix’d, with curious Art,
Which from his double envy-canker’d heart,
By pumping, does exhaust th’ exundant Juice,
Reserving still enough for’s daily use.32

Although the anonymous author of *The Deliquium*, too, makes Shaftesbury the pilot steering the rebels’ craft,33 he refers to Shaftesbury as "Capricio." Dryden captures Shaftesbury’s capricious nature through Miltonic allusions which enable Dryden to identify Shaftesbury with Milton’s diabolic tempter.34 Dryden begins early in *Absalom and Achitophel* to associate Shaftesbury with daemonic forces:

I have not so much as an uncharitable wish against Achitophel, but am content to be accused of a good-natured error, and to hope with Origen, that the Devil himself may at last be saved.35
Although the linkage between Shaftesbury and Satan in this introductory section of the poem is restrained, Dryden has here initiated a systematic linkage which he carries forth throughout the rest of the poem.

Shaftesbury parodies God, because Shaftesbury is Satan, the ambitious one who sought more power and glory than he could reasonably expect to be afforded to him. But as Stephen Zwicker has noted, Shaftesbury’s status as a parody of godliness does not end here:

Achitophel’s argument — "Better one Suffer, than a Nation grieve" — is an echo of Caiaphas’s argument for the crucifixion of Christ (John 11:50), and the lines that follow move from allusion to direct statement. Although there is an echo of God’s comment in 1 Samuel 8:7 — "They have rejected me, that I should not reign over them" — there is also an allusion to the deposition of Charles I, whom the English beheaded before they chose Cromwell (Saul). 36

Achitophel thus parodies three different godless types: 1) Satan, who denied his obligations to his Lord; 2) the Romans, who used human laws to legislate against God; and 3) Parliamentary rebels who rejected Charles I as their
monarch, slew him, and placed an illegitimate leader in his stead.

As early as 1664 some Englishmen believed that Monmouth might succeed his father, Charles II. Samuel Pepys records the following in his diary entry dated February 8–9, 1663/64:

...the King do doat infinitely upon the Duke of Monmouth, apparently as one that he intends to have succeed him. God knows what will be the end of it.37

Charles, it seems, contributed to the disjunctive process by leading Monmouth to believe he might succeed his father. By 1678, however, at least three legitimate Protestant heirs enjoyed a claim to the English throne superior to Monmouth’s weak claim. These included James’s two daughters, Mary and Anne, and Mary’s husband, William of Orange. Furthermore, if Charles had ever considered Monmouth as his heir, he had clearly changed his mind by 1679. Bishop Gilbert Burnet records Charles’s response to a rumor circulating in which it was contended that Charles intended to legitimate his eldest bastard son:

He answered quick, that, as well as he lov’d him, he had rather see him hanged.38
Pressed further by rumors circulated by the Opposition, Charles was eventually forced to state before his Privy Council that he had never married anyone other than Catherine of Braganza.39

W. K. Thomas reveals the telling difference between Dryden's depiction of Shaftesbury and that of Monmouth: Shaftesbury is "ambitious and cunning," while Monmouth is "ambitious and stupid."40 The anonymous author of The Deliquium, too, insinuates that Monmouth was little more than a Whig puppet:

Among his [York's] many unprovoked Foes:
We chose young Marcion, not for any love,
But to undo the Youth, as time will prove:
Poor easie Prince, he little thinks that we
Prostitute this his weak Credulity
To our own use, to Anarchize the State,
And hasten his too soon intended Fate.41

Dryden's Absalom is a parodic image of both Adam and Christ. As Arthur Hoffman argues, in rejecting his father Absalom "reverts to the status of Adam whose fall put an end to man's residence in Eden."42 And, as George Wasserman reveals, Achitophel's temptation of Absalom is "an ironic parody of Satan's temptation of Christ in the wilderness --
one which Dryden, in the temptation scene which follows it, underscores by echoing Milton's version of the event in *Paradise Regained*.

Dryden's Corah (Titus Oates) proves a parodic image of three biblical personalities: 1) Satan; 2) Christ, and 3) Saint Stephen. As Stephen Zwicker reveals, Dryden sharpens and directs the irony aimed at Corah by "juxtaposing the biblical rebel and the typological symbol" of the brass serpent, for "in bearing false witness Oates becomes identified with the serpent in Genesis" as well as with the brass serpent of Moses. W. K. Thomas, on the other hand, notes that in John 3:14-15, the passage in which Christ is identified as Israel's savior, Christ compares himself to the serpent of Moses. Oates, who had proclaimed himself the "Saviour of Three Nations" and who has been identified with Moses's serpent, is thus a parodic image of Christ, the true savior. And as Thomas Maresca has revealed, Corah, who "commits the poem's greatest perversion of words," is contrasted "tellingly with St. Stephen, who bore witness to the truth with his life; the bilingual pun on martyr and witness enables him somewhat less than covertly to warn Corah of the fate that awaits him" if he should continue to pursue the course he seemed determined to follow.

Dennis Davison correctly assesses the reason for Dryden's presentation of members of the Opposition as parodies of godliness:
...by suggesting the parallels of God—David—Charles II, Man—Absalom—Monmouth, and Devil—Achitophel—Shaftesbury, and equating the contemporary revolt against the king with the scriptural accounts of revolt by Absalom and Adam, Dryden had morally won his case even before he started. In an artistic sense perhaps he overloaded the dice. It is...a foregone conclusion that David—Charles II will win....

Dryden dismisses the reliability of the plot witnesses by virtually ignoring all plot witnesses in his critique of the plot. The only plot witness he bothers mentioning, Titus Oates, is, like other members of the Opposition, dismissed as being little more than a parodic image of the world's lawful governor. Dryden dismisses dissenters from the Church of England by labelling them "god-smiths" (l. 50). He then dismisses Oates's version of the plot in four short lines:

Some thought they God's anointed meant to slay
By guns, invented since full many a day:
Our author swears it not; but who can know
How far the Devil and Jebusites may go?

(11. 130-3)
Dryden's placement of "Devil," with whom Achitophel and Corah are later identified, before "Jebusite," that is, Roman Catholics, reveals the true authors of the plot against "God's anointed." Should readers fail to recognize this fact, Dryden carefully points out the most salient feature of the Popish Plot, its narrator/narrative disjunction, in the very next line when he refers to the Plot as that "which failed for want of common sense" (1. 134). As I demonstrated in Chapter I, the narratives which Plot witnesses provided were riddled with logical inconsistencies, inconsistencies which allowed Dryden to identify the Popish Plot as the Plot "which failed for want of common sense."

By identifying members of the Opposition as parodies of godliness, Dryden collaterally identifies the narrators of the Popish Plot as unreliable. And by identifying this plot with "The Good Old Cause revived" (1. 82), Dryden asks his readers to compare the current narrative with the remarkably similar narratives which preceded the first English Civil War. In the process, Dryden questions the narrative of the Popish Plot in its entirety. In his critique of the Popish Plot, Dryden has thus determined both its narrators and its narrative to be unreliable.

Although Dryden's Absalom and Achitophel was once viewed as an attempt to influence Shaftesbury's trial, David
Hopkins acknowledges that Dryden's poem is now assessed as a contribution to the polemical battle waged during the Exclusion Crisis. Dryden's poem remains important because it provides one of the clearest critiques of the [extended] text of the Popish Plot available to the twentieth-century critic. Furthermore, Dryden's poem is an exemplum of critical reading and of the social benefits of critical reading. Dryden, however, was not alone in offering a critique of the [extended] text of the Popish Plot. Virtually all Tory writers, each in his or her own way, provided a critique of the plot Titus Oates and the other plot witnesses were describing. The critique offered by the anonymous author of The Plot in a Dream; or the discoverer in Masquerade, for instance, differs radically from that offered by Dryden.

ii. Other critiques of the text of the Popish Plot

The Plot in a Dream; or, the discoverer in Masquerade in A Succinct Discourse and Narrative of the late and present Designs of the Papists against the King and Government was first published in 1681 under the pseudonym Philopatris, a pseudonym frequently employed during the period 1678-1683 when Charles II's Restoration government faced the greatest challenge to its authority. Ostensibly a re-presentation of the Opposition's version of the events of
the Popish Plot, the lightly-veiled allegory operative in this extended dream vision serves not to veil but rather to highlight the text’s relationship to the events of the plot which had so ordered Englishmen’s lives for the previous three years. The author undermines his or her alleged posture by having the text’s protagonist, Philopatris, offer his revelations to the audience as verification of plot events as described by the plot’s "discoverer," Titus Oates. Philopatris, however, freely confesses the source of his inspiration: dreams!

The veil of allegory, which Michael Murrin insists is so essential to the truly allegorical text, functions in *The Plot in a Dream* to cover the author’s didactic message, but not his subject. Veiling of characters and places here ranges from the obvious and heavy-handed to the non-existent. Characters, places, and events are so thinly disguised that no one even remotely familiar with the persons and events of the Popish Plot would fail to recognize the persons or names they are meant to represent. Thus, the allegory operative in *The Plot in a Dream* does not operate as a veil; rather, it highlights the text’s message by situating the reader within the context in which the author’s message is being delivered.

As it would be in Defoe’s *Moll Flanders*, a framing device is employed in *The Plot in a Dream*. In this work, the framing device takes the form of an introduction
allegedly composed by "the Bookseller," which promises that the truths the text offers are available, in varying degrees, to all readers of the volume:

If thine eyes be shut, this Vision will open them; if open, it will delight them. What thou seest in it, or by it intended, but defeated; designed, but discovered; let it excite thy praises to that God, Whose All-Seeing\textsuperscript{53} eye beholds, and whose infinite power and wisdom bounds the Rage, and baffles the Counsels of these wicked Achitophels.

(p. A5\textsuperscript{r})

Just as Dryden divided his characters into two all-inclusive groups, the godly and those who are but parodies of godliness, the "Bookseller" divides the audience into two all-inclusive groups. Those whose "eyes are shut" are promised enlightenment for perusing the text. Those whose "eyes are open" receive pleasure, for, being in an enlightened state when they first approach the text, members of this group will appreciate fully the witty manner in which the text's moral lesson has been imparted. The text, however, it is suggested, offers sustenance to all, and it does so by offering Opposition rhetoric to support the Royalist position concerning the validity (or rather lack
thereof) of the Popish Plot.

In *The Plot in a Dream*, most (although certainly not all) interpretive difficulties are readily overcome by a critical reading of the text, for such a reading will reveal authorial prejudices not immediately apparent from a cursory examination of the text. Bent upon exposing Titus Oates [Phileroy in the text]; Anthony Ashley Cooper, the first Earl of Shaftesbury; the House of Commons; and radical Protestant sectarians, the author of *The Plot in a Dream* uses every available opportunity to undermine reader confidence in these individuals, groups, or institutions. Five times Phileroy [Titus Oates] is identified with or as the Devil.54 Furthermore, errors which the protagonist Philopatris makes recall errors Oates had made, errors which led Englishmen to question whether Oates’s testimony represented a factual account. For example, Oates, as discussed earlier, failed to identify George Wakeman, Queen Catherine’s physician, when Oates first encountered Wakeman before the Parliamentary investigative committee. Oates brushed this error off as due to fatigue and poor candlelight, but Oates’s protestations met with only partial success. Mocking Oates’s failure, Philopatris fails to recognize his "old Friend Phileroy" when he first encounters Phileroy on Strombolo (p. 9).

The author also expresses contempt for Anthony Ashley Cooper. The Earl of Shaftesbury receives but one direct
mention within the text, but that reference takes the form of the unflattering diminutive, "little Earl Anthony" (p. 263).

Determined to expose the part which members of the House of Commons played in the continuation of the Popish Plot, the author wittily avoids any direct mention of Commons. But the author manages to reflect adversely upon this House of Parliament. There is an old English proverb, found in variation in Chaucer's Squire's Tale, Shakespeare's The Tempest, and Webster's The Devil's Law Case, which states, "He should have a long spoon that sups with the Devil." In England, large serving spoons are referred to as "commons" because they are used in common by all diners.55 Wittily combining these two elements, the author, in a dialogue between Philopatris [the protagonist] and Phileroy [Titus Oates], succeeds in chastising the House of Commons. The author manages this feat in the following way. Intent upon showing Philopatris the entrance to hell, Phileroy leads him up to the volcano's mouth. On the way, the following exchange takes place, which, for clarity's sake, I present in dialogue form:

 Philopatris: No question but the entertainment must be extraordinary where the Devil is the Host and his Imps the Servitours; but if we come
to Table with him, I hope we shall have long Spoons to eat our broth with.

Phileroy: I know not...what length your Spoons are of; but I will ingage your Commons shall be short enough.

(p. 19)

With biting satire, the author expresses equal disdain for radical Protestants. When Phileroy first tells Philopatris that Roman Catholics are plotting to overthrow the government, Philopatris expresses skepticism:

...the Experience of now above twenty years, has confirmed us, that there hath no such Plots or attempts on their parts been attempted.

(pp. 11-12)

Although Charles II’s Restoration government had faced no Roman Catholic plots, numerous radical Protestant plots had been exposed, particularly in the early years of the Restoration. Aping Opposition rhetoric, Phileroy [Titus Oates] insists that no Protestants ever plotted against the King, that all such alleged plots were committed by Roman
Catholics dressed up as Protestants. Roger L’Estrange exposed the ludicrous nature of this oft-repeated radical Protestant defense when he declared,

No man is so senseless as to imagine that the King was depos’d, pursu’d, rob’d, taken, condemn’d and put to death by a hundred thousand Priests in Vizors.\(^5\)

Although anxious to expose members of the Opposition for their part in the Popish Plot, the author of The Plot in a Dream expresses no sympathy for Roman Catholics. Catholics come off as clowns, the pitiable, benighted victims of their own superstitions. Blame for Catholic indiscretions, however, is laid upon the higher members of the clergy, who are presented as deceivers of the laity and of the ordinary priests. This emphasis upon ranking clerical culpability is apparent when the five Jesuits swear to Rhadamanthus, the daemonic magistrate who resides over the purgatorian court, that they will lie in any court or upon the scaffold if necessary. Rhadamanthus chastises the priests for believing in the lies offered to them by their superiors:

...ho, ho, ho, you are pure **Spiritual Villains** a-faith, to think, because you can cheat the world
with your lyes and **Equivocations**, that you can cheat the *Almighty*, who is *Truth* it self; or dare to provoke his angry Vengeance with a dying Falshood; or did you think your **Cheating Viccars Dispensations** could reach to the other *World*? or that *Heaven* would renew them? *Poor Souls!* how miserably are you cheated!

(p. 201)

Although attention to these authorial prejudices enables the critic to begin the interpretive process, only a consideration of the ways in which the author deftly balances reader sympathies through the employment of certain distancing devices enables the critic to complete successfully the interpretive act. Three distancing devices common to many allegorical tales prove operative in *The Plot in a Dream*. They are: 1) the journey, 2) distortion of time and/or space, and 3) incorporation of commentary and interpretation into the narrative. Examining each of these devices in turn, I will reveal how the author uses each to modify critical response to his story.

Philopatris, the protagonist in *The Plot in a Dream*, journeys not once but many times, to many different places. His first journey, a journey he repeats later in the text, is to Strombolo, the volcanic island situated in the Mediterranean Sea upon which Phileroy [read: Titus Oates]
reveals is located the entrance way to hell. Philopatris also journeys to London, to Whitehall, to Oxford, and to some type of limbo in which he encounters and discourses with various individuals who lost their lives as a result of the Popish Plot. All of the journeys Philopatris takes, however, enjoy a common feature — they are psychological journeys only. None of the journeys occurs in actuality; each is a dream reported by Philopatris.

Although the protagonist of The Plot in a Dream seems to journey extensively, he only dreams that he travels; the events he witnesses, events which he offers as proof of the validity of Phileroy's [Titus Oates's] tales, are not events at all, but fantasies. The text's author goes to elaborate lengths to assure that the reader understands that Philopatris's dreams come to Philopatris when the protagonist is in a sleeping state. For example, Philopatris introduces the dream dealing with Sir George Wakeman's trial in the following manner:

...my friend Phileroy...began to rouse me up by plucking me by the Elbow, and saying, What, are you asleep? A wake=man, Here is no rare Show a coming; No, no, said I, Phileroy, I am not asleep; though I lyed in that, for I was asleep all this while; but however at this time, I fancied my self awake, only got into a brown Study, out of which
being thus roused by Phileroy, I opened mine Eyes again.

(p. 91)

Repeatedly, the author calls attention to the sleeping state of his narrator, and this emphasis suggests the importance of this information to a proper interpretation of the text. Witness another of the many times in which Philopatris confesses to being asleep:

...in a little time I fancied we [Philopatris and Phileroy] fell asleep; but what strange whimsies are there in dreams; for alas I was asleep all the while, yet my fancy in this Parenthetical slumber ran into new fancies, dreams within dreams, like the Petropolitan Plots, one within another. Well, as I fancied I slept, so I fancied I waked again in the morning.

(pp. 109-110)

Clearly, Philopatris's state of consciousness when receiving his inspirations is not coincidental to the story. Although no definitive link exists between The Plot in a Dream and Thomas More's A Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation, this strategy, of highlighting Philopatris's state of
consciousness when his revelations arrive, suggests that the author of *The Plot in a Dream* may have had More's text in mind as he wrote. In Book II, chapter 18 of More's work, Anthony and his nephew Vincent engage in an epistemological debate in which they attempt to discern the difference between divine revelation and daemonic inspiration. Anthony insists that the difference between the two is the same as the difference between information received in the waking state (divine revelation) and information received while asleep (daemonic inspiration).

Philopatris's inspirations arrive during his dreams, yet those inspirations are identical to Titus Oates's informations. Setting this up as a logic problem reveals the following:

If:  
A = Philopatris's inspirations, and  
B = Dreams, and  
C = Titus Oates's informations, the following becomes apparent:

A=B and A=C, therefore, C=B

Titus Oates's informations are dreams! (And if, as I have suggested, this text may, with validity, be read back against More's text, Titus Oates's informations are thus revealed as daemonic inspirations.)
A second distancing device common to allegorical texts which the author of The Plot in a Dream employs is the distortion of temporal and spatial concerns. In The Plot in a Dream such distortions are expressed in terms of the protagonist's ability to travel by means of his imagination. Philopatris's ability to ignore temporal and spatial constraints, furthermore, increases proportionately as the plot develops. Philopatris's first dream, a visit to Strombolo and then to London, takes up almost the first one-third of the two-hundred-and-eighty-five page octavo text. In the final two-thirds of the text, Philopatris's travels throughout London and other parts of England through the agency of his dreams increase in both frequency and forcefulness. By the end of the text, Philopatris's immunity to temporal and spatial constraints elevates the protagonist to superhuman or perhaps even daemonic status among mere mortals. Witness, for example, how Philopatris brags of the rapidity of his return to London after witnessing the dissolution of the Oxford Parliament:

The Senate being dissolved, and the Senators all in a bussle preparing for a departure, my nimble Genius outstrip the greatest hast they could make, and lodged me again in fansie at Londinopolis, before any of them could be one foot
Throughout the text, Philopatris remains subject to his ecstasies which, as the narrative progresses, become increasingly forceful. Philopatris eventually becomes the helpless pawn of his own imagination. For instance, Philopatris dreams of seeing the five Lords (that is, the five members of the House of Lords Titus Oates accused of conspiring to overthrow the government) taking part in a conference with Ignatian Provincial General Paul Oliva [referred to as Paulus d'Oliva]. The sight of the priest, Philopatris reveals, so fills him with rage that he wishes to attack the Ignatian physically. Philopatris's desires, however, are thwarted by his fancy, which rushes him to the safety and comfort of his own home. Philopatris's dreams increase both in frequency and forcefulness as the text progresses. Philopatris's helplessness, his inability to control his ecstasies, creates a situation in which he (and the reader) becomes trapped within the imaginative process. The reader, along with Philopatris, senses Philopatris's helplessness, his inability to escape the imaginative process. Although Philopatris presents his dream as beyond his control, in the short poem closing the text Philopatris vows, if necessary, to continue his dreaming:
My Dream is out, I wish the Plot were so,
And that my Dreaming might no further go:
But if provok'd by these designing men,
'Tis ten to one but I shall dream again.

(p. 285)

Only through this closing threat does the author reassert authorial control over the text.

A third distancing device common to allegorical texts which proves of significance in interpreting The Plot in a Dream is the incorporation of commentary and interpretation into the narrative. This distancing strategy enables the author of The Plot in a Dream to accomplish two things. First, through commentary and interpretation the author grounds his audience; he forces them to view reality as the author wishes them to view it. Secondly, textual commentary and interpretation distance the reader from the emotional issues with which the text deals. For three years preceding the composition of The Plot in a Dream, the English government had been held hostage while Titus Oates and his fiction ruled London. Through Philopatris's dreams, the author of The Plot in a Dream succeeds in re-creating the nightmare-like quality of this national ordeal. Caught in a nightmare, England's only hope was to awaken. By presenting Titus Oates's tale as a dream, the author seeks to awaken his or her countrymen. Thus, the text's allegory
has been made subservient to the text's didactic message and its apocalyptic warning.

Like Dryden, the author of *The Plot in a Dream* questions the reliability of both narrator and narrative in the text of the Popish Plot. Unlike Dryden, however, our anonymous author attempts, on the surface at any rate, to express wholehearted support for plot narrators. Although he does attack Oates, Shaftesbury, and the House of Commons, the weapons he has chosen for his attack, irony and satire, enable him to give the outward appearance of supporting the Whig interpretation of the events of the Popish Plot. The author's attack on the narrative, however, is unrelenting. By exposing the source of the narrative as dreams, the author dismisses both narrative and narrator alike. By revealing the narrator as hopelessly enmeshed in the subjectivity of his own experience, the author simultaneously casts doubt upon the validity of the narrative provided.

v. Conclusions

Because the extended text of the Popish Plot exhibited numerous instances of narrator/narrative disjunction, this text encouraged critical responses, critical responses which took the form of Tory polemics aimed at exposing the presence of this disjunction. Texts which present their
audiences with a narrator/narrative disjunction, in fact, encourage readers to confront the text actively in an attempt to provide an adequate rationale for the existence of the disjunction. It is through this process that readers become critics and critics become writers -- writers who in the process of responding to one text become co-authors of the text as they generate additional text -- as they extend the text. The sixteenth-eighteenth century texts I will examine in the next two chapters also exhibit a narrator/narrative disjunction. I will argue that they are also texts which actually help develop critical reading skills because they force readers into an active, even aggressive, confrontation with and participation in each respective text, a confrontation which simultaneously extends the original texts while at the same time it further problemizes these texts by exposing and deepening the narrator/narrative disjunction present in each text.
NOTES


3. Bishop Gilbert Burnet reports that it was not safe "for any man to seem to doubt...any part" of Oates's evidence. Burnet, in fact, reports being threatened by Shaftesbury for questioning the reliability of Plot witnesses who testified against William Staley. See *Bishop Burnet's History of His Own Time: From the Restoration of King Charles to the Settlement of King William and Queen Mary at the Revolution*. London: for Thomas Ward, 1724. Vol. I, p. 430.

6. Duly impressed with Dryden’s accomplishment, Robert McHenry refers to *Absalom and Achitophel* as "a miracle" and praises Dryden for his ability to make "so much compelling sense...from the lies, ambiguities, and uncertainties that constituted the realities of the time." See *Contexts 3: Absalom and Achitophel*. Edited by Robert W. McHenry, Jr. Camden: Archon, 1986. pp. 2-3.

7. W. K. Thomas, for instance, notes several critics, including W. D. S. Sutherland, Jr., Bernard Schilling, and H. T. Swedenberg, Jr., who assert that *Absalom and Achitophel* may stand on its own as a poem without making reference to its topicality. See W. K. Thomas. *The Crafting of Absalom and Achitophel: Dryden’s "Pen for a Party."


10. Laura Brown goes so far as criticize Dryden's poem because "the biblical story comes closer than Dryden's distortion to representing the actual shape of Restoration history: Monmouth was eventually executed, and the monarchical crisis ultimately led to the revolution of 1688. In effect, the assumption of security and order in Dryden's narrative contradicts both the biblical analogue and the contemporary course of events. In struggling to impose a conservative assertion of stability on the inevitably recalcitrant forces of history, the poem must falsify both the past and the present, the two terms that it endeavors to equate." See "The Ideology of Restoration Poetic Form: John Dryden," in Modern Critical Views: John Dryden. Edited by Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House, 1987. p. 114. Monmouth's execution, which Brown faults Dryden for not foreseeing, was still over four years in the future when Absalom and Achitophel was first published. Yet Dryden's choice of the biblical character of Absalom for Monmouth, coupled with Dryden's remarks to the reader ["Were I the inventor, who am only the historian, I should certainly conclude the piece with the reconcilement of Absalom to David. And who knows but this may come to pass? Things were not brought to an extremity where I left the story; there seems yet to be room left for a composure; hereafter there may only be for pity." (John Dryden. "Absalom and Achitophel," in The Oxford Authors: John Dryden. Edited by
Keith Walker. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987. p 178.) suggest that Dryden foresaw clearly the outcome should Monmouth continue the pursue his ambitions to rule England. Dryden thus sought not to falsify either the past or the present, but to warn Monmouth and the English audience of the future which awaited if Monmouth could not be dissuaded from pursuing the path he was treading. The "security and order" Brown argues contradicts "both the biblical analogue and the contemporary course of events" is no contradiction, but a choice Dryden believed remained available to his readers if they refused to support political opportunists and instead support the anointed monarch.


12. Ibid.


18. Bishop Gilbert Burnet records that King Charles considered the attack on his brother James to be a masked attack upon monarchy:

   The King came to think that he himself was levelled at chiefly, tho' for decency's sake his brother was only named.
Another Tory publication, entitled The Deliquium, repeats the charge that the crisis represented another Protestant attempt to overthrow the government:

Things went on well, and now they thought 'twas time
The Ladder of Rebellion they should climbe:
The Senate sate, High for the Good Old Cause,
Magna Charta, and Fundamental Laws,
No Arbitrary Power, but We must give
Necessary Limits to Prerogative,
Though the King mayn't, yet We may break the Laws,
Punish at Pleasure, though without a Cause.


21. Ibid. p. 455.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.


25. Ibid. p. 139.


28. On the entry for February 25-26, 1665/66, Pepys notes that Charles's pursuit of Lady Castlemaine has caused the monarch to neglect state business, causing Pepys to "fear
that all will go to wracke." See The Diary of Samuel Pepys. Edited by Henry B. Wheatley. London: George Bell & Sons, 1899. Vol. V, p. 234. In another entry, approximately eighteen months later, Pepys reports a remark made by Tom Killigrew, in which Killigrew insisted that Charles had been "utterly mastered" by Lady Castlemaine (See Vol. VII, p. 52). One month later, in an entry dated August 5-8, 1667, Pepys reports on a discussion between Pepys and John Evelyn which took place at a booksellers. Evelyn, Pepys explains, "tells me that wise men do prepare to remove abroad what they have, for that we must be ruined, our case being past relief, the kingdom so much in debt, and the King minding nothing but his lust, going two days a-week to see my Lady Castlemayne at Sir D. Harvy's" (See Vol. VII, p. 59).

29. The Earl of Rochester's poem states the following:

And Love, he loves, for he loves fucking much.
Nor are his high Desires above his Strength,
His Sceptter and his Prick are of a Length,
And she may sway the one, who plays with th' other...

(11. 9-12)


32. Deliquium. p. 2

33. The author of Deliquium begins the section describing Shaftesbury in this manner:

I found one fit at last to steer these right,
A Favourite of theirs, a much fam'd Wight,
Capricio call'd, and thereby hangs a Tale,
Meager his Visage is, his Face as pale
As his Deeds black: Dame Nature sure design'd
That by his out-side men might know his mind:
Hell's in his Body.....

See The Deliquium. p. 2.


50. By 1681, the dream vision had already enjoyed a long and prestigious history in English literature. An immensely popular form in the medieval period, by the seventeenth century the dream vision became the form of choice for describing the "inner vision." Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, for example, is a representative of this Protestant experience. Roman Catholics and members of the Church of England, however, employed the dream vision as a means of exposing and mocking personal inspirations of the inner vision. The Plot in a Dream represented but one of many dream visions aimed at exposing the Popish Plot. Some others included Poor Robins Dream, a dream vision narrative which sought to discredit the Popish Plot by comparing the turmoil it created with the turmoil which preceded the first English civil war. Poor Robins Dream opens in this way:
In a trembling Trance I on a sudden fell,
Wherein I saw that damned Den call'd Hell.
Where ten thousand Scenes, with Legions of black
Fiends,
Of burning Rebels, they made their Skreens.
Old Noll and Bradshaw, Ireton, and Pride.

The author, ostensibly recording a dialogue between the
ghosts of Israel Tonge and William Bedloe, goes on to
compare the rebels of '41 with the rebels of '81. See Poor
Robins Dream, or the vision of hell with a dialogue Between
the Two ghost of Dr. T. and Capt. B. London: MDCLXXI.

Another dream vision, from which I have already quoted,
was The Deliquium. In this dream vision, the author falls
asleep and dreams he awakens in hell. Hell, in this vision,
however, is no longer a monarchical government, but has
become instead a democratic state, thanks to a cabal of
plotters who use the King’s bastard as their puppet to rob
the monarch of his powers and to establish a republican
government. See The Deliquium: or, The Grievances of the
Nation discovered in a dream. n.p., n.d. [1681?].

51. Michael Murrin. The Veil of Allegory: Some Notes
Toward A Theory of Allegorical Rhetoric in the English
passim.

52. Unlike Dryden, who assigns character names based upon the biblical personages whose personal qualities or actions he wishes to recall, the author of The Plot in a Dream uses several techniques to develop character names directly from the names of the historical personages those characters represent. For example, some names of people and places are Latinized (Ezreal Tonge becomes Dr. Tongus; Thomas Knox, Knoxius) or translated directly into French (Fr. Whitebread becomes Fr. Blanc-pain; the White Horse Tavern, the Blanc Cheval). In other instances, syllables or letters switch places to alter slightly the person's name to whom the author refers (Lord Stafford is referred to as Lord Fordstaff; Pickering, Ringepick; Gaven, Vanga; Harcourt, Courthar; Captain William Bedloe, Cpt. Lobed; and Stephen Dugdale, Dagdule). London becomes Londinopolis; England, Albonia; and Ireland, Bogland. Roman Catholics are Petropolitans. Other individuals are identified either fully or in part by a description of the job he or she performs (Lord Treasurer Danby is referred to as the Grand Cashier; Judge Edmundbury Godfrey is Edmond, a worthy Magistrate). Little or no attempt is made to alter the name of other characters (Fr. Strange is referred to as Fr. Strange. Philopatris, however, mocking Titus Oates's mistake, proves unable to decide upon Fr. Strange's correct
Christian name).

53. Bold face type, when it appears in quotations from The Plot in a Dream, indicates black letter type. Underlined text denotes italics.

54. Plot. pp. 3, 5-6, 7, 10, and 95-96.


56. Roger L'Estrange An Answer to the Appeal From the Country, to the City For the Preservation of His Majesties Person, Liberty, Property, and the Protestant Religion. n.p., n.d., p. 18.

57. Critics of allegory theory have taken great pains to identify, categorize, and account for distancing devices and their functions in allegorical texts. Distancing devices represent stock features of allegorical texts and include, among others, the three distancing devices employed by the author of The Plot in a Dream; that is, 1) the journey; 2) a distortion of temporal and/or spatial concerns; and 3) an incorporation of commentary and interpretation into the

58. Strombolo, known in medieval times as "the lighthouse of the Mediterranean, is presided over by Lucifer, whose name translates as the "light bearer," the fallen rebel of Milton's *Paradise Lost.*

59. The limbo to which Philopatris journeys, however, is not the limbo described by the Roman Church. There are neither children nor pagans wandering about. This limbo resembles more the Druid limbo, an earthly plane such as that in which Shakespeare’s elder Hamlet awaits, hoping that his son’s revenge of his death will release him, freeing him to journey to his final resting place. The use of such a limbo is an interesting authorial strategy, for it suggests that the victims of the Popish Plot, like Shakespeare’s Hamlet, are trapped in limbo until their deaths have been revenged.

61. The passage involved is worth quoting at length:

I now...imagined to what they tended, which filled
me with such a rage against the Devil in a Cowle,
the Ignatian, that I had certainly fell upon him
and beat him; but, that the impetus of my fancy at
this very time hurrying me away from their
compaany [sic.], broke off my revenge, and placed
me again in my own house, where I became more
troubled and disconcerted than I was before....

This passage serves two purposes: First, it cautions the
reader concerning the power which the imagination can hold
over the individual. Secondly, it offers a mocking excuse
to explain why the "Four Ruffians" Oates insisted had been
sent to assassinate Charles II never initiated an
assassination attempt.

62. Bishop Gilbert Burnet records that "All Oates's
evidence was now so well believed, that it was not safe for
any man to seem to doubt of any part of it." See Burnet's
History. Vol. I, p. 430. And Dryden referred to the peace
of Charles's Restoration government as "war in masquerade."
See Absalom and Achitophel. l. 752.
There is nothing in life better than a wise and good monarch," Renaissance humanist Desiderius Erasmus insisted. "There is no greater scourge," he continued, "than a foolish or wicked one. The corruption of an evil prince spreads more swiftly and widely than the scourge of any pestilence."¹ In many ways, Sidney’s *Old Arcadia* expatiates on this Erasmian argument, translating it into a narrative exemplification of a leader’s conscious and unconscious molding and manipulating of his countrymen. The Arcadian subjects, however, are not the only ones being manipulated in Sidney’s pastoral setting. Through thematic explorations that examine the nature of fiction while exposing the difficulties inherent in the interpretive process, Sir Philip Sidney tests what I shall call the "strong narrative voice." Exploiting the peccability of both the reader and the narrator, probing the links between political and fictile domination, Sidney, through his narrator, manipulates his readers, forcing them into an interpretive stance. He makes critics in the process of making subversive readers of the text of government; deploying narratorial authority, he authorizes, nay, creates among his readers hermeneutical rebellion.

Like Titus Oates’s narrative of the Popish Plot,
Sidney’s *Old Arcadia* is marked by a narrator/narrative disjunction; that is, the narrative tells one story while the narrator relates a slightly different tale. And in each case, readers are forced into an interpretive stance in which they, like Dryden and the anonymous author of *The Plot in a Dream*, must discover some rationale which will account for the presence of the narrator/narrative disjunction. Dryden solved the paradox of the narrator/narrative disjunction by identifying the narrators as unreliable while simultaneously questioning the reliability of most of the narrative. The anonymous author of *The Plot in a Dream*, on the other hand, condemned the narrative as unreliable while excusing the narrators on the grounds that they were hopelessly enmeshed in the subjectivity of their own experiences.

The narrator/narrative disjunction present in the *Old Arcadia* differs somewhat from that found in the texts examined so far, for in this instance the conflict between the narrator and the narrative proves more implicit than explicit. The narrator/narrative disjunction relates to the narrator’s apparent shift (late in the text) from a Christian viewpoint to that of a pagan. The tale Sidney’s narrator relates is, unquestionably, a pagan tale involving the operations of fate. Fate may be defined as a blind, senseless, unreasoning, yet often malignant force. Fate thus contrasts sharply with Divine Providence, the force
some critics attempt to identify as the motive force in Sidney's tale.

The narrator/narrative disjunction first appears within Sidney's text at the point of Basilius's retirement. The narrator asserts that Basilius's retirement aims at avoiding the fulfillment of the fate foretold by the Delphic oracle. As McCanles correctly notes, Basilius's attempts to avoid the occurrences predicted betray the Duke's lack of belief in the inevitability of the prophesied events. Thus, even the pagan monarch in Sidney's tale seems unconvinced of the reality of fate as a motive force in human lives. Readers too, Christian readers at any rate, remain unconvinced of the inevitability of these (or any other) events and are thus discomfited by witnessing the fulfillment of these events. Nevertheless, by the end of the text the reader experiences the fulfillment of each of the prophesied events. Were the events then inevitable? And if so, how must the inevitability of the events color the reader's judgment concerning the reliability of the narrator? Does Sidney's narrator share Sidney's values and the values of the majority of Sidney's readers (that is, is Sidney's narrator a Christian)? Or has the narrator's apparent assumption of a Christian viewpoint served only to disengage criticism until readers have completed perusal of the text? These are some of the questions I view this text as posing for reader consideration.
Basilius's decision to retire initiates a series of events which culminate in the fulfillment of all the events prophesied by the Delphic oracle, causing some critics to identify Sidney's Basilius with Sophocles' Oedipus. No critic, however, has succeeded in explaining fully the import of the oracular fulfillment in Sidney's Old Arcadia. The oracular fulfillment completes the process begun by Basilius's retirement; that is, the eventual fulfillment of the oracular prediction signals the reader that an implicit disjunction exists between the claims made by the narrator and those made by the narrative. The narrator insists Basilius retires to avoid the fulfillment of the oracular prediction. The narrative relates that the predictions are fully fulfilled. The reader's interpretation, then, must account for both possibilities; that is, the reader must discover some means of accounting for the narrator's claim that Basilius seeks to escape the fulfillment of the prophecy while also allowing for the fulfillment of the prophecy in this instance. Christian readers are further hampered by their disbelief in fate as a motive force in human lives. If it is not fate which proves responsible for the fulfillment of this prophecy, how may the prophecy's fulfillment be explained?

As I revealed earlier, in order to reconcile the claims of the narrator with those of the narrative, readers must discover some scenario which will call into question the
reliability of the narrator, of the narrative, or of both the narrator and the narrative. Or readers may find both the narrator and the narrative reliable if they are able to discover (or invent) reasons sufficient to account for the presence of the narrator/narrative disjunction within the text.

Sidney's tale, I will argue, leads the reader through scenario number four, the scenario in which the reader finds both the narrator and the narrative to be essentially reliable. Sidney's narrator proves reliable because he offers no judgment concerning the ultimate success or failure of Basilius's attempt to avoid the oracular prediction. Furthermore, the narrator's repeated condemnation of foolish Basilius should caution careful readers against placing trust in any decision Basilius makes. Sidney's narrative, on the other hand, proves reliable because although readers must acknowledge that the pagan prophecy was, in this instance, fulfilled, many readers, including this critic, remain unconvinced of the inevitability of the prophesied events.

Although failing in their attempts to comprehend fully the import of Basilius's retirement, many critics have nonetheless recognized that Basilius's self-exile remains central to an interpretation of Sidney's tale. Elizabeth Dipple, for instance, has the following to say:
Madeleine Doran's statement that the primary impetus of the Arcadia is Basilius' retreat is certainly correct, at least in the Old Arcadia, for in retreating he chose a metamorphosis based on fear and impiety, and drove first the virtuous women of his family and then the visiting princes into analogous degradation.  

Sidney's narrator, whose excessive sympathies toward the two young princes has unnerved more than one Sidney critic, zealously condemns the Arcadian monarch's actions. Philanax warns Basilius that placing excessive restraints upon the Arcadian princesses will serve only to drive the young women to rebel against their father (p. 7). Later, as Pamela determines to accompany Dorus on his flight from Arcadia, the narrator clearly blames Basilius for her acquiescence. Pamela, the reader is told, has been both disturbed by her father's recent behavior and discomfited by the lifestyle he has insisted that the royal family adopt (p. 152). Andrew Weiner agrees; "The narrator," he insists, "leaves no doubt that it is primarily [Pamela's] resentment at her father's doubt of her ability to keep herself chaste which leads her to flee Arcadia with the prince in the first place." Basilius's decision, then, provides the primary impetus for plot development.  

The narrator's condemnation of Basilius does not end
with blaming the Arcadian monarch for his daughters' disobedience. Determined to prevent the oracle's predictions from being realized, Basilius refuses to allow anyone to court either of the two princesses. The deceptions the two young princes are forced to practice thus prove immediately attributable to Basilius's decision to limit the correspondence of his two daughters. The two young princes might be ideal suitors to the two Arcadian princesses, but Basilius's decision prevents the princes from pursuing Basilius's daughters through socially acceptable channels.

Critics have long noted Basilius's actions and the effects of those actions upon narrative development, yet they have repeatedly failed to emphasize the import of those actions. The great crime which Basilius commits, the crime which Basilius's actions force the two young princes and the members of the Arcadian royal family to commit as well, is the crime of infidelity to self. Infidelity to self may be defined as the commission of acts by the self which are clearly not in the best interest of the self. Philanax's timely warning to Basilius, "whether your time call you to live or die, do both like a prince" (p. 7), aims at preventing Basilius from abandoning himself. As the discussion between Philanax and Basilius continues, Philanax tries once again to demonstrate the mistake which Basilius's intended actions represent:
"...the reeds stand with yielding," said the duke.

"And so are they but reeds, most worthy prince," said Philanax, "but the rocks stand still and are rocks."

(p. 8)

All of Philanax's attempts to enlighten Basilius fail, however, and Basilius's infidelity to self proves recognizable in the form of the self-deception which governs the Arcadian monarch's decision making. "The duke," the reader is told, "having used this much dukely sophistry to deceive himself, told [Philanax] resolutely he stood upon his own determination" (p. 8). Sidney seems to have been aware of the deleterious effects of self-delusion upon the courtier. And Renaissance courtiers, apparently, were not infrequently the victims of self-delusion, for Castiglione warned the courtier "to be rather fearfull then bould, and beware that he perswade not him self falsely to know the thing he knoweth not inde" 7

Margaret Dana has, at least partially, recognized the extent of Basilius's infidelity to self, for she has referred to Basilius's relinquishment of monarchical duties to his courtier Philanax as "an action shockingly at odds with Elizabethan notions of kingship," and has revealed that it is Basilius's actions that doom his country to anarchy "because [Basilius] is violating the hierarchy of political
order upon which its well-being depends." A survey of sixteenth-century writers enlightens twentieth-century readers on this point. John Calvin, for instance, viewed monarchical authority as proceeding from "divine providence and holy ordinance," and called civil authority "a calling...holy and lawful before God." In choosing to retire, then, even if only for a period of one year, Basilius, from a Christian viewpoint, places himself in opposition to God's divine will. Thomas Elyot and Erasmus, on the other hand, insisted that the monarch's duty was to rule for the common weal, "free from all private interests." Basilius's refusal to return to his duties as monarch following the Phagonian revolt reveal the duke's utter disregard for the common weal of his subjects. Renaissance readers, clearly, would have been both shocked and disturbed by the tale of a monarch who willingly relinquished his duties -- even if it was for a period of one year only. While Basilius's actions reveal he is guilty of infidelity to self, the importance of Basilius's infidelity to self can only be appreciated in the context of the larger thematic structures operating in Sidney's Arcadian landscape.

i. Identifying Contexts

Elizabeth Dipple has correctly argued that "Arcadia is
a place where heroic deeds possible in other lands are thwarted or radically changed in quality, intention, or effect; one of the metaphors which contains this basic Arcadian idea is that of radical physical change from one being to another, from prince to Amazon or shepherd, from princess to nymph, from sufficient king to dotard." In Sidney's tale, virtually every character undergoes some form of transformation.

The most radical transformation to occur in Arcadia, the metamorphosis by which all other character metamorphoses should be judged, is that which overtakes the Macedonian prince Pyrocles. In the *Old Arcadia*, Pyrocles' decision to don the garb of an Amazonian warrior is, as Elizabeth Dipple argues, "performed with idealistic ignorance." But Dipple's assessment of the *Old Arcadia* as a "study in the potentialities and final failure of metamorphosis as a human response" betrays Dipple's own failure to grasp the extent of the transformation which overtakes the Macedonian prince.

Pyrocles' transformation must be understood within the context of the mask which his costume represents. When Basilius's desire to impress Cleophila leads him to suggest that the royal party return to Basilius's castle in Mantinea, Cleophila remains "determined...to keep him" in the Arcadian desert, because, the narrator informs us, "to come to any public place she did deadly fear, lest her mask by many eyes might the sooner be discovered" (p. 156).
Musidorus, on the other hand, refers to his cousin's costume as a "transforming apparel" (p. 24), and believes his cousin possessed by "some strange spirit" (p. 17). Implicit in the function of almost all ritual masks is a concomitant belief in the transformative effect of the mask. When one assumes a mask, one forfeits one's own identity and becomes instead the identity depicted by and through the mask assumed. The transformative effects of the mask remain absolute, so absolute, in fact, that in certain African cultures a person in mask is considered possessed by spirits and is, consequently, exempt from having to observe human laws. When one assumes a mask, a mask of any kind, one exposes oneself to the transformative effects of the mask. To take on the mask is to risk becoming absorbed totally in the role one has assumed. In assuming the mask, the boundaries which separate Pyrocles from the role he has assumed, boundaries which Pyrocles believes inviolate, begin fading, as Pyrocles becomes more and more deeply absorbed into the role he has "with idealistic ignorance" assumed. Caillois refers to this phenomenon as "alienation," defining it as a "corruption of mimicry," which occurs when the player "no longer plays another. Persuaded that he is the other, he behaves as if he were, forgetting his own self." 

What Pyrocles experiences, what Sidney explores in the Old Arcadia, is a form of what Stephen Greenblatt has defined as "self-fashioning." But it is the darker side
of self-fashioning, a self-fashioning in its most radical expression, a self-fashioning in which one surrenders oneself fully to the role one has chosen to assume. While Pyrocles chooses the role he wishes to play, he, unlike the historical examples Greenblatt offers to the reader, does so in blissful ignorance of the consequences of the action he has chosen to perform. Despite Musidorus's warnings, Pyrocles experiences no uneasiness in assuming the garb of an Amazonian warrior, because he believes his own identity inviolate. "Neither you doubt," Pyrocles tells Musidorus, "because I wear a woman's apparel, I will be the more womanish; since, I assure you, for all my apparel, there is nothing I desire more than fully to prove myself a man in this enterprise" (p. 21).

Despite Pyrocles' initial protestations, the reader quickly encounters evidence of the extent of the transformation which is rapidly overtaking Pyrocles. As Elizabeth Dipple insists, "Ultimately the most persuasive indicator of the quality of [Pyrocles' and Musidorus's] transmutations is neither their debate, Pyrocles' prose rhapsodies, nor Musidorus' statesmanlike arguments, but the song that each sings to celebrate and analyze the crisis of change."18 Cleophila's song, accompanied "with many sobs and tears," reveals the prince to be "Transformed in show, but more transformed in mind" (p. 26). When Basilius invites Cleophila to remain in Arcadia, the narrator informs
us that "She, although nothing could come fitter to the very point of her desire, yet had she already learned that womanish quality to counterfeit backwardness in that she most wished" (p. 33). Pyrocles has abandoned himself "wholly" (p. 17) to Philoclea. And in so doing, Pyrocles, as Josephine Roberts insists, abandons his own identity. The nadir of Pyrocles's transformation occurs when he rapes Philoclea and solicits her assistance in preventing the Arcadian officials from discovering his true identity. Although many readers might view his defense of Philoclea's honor as beginning the reassertion of his true identity, that defense remains tainted by its participation in promulgating a deliberate deception. By accepting the judgment against himself yet pleading for the court to grant mercy to his cousin, Pyrocles begins discarding the fictional role he has assumed and re-establishing contact with his own noble identity.

Each of Sidney's characters who undergoes a metamorphosis proves guilty, to some extent, of abandoning himself or herself, of alienating his or her true identity in the same way I have attributed to Pyrocles. And in abandoning the self, in surrendering themselves to delusions, Sidney's characters become the hapless victims of pernicious fictions which threaten the individual character's happiness, sanity, or his very existence. In surrendering himself or herself to delusion, each of these
characters chooses the comfort offered by a fiction (the delusion) over the discomfort which experience promises. For example, in his attempt to fulfill the desires of the self, Pyrocles abandons himself, thus losing contact with what his "self" desires. So persistent is Pyrocles' abandonment of self that the Macedonian prince demonstrates his willingness to abandon his cousin, his father, his country to pursue the object of his desires: a woman he is convinced he loves although he has never met her. In Basilius's case, the duke's attempts to avoid fulfilling the prophecies of the oracle lead Basilius to abandon his duties as monarch, the role by which Basilius identifies himself. The monarch's infidelity to self, in turn, provides an open invitation to anarchy. As Margaret Dana has stated, "In an existential sense Basilius not only abdicates his responsibility as king, but his personal identity as well; he declines to be who he really is—a negation already inherent in his decision to evade the will of the gods and escape his own fate." 20 Through character transformations, then, Sidney explores the seductive power which fictions, in this instance identified as self-delusions, can exert upon human lives.

Sidney's persistent attempts to erase the boundaries between life and art provide another means for Sidney to examine the role fictions play in human lives. According to L. A. Montrose, endeavors to "obliterate the distinction
between life and art," were typical of the Renaissance courtly style. And A. C. Hamilton views Sidney's life as a "role," claiming "that from [Sidney's] birth he began to live the legend confirmed by this death.... Or to adapt his own words in the Defense, his essential life is not recorded in what is, but rather in 'what may be and should be'. He lived on the level of art; or, as he might say, he lived by rules of decorum which required him to fulfill the promise of his birth and place in society." Sidney's art, too, reflects this process. Robert Stillman has argued, for example, that the fore-conceit upon which Sidney's Arcadia is grounded is based upon Sidney's conflation of the "laws of Nature" with "a life lived in nature."

Titus Oates's narrative sought to obliterate the distinctions between life and art, for only by doing so could Oates's art succeed as "life," that is, as reality. Had Philip Sidney's Old Arcadia been available to the reading public in 1679, Titus Oates might have found Sidney's tale inspiring, for in his fictional narrative Sidney explores numerous ways of obliterating the distinctions between life and art. This process begins very early as Pyrocles falls in love, not with Philoclea, but rather with a portrait of the young princess:

...it was Pyrocles' either evil or good fortune walking with his host in a fair gallery that he
perceived a picture, newly made by an excellent artificer, which contained the duke and duchess with their younger daughter Philoclea with...both the parents’ eyes cast with a loving care upon their beautiful child, she drawn as well as it was possible art should counterfeit so perfect a workmanship of nature.

(pp. 10-11)

Pyrocles ignores his father’s summons to return to Macedon, abandons his duties towards the Lydian Queen Erona, callously disobeys the monarchical edict forbidding his presence in the Arcadian desert, and utterly humiliates himself by assuming both the dress of an Amazonian warrior and the name of his lover, all because he has fallen in love with an artistic reproduction, an artistic reproduction, one might well add, which, for all Pyrocles knows, may not be a faithful reproduction. Sidney’s inspiration at this point seems to have been Cornelius Agrippa who referred to "Paintinge" as "nothinge els, but a silente Poesie, and Poesie a speakinge Picture: so neare be thei alied togeather."24 The reader may remember, however, that Agrippa also defined painting as "a monstrous Arte."25

Sydney’s case for obliterating the distinctions between life and art takes on new proportions when Pyrocles is discovered in Pamela’s bedroom with Philoclea. Pyrocles
considers suicide, reasoning that "it is fitter one die than both" (p. 256). His attempt fails, however, when the iron bar he tries to drive through his body proves too dull to penetrate his chest. Foiled by impotence in his suicide attempt and inspired by a wicked pun, Pyrocles hits upon impotence as a defense. Questioned about his rendezvous with Philoclea, Pyrocles insists, "The excellency of her mind makes her body impregnable" (p. 261). Pyrocles, of course, is playing semantic games. At issue is not whether Philoclea's body has proven "impregnable," but whether it has proven impenetrable, for under Arcadian law those convicted of engaging in pre-marital coitus are condemned to death (p. 251).

ii. Processing Interpretation:

Cognitions of Narrative Power

Sidney had reason to be obsessed with the problematics of the interpretive process, for as most critics now contend, Elizabeth erred in choosing Espilus over Therion as winner of the dispute which ended Sidney's The Lady of May. It is understandable, therefore, that what was probably Sidney's next composition would concern itself with the many problems associated with the interpretive process. Sidney explores interpretive difficulties in two different ways: first, through character reactions to the two visiting
princes. As Robert Stillman discloses, "As youths who have been raised in the vale of Tempe, one of whom is called 'the gift of the muses', and the other of whom is dressed in the 'likeness' of Clio, Dorus and Cleophila do not always have the kind of poetic success that one might anticipate. Eliciting an emotional response from his listeners is easy, as Cleophila discovers, but assuring that he will procure the right response from the right person proves virtually impossible."27

A second way in which Sidney explores interpretive difficulties is through Musidorus/Dorus's experiences with Dametas and the shepherd/courtier's family. Reactions to Pyrocles (in his disguise as Cleophila) vary widely. Basilius, for example, accepts Cleophila for what (s)he claims to be. Sidney here follows Castiglione, who warned that the tendency to accept others according to their own claims to identity could create difficulties for Renaissance courtiers:

...we have seen menne come to thys house, which for all they were fooles and dulwitted, yet had they a report through all Italye of great Courtyers, and though at length they were discovered and knowen, yet manie dais did thei beguyle us, and mainteyned in our myndes that opinion of themselves, whiche at the fyrste they
found there imprinted, although they wrought accordyng to their small skil.28

Castiglione assigns one cause in particular to this problem:

And of these errors there are divers causes among other the obstinatenes of princes, whiche to prove mastries oftentimes bend themselves to favor him, that to their seeming, deserveth no favor at all, and manye tymes in deede they are deceyved.29

Michael McCanles reveals that Basilius is "as much a reader and interpreter as is Sidney’s intended audience."30 McCanles asserts that the focus of Sidney’s main plot is "on Basilius’ failure as an interpreter of texts," and concludes that it is "quite appropriate that Sidney should include in both Old and New Arcadia an episode in which Basilius erroneously believes that the oracular prediction has already been fulfilled."31 Once Cleophila puts down the rebellion of the Phagonian insurgents, Basilius suddenly believes he has witnessed the fulfillment of the Delphic oracle’s prophecy. Convinced that he has nothing left to fear, Basilius relaxes his guard even further.

Two Arcadians, Gynecia and, surprisingly enough, Dametas, penetrate Cleophila’s disguise immediately, thus offering a different perspective on the interpretive
process. Through these two characters Sidney explores how satisfactory interpretations can nonetheless prompt unsatisfactory responses. Having penetrated the Macedonian prince’s disguise, Gynecia, armed with this private knowledge, ignores the possible social consequences of having a disguised foreign presence at court and concerns herself instead with how she may employ this knowledge for her own benefit. Although there is evidence that Dametas penetrates Cleophila’s disguise as well, Dametas finds it impolitic to question his monarch’s critique of the Amazonian warrior, and he, therefore, suppresses his curiosity, a curiosity which could expose the threat Cleophila represents. Thus, Dametas falls into the same trap Gynecia does, concerning himself with the personal inconvenience which Cleophila’s exposure may cause rather than considering the broader social ramifications of his failure to act.

Philoclea, like her father, remains convinced that Cleophila is what (s)he pretends to be, an interpretation which leads to confusion as the princess discovers herself subject to the "strange unwonted motions" (p. 85) which Cleophila elicits from her. Philoclea proves incapable of comprehending the desire she feels when in Cleophila’s presence:

Sometimes she would compare the love she bare to
Cleophila with the natural goodwill she bare to her sister; but she perceived it had another kind of working. Sometimes she would wish Cleophila had been a man, and her brother; and yet, in truth, it was no brotherly love she desired of her.

(p. 86)

When Gynecia threatens to expose his identity to Basilius and Pyrocles/Cleophila must renew his attentions towards Gynecia to prevent the Arcadian duchess from carrying out her threat, Philoclea's confusion only deepens. The princess's confusion and interpretive problems do not end once she is made privy to Cleophila's true identity, for she believes herself responsible for Cleophila's disguise. "If my castle had not seemed weak," she explains to Pyrocles, "you would never have brought these disguised forces. No, no; I have betrayed myself. It was well seen I was glad to yield before I was assaulted" (p. 106). Pyrocles, of course, fell in love with Philoclea's portrait originally. His disguise was necessitated by Basilius's orders protecting the two princesses. So while Pyrocles may have assumed his disguise for Philoclea, he did not assume it because of Philoclea. The distinction proves meaningful, even if Philoclea remains unable to grasp it.

One of the more interesting Arcadian characters, from
the standpoint of interpretive difficulties at least, is Basilius's regent, Philanax. Philanax enjoys a unique perspective on the events which have transpired in the Arcadian desert, for Philanax, unlike any other of Sidney's characters, has been made privy to the Delphic oracle's message. As Margaret Dana points out, Philanax's behavior "turns to desire for revenge when he discovers [Basilius's] death, leads the courtier "to accept Gynecia's confession at face value, turn a deaf ear to Philoclea's plea of love for Pyrocles, suppress the letters Philoclea and Pamela wrote which were meant for the judge, and bring to bear against Gynecia and the princes at the trial every sophistical argument, every appeal to emotion, every distortion of the fact which he can muster."\(^3\)2

Unsatisfied with branding Pyrocles/Cleophila merely a rapist, murderer, and insurrectionist, Philanax seizes upon the meager facts of the case and constructs an elaborate fiction which will comprehend those facts. Although logically sound, Philanax's interpretation of these facts proves as inaccurate as the interpretation offered by Basilius following the Phagonian rebellion. The prejudicial nature of Philanax's account becomes apparent as Philanax, in his polemical outburst, goes so far as to accuse Pyrocles of being in collusion with the forces of darkness. Summarizing Philanax's charges, Mary Ann Bushman describes Pyrocles as "the arch-fiend, [who] changes shapes and
identities to confuse and seduce his followers, kills Basilius to gain the kingdom, all 'to please the infernal powers'.' Margaret Dana concludes that Philanax represents the "self-righteous and mis-directed" zealot, "a well-intentioned and basically good man, [who] convinced that he has read God's signs rightly, can do a great deal of harm." But Philanax represents more than simply a religious zealot; the behavior of this Arcadian courtier betokens the potential for intellectual and moral compromise resulting from interpretive closure. Convinced of the validity of his own narrow interpretation, Philanax justifies suppressing evidence, an action which results in a corresponding restriction of interpretive inquiry.

Philanax's actions, in fact, correspond in a remarkable way to Opposition responses to Titus Oates's narrative of the Popish Plot. Just as Philanax seizes upon a few meager facts and reshapes them to satisfy his own demands, the Opposition was to seize upon the meager facts in Oates's narrative and reshape them to suit the demands of that party. In both cases what is being illustrated is a typical reader reaction: Readers (whether Philanax, the Opposition forces in seventeenth-century London, or some other readers of other texts) seize upon bits and pieces of a discrete narrative which suit whatever demands the reader is making upon the text in question. Readers then (imaginatively) reconstruct the narrative, emphasizing facts the reader
deems important and de-emphasizing facts which contradict or complicate the reader's interpretive scenario.

The scene in the *Old Arcadia* which perhaps best typifies the difficulties inherent in the interpretive process is the trial presided over by Pyrocles' father and Musidorus's uncle, Euarchus. Critics remain divided in their responses to Euarchus's judgment. Andrew Weiner, for instance, refers to the judgment as "not unfair," while Mary Ann Bushman contends that the trial metes out "judgments far too harsh for the crimes. The severest of readers," Bushman insists, "can hardly agree with the justness of Euarchus's sentences, given what we know."

Euarchus presents somewhat of an enigma. Before the trial begins, he seems cautiously aware of his own limitations. He requests that the Arcadians not "have an overshooting expectation" of him, but that they "remember," he is a man; "that is to say, a creature whose reason is often darkened with error" (p. 315). Euarchus's unpretentious presentation, however, hardly prepares the reader for what transpires during the trial.

In fairness to Euarchus, it should be noted that the information he receives is strictly limited, limited by Gynecia's insistence upon her own guilt, by Philanax's restrictive presentation of the facts complete with his own interpretation of those facts, and by the two princes' determination to continue veiling their true identities.
Pyrocles also lies repeatedly during his testimony, and although the lies he tells aim at protecting Philoclea from suffering the dire consequences of Arcadian laws which punish those who engage in pre-marital coitus, his lies nevertheless compound the difficulties Euarchus faces in attempting to sort through the conflicting stories he is told. Considering the fact that all witnesses seem united in their determination to prevent Euarchus from having access to the truth, Euarchus's judgment proves comprehensible even if it remains morally reprehensible. The difficulty, however, as Mary Ann Bushman reveals, is that the reader has access to all events which preceded the trial. And from the reader's superior viewpoint, it is difficult to accept the verdict Euarchus pronounces. Still struggling with Euarchus's initial decision against the princes, the reader is horrified to discover the seemingly sagacious judge declare "If right I have judged, then rightly have I judged mine own children...." (p. 356). Mary Ann Bushman correctly assesses the trial as a "fiction in itself, an arena where the problems of reaching a judgment are explored." But as Bushman also notes, Basilius's revivification negates the trial verdict, enabling Sidney to employ the trial as a means of focusing "on how the human mind reaches its judgments." Basilius's revivification also absolves readers from having to make difficult decisions which, in light of the text with which they have
been provided, they are probably ill-prepared to make —
decisions such as passing judgment on the moral integrity of
the two young princes.

Musidorus's experiences with Dametas, Miso, and Mopsa
provide additional insights into the difficulties of the
interpretive process. Musidorus/Dorus's courtship of Mopsa
(or, more accurately, of Pamela) tests each young woman's
interpretive skills, for when courting Mopsa in the guise of
a shepherd, Musidorus must simultaneously convince Pamela
both that he is a prince worthy of her attentions and that
he is in reality directing his own attentions towards her
and not towards Mopsa. At first, Dorus enjoys little
success with Pamela, for his every "service or affection was
considered of as from a shepherd and the liking limited to
that proportion" (p. 86). Pamela's error at this point is
the error of many Renaissance courtiers: she judges
Musidorus according to his own claims of identity without
subjecting those claims to the acid test of critical
inquiry. Although Pamela feels drawn to the handsome, young
shepherd, a "consideration of his station in life as a
shepherd leads her to suppress those emotions" (p. 86).
Where controlled rhetoric fails, rhetorical excess succeeds,
for "The more [Pamela] marked the expressing of Dorus's
affection towards Mopsa, the more she thought she found such
phrases applied to Mopsa must needs argue either great
ignorance or a second meaning in Dorus" (p. 87). Referring
to the homely daughter of a shepherd as "sweet," "beautiful," and "great...of...estate" enables Dorus to signal his true intentions to Pamela. So extreme, in fact, are Dorus's praises, that even Mopsa is puzzled by them. "In faith," she tells Dorus, "you jest with me; you are a merry man indeed!" (p. 88).

Finally, Dorus tells Pamela and Mopsa a "tale" of Musidorus and Pyrocles. Pamela alone comprehends the import of the tale:

She well found he meant the tale by himself, and that he did under that covert manner make her know the great nobleness of his birth.

(p. 93)

Pamela's courtship stands in direct contrast to that of her sister, Philoclea, for while both young women initially accept their respective lovers at face value, Pamela alone proves capable of conducting the critical scrutiny necessary to penetrate her lover's disguise.

iii. Using and Abusing

Basilius's abdication of his duties was, according to Renaissance theories of statecraft, clearly an abuse of his monarchical powers.40 No monarch may act alone. Basilius's
decision to retire cannot be viewed as simply an act of individual failure; it had far wider social ramifications. In the Arcadian desert, Sidney creates a world Elliott Simon describes as "vulnerable to the capricious behavior of the monarch,"\textsuperscript{41} a world in which "'well-ordered' citizens fall into the follies of a disorderly mob."\textsuperscript{42} Margaret Dana views Basilius's retirement as creating a disruption in "the rightful order of the commonwealth,"\textsuperscript{43} a disruption which in turn "untunes the harmony of Arcadia, generating a world where shepherds are given charge of princesses, princes must disguise themselves as Amazons, and kings and queens make fools of themselves."\textsuperscript{44} Andrew Weiner is even more harsh in his condemnation of Basilius's retirement, viewing the Arcadian monarch's actions as "a denial of reason and the substitution of curiosity, vanity, and arrogance as the foundation for political judgments."\textsuperscript{45}

Because he is the ruler of a nation, vast social ramifications follow Basilius's decision to undergo a period of forced retirement. As Margaret Dana insists, Basilius's "temporary abdication affects first his family, then the court, and finally the entire nation."\textsuperscript{46} And picking up on "illness" imagery which so pervades Sidney's tale, Franco Marenco finds "Metastasis...a dominant figure, and a meaningful one."\textsuperscript{47} Basilius's decision to retire results from the monarch's illness, an illness which rapidly spreads from him to the rest of the Arcadian citizens. Once again,
Sidney follows Erasmus:

The common people imitate nothing with more pleasure than what they see their prince do....Go through your ancient history and you will find the life of the prince mirrored in the morals of his people. No comet, no dreadful power affects the progress of human affairs as the life of the prince grips and transforms the morals and character of his subjects.48

The most serious incident through which Sidney explores the social ramifications of the monarch's individual failure is that of the rebellion of the Phagonians. This incident, although put down by the two visiting princes, alerts the reader to the rapidly spreading discontent within the Arcadian nation. And as Robert Stillman argues, it also serves as a forewarning to the reader, for although the rebellion is quieted none of the causes which provoked the rebellion have been addressed.49 Instead of viewing the rebellion as a warning to return to an active participation in his nation's governance, Basilius chooses to interpret the seemingly minor skirmish as a sign indicative of the fulfillment of the oracle's prophecy.

Robert Stillman offers still further proof of the way in which Sidney links individual failure with social
responses. Stillman points to Sidney's careful positioning of the rebellion within his text, in which Sidney locates it "immediately after Philisides has concluded a song on the frustration of his desires for Mira." Stillman concludes the following from the textual location of the rebellion:

With characteristically whimsical logic, Sidney suggests that Philisides' song is somehow linked to, even responsible for the rebellion—a logic whose whimsicality is designed to illustrate the more important principle that public disorders both mirror and have their source in private passions.

Sidney leaves no doubt that in abandoning his duties to himself, to his family, and to his country, Basilius proves directly responsible for the turmoil which overtakes his nation. Rather than enjoying full use of the power with which he has been invested, rather than employing those powers for the protection of his nation and of himself, the Arcadian monarch abandons his duties, an abandonment which proves to be a clear abuse of the powers which Basilius, as monarch, should wield. And "If," as Andrew Weiner asserts, each citizen "has an obligation to control rationally his willful desires, the king has any even stronger obligation, for he must rule not only himself but also his people."
Sidney’s text abounds with examples of characters who use their powers to manipulate other characters or events. Basilius, of course, manipulates all the characters and events of the story through his insistence upon retiring to the Arcadian desert. But other characters manipulate as well. Cleophila, for example, manipulates both Basilius and Gynecia, manipulates them, in fact, into committing "adultery" with one another, which thus brings about the fulfillment of part of the oracle’s prophecy. Musidorus/Dorus easily manipulates Dametas and his family. Discerning the character weakness of each member of Dametas’s family, Dorus devises a plan which enables him to employ those weaknesses to arrange the shepherd’s family absence so that Dorus may escape with Pamela. Philoclea becomes a pawn to her parents’ manipulative efforts as the Arcadian monarch and his wife use their daughter as bait to attract the attentions of Cleophila. And even Philanax proves manipulator when he refuses to allow either Pamela or Philoclea to testify in the trial and then callously suppresses the letters which the princesses write in defense of the two princes.

Through their common use of manipulation, Sidney implies a relationship between Basilius and the other characters who employ manipulative techniques, a relationship which enables the reader to recognize that the other characters, too, enjoy a certain amount of power even
if they are not the rulers of Arcadia. And like Basilius, these other characters abuse the power they wield, for like Basilius, each of them employs power to satisfy his or her own personal desires, rather than wielding power for communal benefit.

An ongoing critique of the active versus the contemplative existence provides yet another means for Sidney to examine the use and abuse of power. Montrose asserts that "In his life, as well as in his art, Sidney was in a position to actualize rhetorical and poetic topoi; to live out the ubiquitous humanist debate about the relative merits of action and contemplation, the major literary dialectic of heroic and pastoral kinds." F. J. Levy points out that the emphasis in Sidney's education at Thomas Ashton's Shrewesbury school "was always on utility, on service, not on knowledge for its own sake." Levy concurs with Montrose, insisting that "Sidney was...a representative of his generation. All [of whom] were brought to serve the commonweal, through the active life if possible, through the contemplative if necessary."

A large body of evidence suggests that Sidney himself had rejected the idea of a contemplative existence. In his Apology for Poetry Sidney informs the reader that the end of all earthly existence is "virtuous action." Furthermore, Sidney seems to have resented deeply his period of enforced retirement from the court, a retirement which enabled him to
produce the *Old Arcadia*, a retirement necessitated, however, by Elizabeth's anger over Sidney's letter questioning the advisability of her engagement to Henry, Duke of Alençon. In a letter to Hugh Languet, Sidney complained bitterly of the effects of his retirement upon his own virtue.  

Sidney's narrator, too, provides evidence that Sidney had rejected the contemplative existence. The narrator's treatment of Basilius' retirement intimates that Sidney felt little sympathy for those who attempt to solve life's problems by avoiding them. Furthermore, the narrator's description of Musidorus's reaction to Pyrocles's argument that the Macedonian prince remain in retirement reflects little sympathy with that decision:

For, having in the beginning of Pyrocles' speech which defended his solitariness framed in his mind a reply against it in the praise of honourable action (in showing that such a kind of contemplation is but a glorious title to idleness; that in action a man did not only better himself but benefit others; that the gods would not have delivered a soul into the body which hath arms and legs (only instruments of doing) but that it were intended the mind should employ them; and that the mind should best know his own good or evil by practice; which knowledge was the only way to
Insisting upon viewing Sidney's tale as an heroic epic, C. S. Lewis expressed horror at the moral "lapses" of the two princes. But Katherine Duncan-Jones correctly argues that "Sidney's complex presentation of the two princes, in which he plots the ever-widening discrepancies between their idealized pretensions and their actual self-interest, yet keeps them always the heroes, is one of the special strengths" of the Old Arcadia (p. xv). Despite their behavior, the narrator continues to view the two young princes as heroes, for they, unlike Basilius, actively attack their problems rather than avoiding those problems.

Sidney's text also actively engages the question of whether free will or some ineluctable force governs human lives. There seems to be some sort of deity controlling Sidney's fictional Arcadian universe. The narrator implies, for example, that the storm which shipwrecks Pyrocles and Musidorus on the Arcadian shore is the work of God. And critics such as Margaret Dana and Elliott Simon have argued that the Delphic oracle operates as a classical expression of Divine Providence in Sidney's pagan tale. Offering a slightly different perspective, Michael McCanles conceives of the oracular prediction as a "kind of perspectival paradox," which functions both "inside and
outside the fictive world of Arcadia," creating "still another paradox: a dialectical play between free will and determinism." McCanles insists that what frightens Basilius is not so much that irrational events "will happen...but that it is possible for them to happen: that there is a logic governing human lives that can bring such events about." Attempting to reconcile these paradoxical elements, McCanles concludes, "As the Arcadia shows, such a logic is not merely a matter of chance, but has its own intelligible if paradoxical rules. And one of these rules appears to be that opposites not only exclude each other but imply each other as well."

While no critic appears willing to question the piety of Sidney's own religious beliefs, a noticeable shift, a shift which cries out for explanation, occurs in the apparent attitude of the narrator late in Sidney's text. When relating the decision to try the two princes and the identity of the man who has been chosen as judge, the narrator says the following:

Wherein the chief man they considered was Euarchus, whom the strange and secret working of justice had brought to be the judge over them--in such a shadow or rather pit of darkness the wormish mankind lives that neither they know how to foresee nor what to fear, and are but like
Sidney's narrator's apparent shift from a Christian viewpoint to that of a pagan seriously undermines any attempts to view the Delphic oracle as a classical expression of Divine Providence. And although McCanles's argument is inventive, at times even inspired, his conclusions strike this critic as more wistful than compelling.

By the end of the Arcadia, Sidney's narrator clearly denies the existence of free will as a motive force governing human actions. Men and women have become "tennis balls tossed by the racket of higher powers." McCanles errs, I believe, in attempting to respond to Sidney's provocative, but rhetorical, question, "Is there such a thing as free will?" Sidney wants no answer from his reader; Sidney simply wishes the reader to consider the true extent of his or her own freedom of action. Thus, according to my argument critics such as Dana, Simon, and McCanles, critics who view Sidney's tale of fate as a classical redaction of "Divine Providence," are merely reconciling for themselves the narrator/narrative disjunction present in Sidney's text. Rather than identify the motive force in Sidney's text as a classical redaction of Divine Providence,
I prefer to identify it as "chance"; that is, while acknowledging the fulfillment of the oracle's prophecy, I am denying the absolute necessity of that fulfillment. Determining upon such an expediency enables me to find both the text's narrator and the text's narrative to be essentially reliable.

iv. The Strong Narrator

Like Dryden's "Absalom and Achitophel" and the anonymous *The Plot in a Dream*, Sidney's *Old Arcadia* employs a strong narrative voice. Sidney's narrator, in fact, proves so forceful that he may best be described as one of the *Old Arcadia*'s main characters. Critical response to Sidney's narrator has been varied. Richard Lanham, for instance, accuses the narrator of "duplicity,"71 while Elizabeth Dipple refers to him as "cynical,"72 and Margaret Dana finds the narrator to be "ironic, sympathetic, and just."73 Readers familiar with Sidney's text recognize a certain justice in each of these assessments. Sidney's narrator, however, may best be evaluated in terms of his function and purpose within the *Old Arcadia*.

The function Sidney's narrator performs is that of data disseminator. The narrator provides the reader with a large amount of disparate, seemingly irreconcilable information, information which, in turn, implicates the reader in the
fiction itself. Two examples will serve to illustrate how this phenomenon occurs. When the Phagonian rebels, disturbed primarily by Basilius's absence from court, threaten Basilius's kingdom with anarchy, Cleophila's eloquent speech quiets the rebels. But as Katherine Duncan-Jones points out, Cleophila's "splendid display of rhetoric...takes no account of the reality of the situation: the princes themselves are fostering 'the duke's absented manner of living', which is the prime cause of civil discontent" (p. xiv). Furthermore, Andrew Weiner finds Cleophila's "arguments about the sanctity of established governments...hypocritical in light of the princes' actions to kidnap and enforce Pyrocles' claim for Philoclea." While the princes may be guilty of "fostering 'the duke's absented manner of living'" and of plotting to kidnap the heirs to Basilius's throne, other information which the narrator provides to the reader prevents most readers from viewing the two princes as equal to the Phagonian rebels. In the first place, while the princes may be fostering the continuation of Basilius's retirement, they are certainly not responsible for causing that retirement. The narrator, often ambiguous towards some characters, is totally unambiguous when it comes to Basilius. Following the narrator's lead, the reader tends to blame Basilius for the state of Arcadian affairs. And while the princes plot the kidnapping of Pamela and the use of an armed force to insure
Philoclea's marriage to Pyrocles, the reader resists defining them as "rebels," for the princes' interest is in the princesses, not in the Arcadian state. Yet in a broader sense, in the sense that any hostile act against the heirs apparent is a hostile act against the state, the reader must confess that the princes are rebels against the Arcadian state. Asked either to condemn the princes as guilty of fomenting rebellion or to confirm their innocence, and uncomfortable with both choices, the reader hesitates, but only momentarily, for reader must make this decision before continuing. In making this decision, the reader must admit complicity in the princes' crime and accept the Arcadian world as the narrator portrays it, or must condemn the work's "heroes" and label the work's narrator as unreliable, a decision few readers seem prepared to make at this point in the text.

The reader is placed in a similarly troubling situation during the trial scene. Four witnesses testify at the trial, Gynecia, Philanax, Pyrocles, and Musidorus. Gynecia's own guilt leads her to confess freely her own crimes, to offer testimony which will lead others to convict her just as she has found herself guilty. The narrator says the following of Gynecia's testimony:

There was never tyrant exercised his rage with more grievous torments upon any he most hated than
the afflicted Gynecia did crucify her own soul, after the guiltiness of her heart was surcharged with the suddenness of her husband's death.

(p. 316)

Convinced of her own guilt, Gynecia deliberately colors her testimony to assure her own conviction and punishment. But the reader, aware of what has transpired in the cave, hesitates to brand Gynecia a traitor and murderess.

Philanax's abuses during the trial have already been discussed but require summarization: first, Philanax refuses to allow the princesses to offer testimony during the trial; secondly, the courtier deliberately suppresses the princesses' letters written in defense of their lovers; thirdly, he offers an alternate scenario, one which takes into account the few facts known, but one which, otherwise, proves as fictitious as the accounts which the princes offer; and finally, Philanax's offers a highly prejudicial accounting of the facts, an account colored by the courtier's own pre-conceived notion of the events which have transpired, a notion itself colored by Philanax's prior knowledge of the oracle's prophecy. The reader, recognizing the prejudicial nature of Philanax's account, rejects the courtier's version of the events which led up to Basilius's (supposed) demise.

Readers, however, finds themselves only slightly more
comfortable with the version of events which Pyrocles and Musidorus offer, for both princes lie repeatedly during pre-trial and trial questioning. Both insist upon remaining incognito, acknowledging new (although still false) identities.\textsuperscript{75} While both princes accept responsibility for dishonoring the princesses and absolve their respective lovers of any guilt, the testimony each prince offers is noticeably distorted to reflect the princes in the best possible light. Ann Astell, quoting Elizabeth Dipple, reveals the difficulty which the trial poses for readers: readers come to the trial "in full possession of 'all of the data, the entire sequence of action for each character'."\textsuperscript{76} Readers, from their superior viewpoints, wish to absolve the princes; but readers may only do so by acknowledging their own complicity in the crimes which the princes have committed. The reader, Ann Astell explains, wishes "to reject Philanax's premise [that the princes have conspired with Gynecia to overthrow the Arcadian government] because [the reader] knows that the princes came to the Arcadian retreat, not because of political ambitions, but out of love for the 'two peerless daughters of Basilius' whom they hoped to woo and win. At the same time, the reader recognizes that, whatever their conscious intent, the princes do bear responsibility for the civil unrest in Arcadia, the king's death, the princesses' dishonor."\textsuperscript{77} Astell summarizes the effect which Philanax's testimony has upon readers in this
A complicated causal chain connecting decision and deed, deed and decision, implicates [the princes] in the very crimes Philanax enumerates.78

And a similar causal chain, connecting decision and deed, deed and decision, implicates readers both in the princes' crimes and in the narrator's excusing of those crimes. Readers suddenly recognize that, under the narrator's skillful manipulation, they have fallen victim to their own interpretive decisions. Those readers who have acquitted the princes of rebellion after the Phagonian revolt, must now acquit them once more of fomenting rebellion. Those readers who have judged the princes guilty of rebellion following the Phagonian revolt must once again find the princes guilty.

Other critics, too, have noted how Sidney's narrator forces the reader into an interpretive stance. Margaret Dana, for instance, argues that Sidney's narrator forces the external world of the reader into the presumably closed, internal world of the text.79 Weiner finds that the constant playing of the narrator's perspective against the various perspectives offered by other characters forces the reader "always into the position of judge, not observer, always inviting [the reader] to become a partisan, not a
neutral." And Ann Astell insists that the princes’ trial speeches "allow the reader no escape. They elicit a mixed response and cultivate an ambivalence in the reader that forces him to judge and be judged at the same time." Through the trial, the reader, Astell reveals, is asked to admit his own complicity in the crimes of the two princes, and in doing so, is asked "to declare himself guilty."

In the final analysis, however, what the reader is forced to recognize is his relationship to Sidney’s victims of manipulation, victims such as Basilius, Pyrocles, Musidorus, Pamela, Philoclea, Gynecia, Dametas, Miso, and Mopsa. For Sidney’s narrator, like Sidney’s characters, manipulates. The narrator manipulates the reader’s response to characters, to events, and to decisions made within the text. The narrator assures that the reader will condemn Basilius and Gynecia, just as he tempers the reader’s response to the two princes through an excessively sympathetic response to the young men when he is not openly praising them.

Rhetoric becomes the narrator’s weapon in controlling the reader’s response to narrative events. For instance, the sexually charged rhetoric used to describe Musidorus’s escape with Pamela immediately colors the reader’s perception of that event:

...mounting the gracious Pamela upon a fair
horse...he _thrust_ himself forthwith into the wildest part of the desert....

(p. 172)
readers must assume the narrator to be something less than
godlike. And if readers assume the narrator to be something
less than omniscient, they may only do so based upon their
critique of one of the earliest statements which Sidney’s
narrator makes: the statement concerning Basilius’s reasons
for his retirement. When the narrator first informs the
reader of Basilius’s reasons for retirement--to escape the
events prophesied by the oracle, most readers accept the
statement as true; that is, readers agree that it is
theoretically possible for Basilius to escape this pagan
prophecy. Yet as it turns out, Basilius, despite his
retirement, fails to escape the prophecy. Does the
narrator, then, mislead to the reader? Few readers seem
willing to identify Sidney’s narrator as unreliable because
the narrator clearly notes the unlikelihood that Basilius
will succeed in escaping the oracle’s prophecy. A later
textual event, the narrator’s abrupt shift from Christian to
pagan viewpoint, may corrupt readers’ assessments of the
narrator. The narrator’s apparent shift from a Christian
viewpoint to that of a pagan may best be viewed as an
attempt to seduce lazy readers, to offer them an easy,
comfortable alternative, to provide them with a fiction
which will relieve them from an uncomfortable encounter with
experience as described within the text. For if men and
women spend their lives "like tennis balls tossed by the
racket of higher powers," then questions of free will, the
proper dispensation of power, and responsibility for the exercise of one's power remain moot points. If, on the other hand, readers feel no qualms about acknowledging that this pagan oracle's prophecy was, in this instance, fulfilled, yet refuse, like Basilius, to acknowledge the oracle's prophecy as inevitable, then questions concerning free will and the proper use of power remain open to debate.

What readers must finally acknowledge, therefore, is not complicity in the princes' crimes, but rather their own susceptibility to fictional discourses and to the closed, controlled universes which those discourses portray. Readers submit willingly to the narrator's manipulations, for in doing so readers surrender themselves to the seductive power of fiction, recognize their status as the victims of unending manipulation and admit their desire to be the object of benevolent manipulation, confirm their desire for a future which the idea of plot development implies, and assert their need to explore a universe in which human beings enjoy some measure of control.
NOTES


15. In my conclusions I will identify literature as "mask" and argue that perusal of a text amounts to the reader’s assumption of the mask which the text represents. I will likewise discuss what I view as the ramifications of such an act.


24. Henry Cornelius Agrippa. *Of the Vanitie and Uncertaintie of Artes and Sciences*. Edited by Catherine M. Dunn. Northridge: California State University Press, 1974. p. 79. Dunn notes that Sidney referred to "De vanitie directly in An Apology for Poetrie" and borrowed "from Agrippa's argument in order to attack the other arts and sciences for their limitations while carefully ignoring poetry so as to prepare for its defense." See p. xxii.


28. Castiglione. *Courtier*. p. 47. Royalist attempts to expose the characters of various Plot witnesses aimed at exposing to ridicule any who accepted the testimonies of Plot witnesses without due consideration of the source of such claims.


31. Ibid.


34. Dana. "Providential Plot." p. 54.


37. Mary Ann Bushman has also noted the effects of the witnesses' limited testimonies, finding each witness guilty of ordering the facts according to his or her limited "motives, perceptions, and values. Each of them proposes a different explanation of the facts, none of which is

38. Ibid. p. 20.

39. Ibid. p. 21.

40. For instance, a sixteenth-century writer, Charles Merbury, argued that the weakening of a monarch’s power inevitably affected all of the monarch’s subjects:

...if the Princes Power be in any pointe impared, or the brightnesse of his Royall maiestie any whitte eclipsed: the subiecte straight doth feele the smarte, and want therof. The Trauailer is lesse estemed abrode: the Courtier lesse priviiledged in a farre countrey: the Noble man lesse honored in his owne.


And Thomas Paynell warned of the disastrous effects brought about by a ruler’s relinquishment of his duties:
Lyke as the mariner/ a lytell goynge out of cours/ hureth (tis noyfull to those that sayle with him: & as the shyppe by negligence of the governour perysssheth and goeth to wracke: euen so do the cities). For if a subiecte do amys/ he hurteth hym selfe more greuously than the welth publyke: but whan the ruler/ the governour/ or prince mysdoeth/ he hurteth ye holle comunalte: Therfore for as moche as he must gyue a strayte counte if he rule not well: hit were nedefull that he with exquysite diligence both speke & do every thynge/ and so auoyde all danger."

See The preceptes teachyng a prynce or a noble estate his duetie written by Agapetus in Greke to the emperor Justinian. Translated by Thomas Paynell. London: by T. Berthelet [1530?]. Page clipped too close in rebinding to note the page number. This is precept number five.


42. Ibid.

44. Ibid.


50. Ibid. p. 802.

51. Ibid.

53. To prevent Basilius from returning to his capital of Mantinea, Cleophila flirts openly with the Arcadian monarch. The narrator leaves no doubt concerning the effects of this flirtation upon Basilius. "You might have seen Basilius humbly swell," the narrator reveals, "and with lowly look stand upon his tiptoes—such diversity her words delivered unto him" (pp. 156-157). At any rate, Cleophila’s actions succeed, and Basilius remains in the Arcadian desert rather than returning to the capital. Cleophila also manipulates Gynecia by feigning affection for the Arcadian duchess when Gynecia’s despair leads her to threaten to expose Cleophila’s true sex to Basilius (p. 181).

54. Cleophila promises to have sexual relations with Basilius one time, but one time only. Cleophila then sends Basilius to the darkened cave, knowing Basilius will have difficulty recognizing his correspondent (p. 194). Cleophila then arranges for Gynecia to meet Basilius. Cleophila offers Gynecia her cloak, so that Basilius, in the darkness of the cave, will assume that the woman he embraces is Cleophila (p. 195).

55. Dorus tells Dametas, whose character flaw is covetousness, of the supposed location of a large cache of treasure. Miso, subject to insane fits of jealousy, is told
her husband has gone courting in the capital. Mopsa, who is curious, is provided with an elaborate tale through which Dorus convinces the young woman to climb a tree and to await the return of the god Apollo (p. 163).

56. Gynecia, for example, sends Philoclea to see her father so that Gynecia may be alone with Cleophila (p. 108).

57. Although Pamela and Philoclea both write letters defending their lovers and asking mercy for them, Philanax's overweening desire for revenge leads him to hide the letters from the court (pp. 342-344).


60. Ibid. p. 10.


64. Elliott Simon seems to concur with the assessment, arguing that "it is the character's willingness to confront their follies that represents the true heroic activity of man." See Elliott Simon. "Praise." p. 287.

65. The narrator insists, "But so pleased it God who reserved them to greater traverses, both of good and evil fortune, that the sea, to which they committed themselves, stirred with a terrible tempest, forced them to fall far from their course upon the coast of Lydia...." See Duncan-Jones, p. 10.
66. Dana finds "The Old Arcadia's plot...based upon the workings of providence as mediated through the ambiguous voice of the oracle." See Margaret Dana. "Providential Plot." p. 40.


69. Ibid. p. 242.

70. Ibid.


75. Before Musidorus had escaped with Pamela, he and Pyrocles agreed that, should they be caught, they would claim Pyrocles’s true identity to be Palladius, prince of Caria and Musidorus’s to be Tymopyrus of Lycia. See Sidney. *Arcadia*. p. 271.


77. Ibid. p. 46.

78. Ibid.

79. Dana compares Sidney’s narrator to the Chaucerian narrator, who "relies upon his auditors to supply" his alleged deficiencies "from their own experience." See Dana. "Providential Plot." p. 40.


82. Ibid. p. 45.

Although twentieth-century critics define "audience" as a complex and often elusive literary term, the texts examined so far suggest that writers of the early modern period conceived of but two types of readers: 1) those who comprehend a given text and 2) those who fail to comprehend a given text. John Dryden, the anonymous author of *The Plot in a Dream*, and Sir Philip Sidney each provides for a bi-partite division of his respective audience. Dryden divided his characters (the godly and those who are but parodies of godliness) and his audience (Fools and the Wise) into two all-encompassing groups. The Bookseller’s introduction to *The Plot in a Dream* divides its audience into those whose eyes are open and those whose eyes are shut. In the *Old Arcadia*, this bi-partite division of audience is illustratively represented by Sidney’s division of characters into two groups: 1) those who penetrate the princes’ disguises (Gynecia, Dametas, and Pamela) and 2) those who fail to penetrate the princes’ disguises (Basilius, Philoclea, and Philanax). Defoe critics, interestingly enough, have provided independent corroboration of such a bi-partite division of audience, for critics addressing themselves to Defoe’s *Moll Flanders* have aligned themselves into two opposing camps: those who deny
any consistent irony within the text\(^1\) and those who argue that the text remains consistently ironic throughout.\(^2\)

At issue, of course, is the validity of Moll’s repentance and its import to Defoe’s tale. Both of the text’s narrators, Moll and the "editor,"\(^3\) proffer claims of Moll’s repentance; the narrative, however, for many readers at any rate, contradicts those explicit claims.\(^4\) Thus, a narrator/narrative disjunction exists in which the claims of the narrator conflict with the implicit claims of the narrative. Readers are placed in an untenable situation in which they are forced to account for this particular instance of narrator/narrative disjunction. I will argue that Moll, despite her own protestations and those of Defoe’s editor-narrator, does not repent and that Defoe’s narrative, consequently, proves deeply ironic. I will argue further that the irony of Defoe’s tale aims at exposing those who believe that rhetoric alone, a rhetoric totally divorced from meaning, is sufficient to define a given thing or action. The narrator/narrative disjunction proves to be but one of several ways in which Defoe problemizes his text in an effort to reveal another meaning to be found within the text for those readers interested enough to discover that meaning. Just as the narrator/narrative disjunction found in the extended text of the Popish Plot forced readers into a more active confrontation with that text, Defoe’s demands that readers actively confront the logical
inconsistencies apparent within *Moll Flanders*. The narrator/narrative disjunction found in Defoe's text alerts readers that meaning within the text is not immediately apparent; readers must work to discover the lessons Defoe's text offers.

My argument advances in three stages: first, I will define the four criteria necessary for true repentance, explaining how Moll's repentance fails to conform to the definition I have provided and how this failure, in turn, problemizes for me Moll's claims of repentance; secondly, I will discuss how my rejection of the validity of Moll's repentance leads me to discover another meaning within Defoe's text; finally, I will consider the character of Moll Flanders, noting how Moll's appeal as a character further problemizes Defoe's text for readers, and how Moll's appeal as a character relates to the narrator/narrative disjunction.

i - Feeling the Signs of Repentance

Curiously enough, Moll describes what she alleges to be her true repentance in sensual terms:

It was now that for the first time I *felt* any real *signs* of Repentance.

*(p. 364)*\(^{5}\)
The emphases here are mine, intended to point out the confusion in and rhetorical poverty of Moll's description of her repentance. Moll, of course, is in her old age recalling an event which occurred some years earlier. And Moll's choice of sensual rhetoric is, while somewhat disconcerting, certainly understandable, for Christian literature abounds with examples in which divine and corporeal love have been conflated. What is disturbing, however, is Moll's confusion and conflation of the senses through which she experiences her supposedly genuine repentance. This is apparent from the statement she makes, for readers may discern two possible meanings from Moll's statement. Moll appears to describe a tactile sensation, "felt," in terms of a non-tactile sense, vision. One "sees" signs; one does not "feel" them. Or one "feels" emotions; one does not feel "signs" of emotions. Admittedly, moving emotional experiences often prove difficult to describe rhetorically, yet Moll's confusion, it seems to me, results from a lack of familiarity with the experience she is attempting to describe.

As a reader and critic of Moll Flanders, I remain unconvinced of the validity of Moll's repentance. After consulting a seventeenth-century edition of The Book of Common Prayer, I have arrived at the following definition of repentance against which I will measure Moll's alleged
repentance. Four criteria must be met for true repentance to occur: 1) There must be a recognition that one's actions (or one's failure to act) constitute sin. Sin, here, is understood as an offense against one's God, not against one's society, which is a criminal offense. 2) One must acknowledge one's sin. Often, acknowledgement takes the form of confession to God, but it may also include a confession to another person. 3) The penitent person repudiates his or her sin, and this repudiation includes a renunciation of the fruits of past sins. 4) If repentance has occurred, some evidence of that repentance, either as an external or an internal change, will be apparent.

"Penitence" is a word which, in one form or another, Moll frequently articulates. For instance, after seducing her Bath gentleman, Moll confesses the following:

In the Morning we were both at our Penitentials; I cried very heartily, he express'd himself very sorry; but that was all either of us could do at that time; and the way being thus clear'd, and the bars of Virtue and Conscience thus removed, we had less difficulty afterwards to struggle with.

(p. 168)

The emphasis here is mine; its purpose is to demonstrate that for Moll penitence seems to be little more than ritual
Moll performs to provide moral sanctification to the actions she willfully performs. Another example reinforces this point. As she contemplates marriage to the clerk at the bank, Moll reproaches herself:

If ever I had a Grain of true Repentance for a vicious and abominable Life for 24 Years past, it was then....

Then it occur'd to me what an abominable Creature am I! and how is this innocent Gentleman going to be abus'd by me!

(pp. 243-244)

After completing this melodramatic outburst, Moll concludes:

Well, if I must be his Wife, if it please God to give me Grace, I’ll be a true Wife to him, and love him suitably to the strange Excess of his Passion for me; I will make him amends, if possible, by what he shall see, for the Cheats and Abuses I put upon him, which he does not see.

(p. 244)

Once again, I am responsible for the bold-faced emphasis. By the eighteenth-century, the verbal auxiliary "must" most often indicated compulsion. And as readers well know, Moll
was under no compulsion (except in her own mind) to marry her friend at the bank. In fact, this liaison has been the result of Moll's most complex manipulations, for she had to keep her friend at the bank both interested in her and at a distance from her until she could give birth to and dispose of Jemy's child. Once again, Moll proves guilty of attempting to alter audience response to an action she commits long after she has determined upon the course of action.

Moll's open admission that she has experienced numerous false repentances also serves as a warning to wary readers, causing them to doubt the sincerity of her final repentance. For instance, Moll's first Newgate repentance, she confesses, is no true repentance:

I seem'd not to Mourn that I had committed such Crimes, and for the Fact as it was an offence against God and my Neighbor, but I mourn'd that I was to be punish'd for it; I was a Penitent as I thought, not that I sinn'd, but that I was to suffer, and this took away all the Comfort, and even the hope of my Repentance in my own Thoughts.

(pp. 349-350)

Moll's sorrow for her sin is mediated by her knowledge that she is "to suffer" for her crimes. Does this self-confessed
false repentance, then, differ in any substantial way from Moll's allegedly true repentance? Even the timing of Moll's allegedly true repentance problemizes readers' assessments of the validity of Moll's repentance. Robert Bell, for instance, refers to Moll's awakening as "suspiciously abrupt."\(^{10}\) The whole time Moll is in Newgate, she resists repentance. Although her governess arranges for a postponement of her trial, Moll makes no use of the additional time this postponement provides to seek forgiveness for her sins. Brought to trial and convicted, Moll still resists repentance. Moll's repentance, in fact, occurs only after Moll has been informed that a death-warrant has been issued and that she is soon to be executed. Moll's belated recourse to repentance intimates this final repentance, too, has been mediated by the knowledge that she is "to suffer" for her crimes. Although the knowledge that one will suffer for one's sins is a necessary component of repentance, this is limited to knowledge that one will suffer in the afterlife for such sins. Moll, clearly, fears the loss of her life, that is, that she will suffer in this life for her sins. Moll is unwilling to pay with her life for the sins she has committed. The rich irony, of course, is that in failing to repent Moll will, according to Christian theology, forfeit her claim to eternal life.

During her final Newgate repentance, however, Moll insists she feels an "abhorrence" for her "past Life" (p.
364), so it remains possible that Moll recognizes her past actions as sinful. Whether she recognizes these past actions as sinful, that is, as an offense against God, or merely as illegal, an offense against society, there is no way of telling, for neither Moll nor her editor provide sufficient information to make this type of judgment. However, the fact that Moll's allegedly true repentance leads to a reprieve suggests that this, in fact, may have been the motivating factor behind Moll's repentance in the first place. Once again, the "edited" text to which readers have access serves only to complicate reader comprehension. Consequently, based on the first criterion in this paradigm of true repentance, no final judgment is possible; it becomes necessary, therefore, to consider Moll's repentance in light of the second criterion established.

The second criterion I have identified as necessary for true repentance is an acknowledgement of one's sins, an acknowledgement which often takes the form of a confession to God or possibly to another being. Moll's final Newgate repentance appears, on the surface at any rate, to correspond to this paradigmatic criterion, for Moll indeed confesses her guilt to the minister, or so she claims. But as Paula Backscheider reveals, there is reason to question this "confession":
The very list of sins that Moll enumerates to the minister seems to be nearly too long for the telling, numerous beyond the time available for the minister to hear her....

Backscheider here identifies an area of concern for this critic as well: Why does Moll provide her audience with only a summary of her discussion with the minister? Moll describes the encounter in this way:

"...I unravell'd all the Wickedness of my Life to him; In a word, I gave him an Abridgement of this whole History; I gave him the Picture of my Conduct for 50 Years in Miniature.

I hid nothing from him, and he in return exhorted me to a sincere Repentance, explain'd to me what he meant by Repentance, and then drew out such a Scheme of infinite Mercy, proclaim'd from Heaven to Sinners of the greatest Magnitude, that he left me nothing to say, that look'd like despair or doubting of being accepted, and in this Condition he left me the first Night.

(p. 366)

Moll's summary of her discussion with the minister reminds the reader of her summary of her marriage to Robin. After
explaining the marriage lasted five years and produced two children, Moll adds only, "He had been really a very good Husband to me, and we liv'd very agreeably together; But as he had not receiv'd much from them [his parents], and had in the little time he liv'd acquir'd no great Matters, so my Circumstances were not great; nor was I much mended by the Match" (p. 102). While Ian Watt may identify statements such as these as "uninspired summary," I find summarization of this kind, summarization found repeatedly throughout Defoe's text, to be provocative; that is, it is intriguing not in what it does say, but in what it intimates is not being said. Such summarization provokes readers, bullies them into extending the text by encouraging them to consider actively that which might be missing from the text.

Although Moll describes the minister's prayers to God, not once during her allegedly true repentance does Moll claim that she herself prayed to God. And why does Moll not inform the reader of the minister's definition of "true repentance"? And what, exactly, is this "Scheme of infinite Mercy" the minister "drew out" for Moll. Was it Christ's offer of infinite mercy to the sinner, as many readers no doubt conclude, or might it be instead the monarch's scheme of infinite mercy (read: transportation)? Was Moll's repentance predicated on the promise that the minister would seek a reprieve of her sentence? Once again, the text reveals itself as an insufficient means of answering the
questions the text raises in readers' minds.

Unable to confirm or deny the validity of Moll's repentance based upon the first two criteria in my paradigm, Moll's repentance must be judged in light of the third criterion. According to my third criterion, true repentance necessitates a repudiation of sin, a repudiation which includes a renunciation of the fruits of past sins. It is at this point that many critics, apparently, experience difficulty accepting the validity of Moll's claims of repentance. Although Moll definitely repudiates her sins, verbally at any rate, critics in both the "irony" and "no irony" camps alike have condemned Moll for her refusal to renounce the fruits of her past sins. Ian Watt, for instance, finds that "Moll's penitent prosperity...is based on her criminal career, and the sincerity of her reformation is never put to the acid test of sacrificing material for moral good. The plot, in fact, flatly contradicts Defoe's purported moral theme." Robert Bell likewise notes that Moll "joins her Lancashire husband and uses her ill-gotten gains to insure a rather comfortable cruise." It is easy to see why critics such as Watt and Bell are disturbed by Moll's refusal to renounce the fruits of her past sins, for Moll herself has identified the renunciation of the fruits of past sins as a necessary criterion for true repentance. In describing the end of her affair with the Bath gentleman, Moll insists:
...when ever sincere Repentance succeeds such a Crime as this, there never fails to attend a Hatred of the Object; and the more the Affection might seem to be before, the Hatred will be the more in Proportion; It will always be so, indeed it can be no otherwise; for there cannot be a true and sincere Abhorrence of the Offence, and the Love to the Cause of it remain....

(p. 176)

Although Moll is here discussing "sincere Repentance" as it applies to the sin of fornication, there is little reason to doubt that the criterion she identifies, "Hatred of the Object," would not be equally applicable to other sins as well. Moll clearly never reaches a point at which she hates the objects of her sin of theft. Indeed, she expresses only delight in employing the fruits of her sins to insure a smooth and comfortable passage to the New World.

Having examined now three of the four criteria established for a paradigm of true repentance, it is increasingly clear why so many critics have questioned the validity of Moll's repentance. Should any doubts still remain, however, these may be dispelled by examining how Moll's repentance fails to conform to the fourth criterion which has been established. The fourth criterion states
that when a true repentance has occurred evidence of some external or internal change will be manifest. Is there, in fact, any change evident in Moll which may be attributed to her alleged repentance? If one examines Moll's attributes or character traits prior to the final Newgate repentance and after the final Newgate repentance, one discovers no difference in the pre-repentant and the post-repentant Moll. For instance, prior to her alleged repentance, Moll exhibits a positively obsessive concern with material wealth. Although Moll has no desire to leave England, she agrees to accompany her husband, who is later determined to be her half-brother, to Virginia because the plantations he owns there will provide him with a far greater return if he manages them himself (pp. 126-132). Although Moll claims "necessity" fires her acquisitiveness, critics have long disputed Moll's claim. Robert Alter, for example, finds Moll's only real sense of responsibility "and it is quite literally a responsibility for her -- is toward the accumulation of wealth for its own sake." J. A. Michie assesses Moll's motive for amassing a fortune to be the result of Moll's "ruthless ambitions." And Howard Koonce acknowledges that "Moll is never allowed to descend to anything like missing a meal, let alone starvation." Moll equates money with power, with independence. And it is evident from the way she employs her ill-gotten gains to assure a comfortable passage to the New World that Moll's
opinion of wealth has not been altered by her alleged repentance. Although Robert Columbus is convinced of the validity of Moll’s repentance, he admits the following concerning Moll’s post-repentant attitude towards wealth:

[Moll] responds to the world still as though it were a vault stuffed with precious goods. Like penitence, these remain for her symbols of her desire for middle-class respectability. 19

Before her Newgate repentance, Moll reveals herself time and again as a master manipulator. An excellent case in point is Moll’s description of her affair with her Bath gentleman. Moll describes her relationship as "the most undesigned thing in the World" (p. 171). Only a short while later, Moll admits the affair was, in fact, well designed:

It is true, and I have confess’d it before, that from the first hour I began to converse with him, I resolv’d to let him lye with me if he offer’d it.

(p. 172)

Robert Bell summarizes the Bath episode as "a paradigm of Moll’s experiences" in which "She manipulates someone who sincerely loved her, shams religious scruples to mimic
middle-class morality, delivers a child she dispatches forthwith, and effectively extorts 'the last penny I was ever to expect' from a gentleman who had offered her unmitigated kindness. After her alleged repentance, Moll is still depicted as a manipulator of others. Moll sends her husband/brother a note announcing her arrival in Virginia, knowing full well that the man is almost blind, so their son Humphrey will, in all likelihood, read and respond to the note (pp. 416-418). Moll counts on their son's compassion for his aged and infirm father to mitigate his response to his mother's return. Moll's ploy succeeds; he, much to most readers' astonishment, welcomes his mother with open arms.

Moll's pride, one of her most defining characteristics, likewise seems unaffected by her alleged reformation. At the height of her career as a thief, Moll brags of her skill:

...I grew the greatest Artist of my time, and work'd myself out of every Danger with such Dexterity, that when several more of my Comrades run themselves into Newgate presently, and by that time they had been Half a Year at the Trade, I had now Practis'd upwards of five Year, and the People at Newgate, did not so much as know me; they had heard much of me indeed, and often expected me
there, but I always got off, tho' many times in the extreamest Danger.

(p. 280)

Robert Columbus finds Moll a performance-oriented individual for whom "emphasis upon material gain...is both conscious and unconscious revelation," while Paula Backscheider sees Moll's pride as a form of moral justification, a means of "exempt[ing] her from ordinary rules." Regardless of how Moll's pride affects the critics, its influence over Moll increases as the tale progresses. The same pride which enabled Moll to brag of her exploits as a thief enables her to view her new prosperity as proof of the validity of her repentance:

...we [Moll and Jemy] us'd to look at one another, sometimes with a great deal of Pleasure, reflecting how much better that [their new life] was, not than Newgate only, but than the most prosperous of our Circumstances in the wicked Trade that we had been both carrying on.

(p. 415)

Moll's egocentricity, too, has remained unaltered by her alleged repentance. Moll's self-concern is readily apparent at many points in the text. For example, when
she discovers her Bath gentleman is critically ill, Moll's first thoughts are of what the gentleman's illness and possible death will mean to Moll:

This was heavy News for me, and I began now to see an end of my Prosperity....

(p. 174)

Robert Bell is convinced that Moll's egocentricity colors her recitation of her life story:

One important measure of Moll's increasing egocentricity is the amazing consistency with which she strikes other people she meets. Nearly everyone likes her; they cannot do enough for her. Men are constantly aching to seduce her, even when she is well past her alluring prime. And even though she inhabits a perilous world, made dangerous by such unscrupulous characters as Moll herself, she is rarely harmed or even discombobulated for very long.24

The allegedly post-repentant Moll continues to evidence this egocentric personality. When she and Jemy total their stocks before departing for the New World, Moll conceals approximately one-half of her assets. When they arrive in
the colonies, Moll refuses to tell Jemy about her husband/brother who lives in Virginia. And when Moll meets her son, she does not tell him of her remarriage until her son's father dies. Moll's concern, after Newgate, just as it was before Newgate, is with Moll first and with what is in Moll's best interest to reveal or to conceal. Moll is a reliable narrator when it is in her own best interest to disclose the truth.

Although Robert Bell stopped short of claiming that Moll is a thoroughly unreliable narrator, Bell suggests this possibility. While Bell may be reluctant to label Moll an unreliable narrator, Moll herself exhibits no such scruples.25 On numerous occasions, Moll confesses, almost inadvertently, to having lied at some point in her previous testimony. For example, Moll depicts her moral fall to the elder brother as if she were being victimized by a skilled seductor (p. 57ff.). Moll later admits she was willing to sell her body for four or five guineas.26 When the elder brother's offer does come, it consists not of four or five guineas, but of a silk purse containing one hundred guineas. Moll admits he's found her price:

...putting the Purse into my Bosom, I made no more Resistance to him, but let him do just what he pleas'd; and as often as he pleas'd.

(p. 68)
After her alleged repentance, Moll continues lying, for she refuses to tell Jemy about her former marriage to the Virginia plantation owner (p. 407). Furthermore, Moll informs her son Humphrey that he is her only child (p. 421) and leads him to believe that the Delaware plantation she and Jemy own belongs to Jemy alone (p. 407). Moll, in fact, lies so frequently that determining which information she provides is reliable and which information is unreliable remains an abiding task for the reader.

Does Moll’s alleged repentance make Moll a better mother? Ian Watt specifically attacks Moll’s callousness as a mother, finding it odd that although Moll "loudly condemns unnatural mothers," she "never makes any such accusations against herself even in her deepest moments of penitent self-reprobation." Moll herself would have readers believe she repents of abuses to her children, offering as proof her willingness to kiss the ground her son Humphrey has trod upon (p. 404). And the reader might be inclined to believe that the sorrow Moll feels toward her children is genuine, if the reader had not been made witness to Moll’s abandonment of seven children without so much as an expression of regret for doing so. But for those readers still inclined to believe Moll, and there are some, (Everett Zimmerman, for instance, refers to Moll as "the transported felon...a good mother with a dutiful son." -- for those
readers still inclined to believe Moll has suddenly become a devoted mother, Moll herself provides testimony to counter such a claim. For what kind of devoted mother gives her son a stolen watch, thus making him an accessory to her crime? In the final analysis, many readers are forced to concur with Howard L. Koonce's assessment. For Koonce, Moll's children are little more than "a means for turning the trick of sympathy, episode by episode." 

ii - The Two Lives of Moll Flanders

Moll manifests no alteration in her personality after experiencing what she defines as a true repentance. In fact, the only areas of Moll's life where change is evident involve Moll's criminal activities. Readers must consider, however, Moll's reasons for abandoning her habit of stealing. Is this abandonment, for instance, indicative of reformation, or is it motivated by other causes? Critics have long noted the bipartite structure of Defoe's narrative, yet they have continually failed in their attempts to comprehend the purpose served by this particular structure. Moll's life involves two stages: her early life as a prostitute and her later life, in which she is forced to abandon prostitution and support herself through thievery. Critics have repeatedly failed, however, to recognize the intimate connection which exists between these
two sections of the narrative. Comparing Moll's early life and her later life enables readers to judge the validity of Moll's repentance. For a comparison of Moll's two careers reveals that Moll abandons her career as a thief for the same reason she abandons her career as a prostitute, because age and infirmity together assure that Moll's continued pursuit of the career in question will no longer be profitable! Evidence of this correspondence between the two stages of Moll's life is readily apparent from a careful examination of each of Moll's careers.

It is with regret that Moll abandons supporting herself through prostitution, but after her banker husband dies she recognizes that her body is no longer marketable merchandise:

...it was past the flourishing time with me when I might expect to be courted for a Mistress; that agreeable part had declin'd some time, and the Ruins only appear'd of what had been.

(p. 252)

Although Moll's brief affair with the Baronet demonstrates that Moll is yet somewhat desirable, this affair stands in stark contrast to her other liaisons. In the first place, the Baronet is in a drunken stupor when he first picks Moll up at the fair, so drunk that Moll rolls him before she
departs his company for the first time. In the second place, this is, according to Moll's account, only a brief affair, with her gentleman friend apparently tiring of her company. What Moll's career as a prostitute reveals, however, is that Moll makes no conscious decision to reform her ways; she abandons his life as a prostitute because she no longer possesses the wherewithal to practice prostitution profitably.

A careful reading of the text reveals that Moll abandons her life of theft for the same reason. Moll describes her escape after shoplifting for the first time:

When I went away I had no Heart to run, or scarce to mend my pace; I cross'd the Street indeed, and went down the first turning I came to, and I think it was a Street that went thro' into Fenchurch-street, from thence I cross'd and turn'd thro' so many ways and turnings that I felt not the Ground, I stept on, and the farther I was out of Danger, the faster I went, till tyr'd and out of Breath, I was forc'd to sit down on a little Bench at a Door, and then I began to recover, and found I was got into Thames-street near Billingsgate; I rested me a little and went on....

(p. 255)
This passage continues, with Moll informing us she walked about London until "Nine a Clock at Night" (p. 255). When Moll begins her career as a thief, she is relatively young, about fifty years old. She is able to walk long distances, and even to run when such proves necessary.

As Moll's career progresses, however, it becomes increasingly apparent that Moll's age and infirmity have altered the course of her new career. When Moll steals from the two daughters of Essex in the park, she escapes by coach (p. 332). At Cambridge, Moll and her accomplice defraud the linen draper's delivery boy in a manner which enables them to get a full hour's head start on the constable (p. 337). Later, Moll steals a portmanteau being guarded by a footman who has passed out in a drunken stupor (p. 337). Moll possesses the ability to discern the difference between theft as an asset and theft as a liability, as her decision to return the stolen horse clearly demonstrates. Moll ceases to steal because she has reached a point at which the likelihood of her succeeding with any given theft has been significantly reduced. And as Moll herself admits in her first Newgate repentance, this is not the same as repenting of one's sins:

Then I repented heartily of all my Life past, but that Repentance yielded me no Satisfaction, no Peace, no not in the least, because, as I said to
myself, it was repenting after the Power of
farther Sinning was taken away.

(p. 349)

Prostitution and theft, however, are not the only two crimes Moll commits. She is also a bigamist, a crime which she conveniently ignores (and continues to practice) in her supposedly penitent state. Throughout her tale, Moll evidences a continuing contempt for the laws of the land and for the moral code which prevents other people from committing the crimes in which Moll takes special relish. Moll’s contempt for the law remains evident in the closing paragraph of the book, when Moll admits that she and Jemy, who has been forbidden to return to England, ignore the edicts of English law and return to their native land.

Moll never reforms; she is never penitent. Moll ceases sinning when advancing age and infirmity prevent her from profiting by her sins. I must, therefore, concur with Laura Curtis’s assessment:

...at the end of Moll Flanders Defoe rewards Moll for a life of crime, immorality, and hypocrisy with financial prosperity and a semi-aristocratic husband. The fulsomeness of this reward is predicated upon Moll’s religious conversion, but the quality of the conversion does not stand up to
I cannot, however, agree with Curtis's conclusion that Defoe's ending "was presumably calculated to appease the consciences of guilt-ridden readers of novels." Defoe's ending was contrived to appease the reader who reads Moll Flanders in the same way Moll Flanders reads her own life story: with blinders on. Defoe's narrative is highly ironic. The irony of the story aims at exposing those who believe that rhetoric alone, a rhetoric totally divorced from meaning, is sufficient to define a given thing or action. Defoe's narrative abounds with evidence of this theme. Moll is forever defining people and things with qualifying phrases which indicate that that which is called one thing is in fact something else altogether. For example, note Moll's description of child abandonment:

I wish all those Women who consent to the disposing their Children out of the way, as it is call'd for Decency sake, would consider that 'tis only a contriv'd Method for Murther.

(p. 233)

Moll herself tells readers how they should read her story:

The Moral indeed of all my History is left to be gather'd by the Senses and Judgment of the Reader;
I am not Qualified to preach to them....

(p. 343)

Truer words have never been spoken, for Defoe realizes that it is the reader who is responsible for interpretation and interpretation requires two things: 1) recognition of the text, that is, of the data provided to the senses and 2) the exercise of the reader's judgment upon that data. With this statement Defoe tacitly acknowledges the extended text, that is, the text which results when readers confront discrete texts and employ previous confrontations with other texts to interpret the discrete text in question.

The irony of Defoe's narrative proves not only consistent but has been multiplied by the form which Defoe has given his narrative, for Defoe offers readers a tale told by a narrator of questionable reliability. Defoe further undermines his text by including a second narrator, an editor who provides readers with an admittedly "edited" version of Moll's tale. An off-hand comment made by Moll just prior to marrying the clerk at the bank suggests the text has been subject to a considerable amount of editing. Moll, at this time, confesses to having "lain with thirteen men." The narrative's readers, however, are made privy to but seven of Moll's liaisons. Moll, as noted previously, has proven at times to be an unreliable narrator. While readers may accept much of what Moll tells them, Moll's tendency to contradict herself when relating an incident for a second time
alerts readers that they would be remiss in accepting all Moll has to say. Defoe's editor-narrator, readers must note, makes claims identical to those being made by Moll -- that Moll has repented of her life of sin. Once it has been determined that Moll is an unreliable narrator as far as her alleged repentance is concerned, the editor-narrator's judgment, in concurring with the mistaken Moll, must be called into question. And if readers have reason to question the editor-narrator's judgment concerning Moll repentance, they have reason to question his skill as an editor.

iii - The Strange Appeal of Moll Flanders

Readers' awareness that Moll Flanders represents a significantly edited version of a tale told by a narrator [Moll] of questionable reliability threatens to paralyze readers, to prevent them from making any moral assessment of Moll whatsoever, and readers are encouraged in this state of moral stasis by Defoe's characterization of Moll. It has already been determined that Moll is occasionally an unreliable narrator. Moll, however, is at times a hauntingly reliable narrator. Commenting upon Moll's tendency to tell the truth even when she lies, Pat Rogers reveals, "Moll often remembers too much for the good of the novel." 38 Robert Bell, too, acknowledges Moll's dual role in Defoe's narrative:
Moll is at once a thoroughly unreliable and fully convincing autobiographical narrator. She is unreliable...in her unrepentant self-delusions and illusions, but she is sublimely convincing in her all-too-human effort to assert that she is better than she appears and that her life has order and purpose.

Moll’s dual role as both a reliable and an unreliable narrator urges readers to accept greater responsibility for discovering meaning in the tale Defoe tells through his narrators, for a reader’s understanding must be predicated upon a consideration of the story, coupled with a selection of certain data as reliable and meaningful and the simultaneous rejection of other data as either unreliable or insignificant to an understanding of the text in question. Meaning is no longer dependent only upon what data Defoe has included in his text; meaning becomes likewise dependent upon readers’ willingness to inject themselves into the fictional world Defoe has created and to assess the data Defoe has provided in light of the world which readers bring with them to Defoe’s text.

Defoe further problemizes his text by manipulating reader response to his main character, Moll Flanders. Moll possesses certain characteristics which demand readers’ admiration. Moll, for instance, proves intellectually
superior to her peers, as her exploits reveal. Most of Moll’s peers are caught within six months of embarking upon a life of crime; Moll, however, practices thievery for over five years before being apprehended. Moll offers several reasons for her success: 1) she wears good clothes. Few suspect her of need, so few suspect her of thievery; 2) She carries a sufficient amount of money with her so that if she is caught she can either buy her way out of trouble or simply claim she intended all along to purchase the items in question; and 3) Moll takes only calculated risks. Moll does not simply steal; she thinks, then she steals.

Moll possesses another admirable quality: she is, in the words of Mona Scheuermann, "a careful survivor." Howard Koonce concludes, Moll is "a character profoundly superior to her environment," a victim of "a malignant fate" which keeps her "from achieving her proper destiny by any other than criminal means." Whether readers find Moll blameworthy or blameless, they are forced to acknowledge Moll’s superiority over the other characters depicted in Defoe’s narrative. Most readers, however, appear to concur with Virginia Woolf’s assessment that "we admire Moll Flanders far more than we blame her."  

Reader assessment of Moll’s character is further problemized by Moll’s narratorial style, a style which forces readers to suspend their judgments of Moll’s actions in a given situation until Moll has completed her
description of the event in question. J. A. Michie explains this phenomenon in his assessment of the scene in which Moll surrenders her virginity:

All sorts of extenuating factors and circumstances are adduced, which have the effect of clouding our judgment with the specious pleas of moral relativism.\textsuperscript{43}

Moll, of course, frequently provides commentary which alerts readers to the fact she herself questions the grievousness of her fault at the point in question. For instance, when Moll retrieves the package dropped by the escaping thief, she rationalizes, "as I had only robb'd the Thief I made no scruple at taking these Goods, and being very glad of them too" (p. 260). Moll makes similar excuses when she steals the child's necklace, blaming the maid for failing to watch the child closely:

...no doubt the Child had a Maid sent to take care of it, but she, like a careless Jade, was taken up perhaps with some Fellow that had met her by the way, and so the poor Baby wandered till it fell into my Hands.

(p. 258)
How many readers stop at this point and consider where Moll's two young children (fathered by the clerk at the bank, both of whom are under five years of age) are at the time their mother is wandering the streets of London mugging toddlers? Moreover, readers are almost inclined to accept Moll's argument that by stealing the child's necklace she is warning the child's parents of their maid's carelessness.

This ability Moll possesses, of forcing readers to suspend their judgments until they become implicated, through their compliance with the conflicting rhetorical claims Moll makes, effectively prevents most readers from standing in judgment of Moll Flanders.

Moll's moral blindness, moreover, prevents her from judging herself, for, as Robert Bell has noted, Moll "does not see herself as the rogue whose tale she tells."44 However, readers who refuse to judge Moll are, metaphorically speaking, allowing Defoe to lead them around by the nose. Moral judgment is possible, but it requires that readers inject themselves into the fictional world Defoe has created and judge Moll by the world they bring with them to Defoe's fictional world. In other words, readers must extend Defoe's text; readers' judgments of Defoe's text must be predicated upon the readers' personal experience; that is, the criterion by which moral judgment of Moll is to be passed is extra-textually provided. For instance, as I have demonstrated, readers judging Moll's
alleged reformation in light of *The Book of Common Prayer* would be hard pressed to acknowledge Moll's repentance is sincere.

George A. Starr, in discussing Defoe's use of realistic details, notes how Defoe skillfully draws readers into his fictional universe:

Details that appear to be introduced for their psychological, social, or economic import, or for the sake of narrative realism, frequently involve covert appeals for sympathy as well; their function is not only descriptive or analytic, but also rhetorical. Some of them call in question the conventional assumptions and values which ordinarily shape our judgment, and attempt to make us judge more favorably than we otherwise would, given the outward facts of a case. More often, it is the tone rather than the substance of our judgments that they induce us to modify; they insist that reprehensible as a character may be, he merits our compassion, not our contempt.45

The world of Defoe's "edited" text proves insufficient for readers to assess Defoe's tale. Defoe insists that readers bring their own "worlds," their own understanding and life experience, to the fictional world Defoe has created, if
they wish to comprehend the lesson Moll has to offer. Readers must, therefore, extend Defoe's text.

In discussing the apparent contradiction between the early narrative depiction of Moll as a mother who abandons her young and later depictions which show the transported Moll as a loving mother, Ian Watt suggested "that in reading Defoe we must posit a kind of limited liability for the narrative, accepting whatever is specifically stated, but drawing no inferences from omissions, however significant they may seem." Watt's critical assumptions limited him to a consideration of Defoe's text alone. Although he was able to identify the presence of a narrator/narrative disjunction in Defoe's text, because he was unwilling to draw any inferences from omissions within the text, Watt possessed no effective means of accounting for the presence of the disjunction within the text. Watt, consequently, blamed his failure as a critical reader (that is, his inability to account for the narrator/narrative disjunction) as a fault of the author. In fact, Watt's obtuse reading of Defoe's text mirrors Moll Flanders reading of her own life-story.

In suggesting that readers limit their understanding of Defoe's text to the text itself, Watt betrays his lack of understanding with what Defoe wishes to accomplish. Through Moll's self-delusions and the editor-narrator's omissions, Defoe declares his narrative to be only a partial text.
Defoe, consequently, invites readers to complete, or at least to attempt to complete, his partial text. Defoe offers through his text an example of his principal theme, a demonstration of what he is attempting to declare by his text: that is, that which is called one thing may, in fact, actually be something else altogether.


3. Defoe, in the persona of the "editor," purports to offer readers "the History of a wicked Life repented of," and although the editor admits that in the New World Moll "was not so extraordinary a Penitent as she was a first," there is little reason for the reader, based on what the editor says, to doubt the sincerity of Moll's repentance at this point in the narrative. Based on the Moll's testimony and on the edited version of that testimony offered to the reader, however, there are, by the time the reader has completed a perusal of the narrative, significant reasons for doubting the sincerity of Moll's repentance, as I will demonstrate.

4. Even adherents to the "no irony" camp recognize this attribute of the narrative. For example, Ian Watt admits that Defoe's "plot... flatly contradicts Defoe's purported moral theme." See Watt. Rise. p. 115. Watt, however, fails to discover irony in this contradiction.

6. The Book of Common Prayer says the following concerning sin:

   all they are accursed...who do err and go astray from the commandments of God

Among sins specifically listed are fornication, theft, and the worshipping of false gods [the love of wealth, for instance]. See Liturgia Tigurina: or, The book of common prayer, and administration of the sacraments and other rites and ceremonies of the church, according to the use of the Church of England....London: by Charles Bill, MDCXCI. p. H6r.

7. With reference to acknowledging one’s sins, The Book of Common Prayer says the following:

   ...let us (remembering the dreadful judgment hanging over our heads, and always ready to fall upon us) return into our Lord God with all contrition and meekness of heart, bewailing and
lamenting our sinful life, acknowledging and confessing our offenses....


8. Regarding the renunciation of the fruits of past sins, The Book of Common Prayer says, let us seek "to bring forth worthy fruits of penance. For now is the ax put unto the root of the trees, so that every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire."


9. By the following passage, The Book of Common Prayer intimates change will occur within the penitent sinner:

Turn ye...from all your wickedness, and your sin shall not be your destruction. Cast away from you all your ungodliness that ye have done, make you new hearts and a new spirit.


11. Defoe’s editor-narrator admits he has altered the story Moll provided him with:

It is true, that the original of this Story is put into new Words, and the Stile of the famous Lady we here speak of is a little alter’d, particularly she is made to tell her own Tale in modester Words than she told it at first....


In my conclusions I will comment upon the implications of having only an edited version of Moll’s story available.


23. Other critics, too, have commented upon Moll's egocentric personality. J. A. Michie, for example, notes that Moll "lacks the capacity for a feeling for others strong enough to survive conflict with her own interest." See J. A. Michie. "Unity." p. 88. And Robert Columbus claims that Moll's "Fulfillment in...life...comes through her yielding to egocentric inclinations." See Robert Columbus. "Conscious Art." p. 431. Ian Watt, too, comments upon Moll's egocentricity, although Watt prefers to term it "a restless, amoral and strenuous individualism." Ian Watt. Rise. p. 114.


25. Other critics are prepared to question, in a straightforward manner, Moll's reliability as a narrator. Paula Backscheider, for example, after contrasting Moll with Defoe's Roxana, admits that readers sometimes have strong reasons to doubt Moll's reports concerning what other people think of her. See Backscheider. Ambition. p. 199. Everett Zimmerman condemns not only Moll Flanders, but all of Defoe's narrators as being "enmeshed in their own history," and insists that "their accounts of the past must inevitably be limited or implausible." Zimmerman. Novel. p. 75.
26. Moll says the following:

...if he had known me, and how easy the Trifle he aim'd at, was to be had, he would have troubled his Head no farther, but have given me four or five Guineas, and have lain with me the next time he had come at me.

(p. 64)


31. George A. Starr, for instance, admits that Moll's "initial essay in shoplifting undeniably marks another fresh start in the narrative." See George A. Starr. Defoe &

32. Moll returns the stolen horse when she realizes that the value of the horse and the ease with which it may be described assure that the owner will advertise the theft and offer a reward. Wherever Moll boards the horse, chances remain high that the stable owner or one of his employees will turn the horse over to its rightful owner in order to collect the reward. The theft of the horse thus creates an unacceptable risk level. See pp. 326-327.

34. Although Moll is transported to serve as a convicted felon for only five years, Jemy was "under Bonds and Security not to return to England any more, as long as he liv'd." See p. 391. Moll, of course, is guilty of aiding and abetting a felon when she willingly accompanies Jemy back to England.


36. Ibid.

37. Defoe's narrator of the preface admits he has put Moll's story "into new Words" and that he has altered Moll's style (p. 37). Later, statements Moll makes suggest that the amount of editing which has taken place is substantial.


47. Watt recognizes that Moll does not reform, but because he denies Defoe's tale is "consistently ironic," he has no way of accounting for Moll's failure to reform other than to claim that Defoe's text has been marred by hasty composition. See Watt. Rise. p. 143.
Conclusions

Both the discrete and the extended texts of the Popish Plot displayed narrator/narrative disjunctions which elicited from critics a wide variety of responses. These responses, in turn, offer twentieth-century literary critics a number of insights into the function of the narrator/narrative disjunction. Furthermore, because many fictional narratives exhibit narrator/narrative disjunctions, a study of the narrator/narrative disjunction and its function within a fictional narrative promises critics substantial rewards for their endeavors. This study, in fact, has revealed six insights into the narrator/narrative disjunction.

First, the narrator/narrative disjunction directs audience attention to the existence of an essential conflict between the claims made by the narrator and those made by the narrative. During the Popish Plot, for instance, Whig polemics depicted alleged Roman Catholic conspirators as fanatical, well-trained, bloodthirsty, and a genuine threat to the British crown. Yet in his original deposition Titus Oates listed no less than five assassination attempts that had failed, five assassination attempts, one might add, which succeeded in arousing the suspicions of no one near the King. The narrator/narrative disjunction also forces readers to accept greater responsibility for discovering
meaning within a given text. Members of the London audience of 1678-1681, for instance, undoubtedly asked themselves questions such as this: "How much of a threat can assassins be if they have already tried and failed five times?" The narrator/narrative disjunction thus reveals discrepancies within a discrete text and elicits from its audience questions which aim at providing a rationale for these apparent discrepancies.

When a narrator/narrative disjunction occurs, readers' tasks often correspond to and complement the tasks performed by editors: like editors, readers must, to some extent, re-organize textual materials; while it is true most organizational work is performed by a text's author, editors re-organize textual materials to some extent. Defoe's editor-narrator, for instance, so re-organizes Moll's life that he omits mention of six of Moll's sexual correspondents.

Readers also re-organize textual materials, but with a different purpose in mind. Unlike editors, who tend to edit superfluous materials out of a text, readers often edit materials into a text; that is, a given reader's response to one text is frequently influenced by that reader's previous experience with other texts. Thus, as I argued in relation to Defoe's text, meaning in a text exhibiting a narrator/narrative disjunction is often dependent upon readers' willingness to inject themselves into the fictional
world which has been created for them and to access the data which the author has provided in light of previous confrontations with any other texts with which the individual reader has had contact, as, for instance, I did in judging Moll’s alleged repentance by the text of the Lenten penance service found in The Book of Common Prayer. Defoe’s editor-narrator and Moll Flanders both claim Moll has repented. Yet as I have demonstrated, readers familiar with the Lenten penance service as found in The Book of Common Prayer would experience difficulty in confirming the validity of Moll’s alleged reformation. It is safe to assume that the majority of Defoe’s original audience would have been thoroughly familiar with this portion of The Book of Common Prayer, so it is probably equally safe to assume many members of Defoe’s original audience would have experienced difficulty in acknowledging Moll’s repentance as sincere. Defoe had to be aware of his audience’s familiarity with The Book of Common Prayer, so in describing Moll’s repentance in a manner which stood at such variance with repentance as defined by the Church of England, Defoe (despite his status as a member of one of the dissenting sects) must have recognized that many members of his audience would fail to be convinced by Moll’s claims of repentance. In fact, Defoe may well have anticipated his audience reading Moll’s alleged repentance back against the applicable text in The Book of Common Prayer.
Secondly, the narrator/narrative disjunction clearly challenges reader credulity. And such a challenge generally elicits some type of response, written or oral. Narrator/narrative disjunctions force readers into an interpretive stance as readers attempt a reconciliation of the apparent conflict between the claims made by the narrator and those made by the narrative which the presence of a narrator/narrative disjunction announces within a given text.

Thirdly, the presence of a narrator/narrative disjunction also provides a textually explicit acknowledgement of the difficulties inherent in the interpretive process. Much of Titus Oates's early success may be attributed to two features of his narrative. First, Oates's narrative (like Defoe's narrative) raised far more interpretive questions than it answered. Bishop Gilbert Burnet, for example, relates that Oates "gave a long account of the burning of London, at which they [Jesuits] intended to have killed the King: But they relented, when they saw him so active in quenching the fire." Why would Jesuits, who according the Oates and Whig propagandists owed no loyalty to anyone but the Pope, be moved to alter their plans by the sight of the English King's active participation in fighting the Great Fire of London? Having made this claim, Oates provided no explanation for the Jesuits' alleged behavior. Oates's narrative kept raising
questions which Oates, as narrator, steadfastly refused to answer. Secondly, Oates's narrative owed much of its initial success to the abundance of physical detail (names, dates, places, amounts of money exchanged, etc.) which proved so extensive that they were deemed beyond mere invention. Bishop Burnet reveals that all of London was "enflamed" with Titus Oates's "discovery," a discovery which "consisted of so many particulars that it was thought to be above invention."2 These two narrative features, in fact, are two of the most notable features of Defoe's *Moll Flanders*, and Defoe, interestingly enough, was a London resident during the time when all Londoners became co-inscribers of the extended text of the Popish Plot, when all Londoners became actors in the elaborate fiction initiated and co-directed by Titus Oates.

As I demonstrated in Chapters III and IV, Sidney and Defoe were both concerned with interpretive difficulties. Sidney divided his characters into two groups with differing interpretive abilities: one group, which included Pamela, Gynecia, and Dametas, proved capable of penetrating the masks of Pyrocles and/or Musidorus; a second group, which included Basilius, Cleophila, Philanax, and Euarchus, failed to penetrate the two princes' masks. Defoe’s concern with interpretive difficulties in also apparent, for Defoe assigns readers two complex interpretive tasks: Defoe expects readers not only to critique Moll’s alleged
reformation, but also to critique Moll’s interpretation of her own life story.

Fourthly, the narrator/narrative disjunction proves to be but one of many ways in which an author may purposely problemize his text. It is this problemization of the text which forces readers into an active confrontation with the text; it is this problemization, in turn, which entices readers to contribute to the extension of the text. The acts of reading critically or of producing a formal written response are, in fact, the acts which initiate the extension of a given text.

In Chapter III, I argued that Sidney’s narrator was a disseminator of disparate, seemingly irreconcilable information, and the narrator/narrative disjunction he reveals is, in fact, one of the two ways Sidney invites his readers into the fictional world of his text. Sidney also invites readers into the fictional world he has created by leading his readers to identify so completely with the characters of the two princes that readers forfeit, momentarily, their own sense of self, their own moral integrity, and thus become implicated in the crimes which the two princes commit. Defoe, not only employs these two strategies, he also invites readers into his text by problemizing Moll Flanders in other ways as well. The abbreviated summaries which dot Defoe’s text, for instance, contribute to the problemization of Defoe’s text. Ian
Watt's remarks notwithstanding, most readers appear to find such problemization of a discrete text provocative. The simple fact is, Defoe's text raises far more questions in readers' minds than the text alone proves sufficient to answer. Readers determined to comprehend Defoe's text are forced to seek guidance outside Defoe's text, and the help readers seek may be found in the "narrative" which readers bring with them from previous encounters with other discrete or extended texts. During the Popish Plot, discrepancies in the testimonies of Plot witnesses forced readers to turn to some other means of assessing the testimony being provided. Tory writers offered assistance at this point, providing character analyses and life-stories of the various plot witnesses, many of whom were felons. Whig polemicists countered with pamphlets such as The character of a Jesuit. Unable to pass judgment upon the validity of the Popish Plot based only upon alleged witness testimonies, most members of the London audience was forced to turn elsewhere in hopes of finding additional information to aid them in their assessment of the claims made by various Plot witnesses.

Any problemization of a text forces readers to suspend (momentarily at any rate) their judgment processes; having suspended his or her reader's judgment, an author is free to introduce mitigating circumstances which serve to complicate the interpretive process even more. Complicating the judgment process proves an effective means of manipulating
one's audience, for as I have demonstrated in the case of the *Old Arcadia* and *Moll Flanders*, complicating the judgment processes of readers prevents readers from judging a character as harshly as that character's actions might warrant. The polemics of the Popish Plot demonstrated how this complicating process operates: conflicting claims made by the two opposing parties represented in the polemical debate prevented many critics in the London audience from taking sides and benefitted Opposition forces which remained powerful as long as a significant number of audience members possessed no means of exposing Titus Oates as an unreliable narrator. After all, the self-proclaimed "Savior of Three Nations" insisted Roman Catholics were plotting the overthrow of the British government. While many fanatical Protestant dissenters supported Oates and his claims, more moderate Protestants (both dissenters and members of the Church of England) acknowledged the likelihood that some plot against Charles's Restoration government existed. All, in fact, agreed that a plot existed; but whether it was a plot by Roman Catholics seeking to blame Protestant dissenters for the nation's unrest or a plot by Protestant dissenters seeking to return England to a commonwealth and place the blame for such a revolution upon Roman Catholics, few Londoners knew for sure.

The relative effectiveness of this complicating strategy is clearly demonstrated by audience confrontations
with the *Old Arcadia* and *Moll Flanders*. Both Sidney and Defoe carefully modulate their readers' responses to their texts' major characters. Despite the heinous nature of the actions committed by Pyrocles, Musidorus, or by Moll Flanders, readers almost universally respond in a positive manner to each of these particular characters.

Each of the discrete texts examined share a common feature. In each text a strong narrative voice relates the narrative to readers. Indeed, the fifth insight which this study of the narrator/narrative disjunction reveals is that a strong narrative voice appears a necessity in any text displaying a narrator/narrative disjunction. In the often confusing world of the disjunctive text readers willingly surrender themselves and their judgments (at least until they have completed the text) to the authoritative presence represented by the strong narrative voice. And it is this surrender which facilitates the narrator's manipulation of the reader.

Finally, the discrete text of the Popish Plot, which has been identified as Titus Oates's initial deposition before Judge Edmundbury Godfrey, suggests that texts displaying a narrator/narrative disjunction tend to elicit from their audience a response (written or oral), which I have identified as an extension of the narrative. The extended text, in turn, proves to be a concept with exciting and consequential implications for literary criticism.
Whenever readers are challenged by a text, they are being invited to continue inscription of the text, to extend the text, by producing a formal or written critique of the discrete text. Texts which challenge reader credulity, texts which invite readers to respond to them, are texts which willingly surrender to readers much of the responsibility for discovering meaning within that text. Such texts, clearly, invite audience extension. Titus Oates's original testimony to Israel Tonge (lost forever to posterity) most properly represents the discrete text of the Popish Plot. However, the only written record of this narrative is to be found in the original deposition Oates swore before Judge Edmundbury Godfrey. This, consequently, is the text I identify as the discrete text of the Popish Plot. The testimonies of other plot witnesses, the productions of Whig and Tory propagandists, and even the later (convenient) testimony of Titus Oates and other Plot witnesses must be considered part of the "extended text" of the Popish Plot. Because Oates's testimony exhibited a narrator/narrative disjunction, it invited extension, invited other parties to respond to the text Oates provided.

Oates, apparently, wished to evoke an entirely different type of response when he first concocted his tale. The first member of Titus Oates's audience was the Protestant fanatic Israel Tonge. At a point in time in which Titus Oates was reduced to beggary, Tonge often fed
the starving Oates. Tonge was a Protestant fanatic who blamed Roman Catholics for firing London in 1666, a conflagration which cost Tonge his pastorate and unhinged the dissenting minister. In all likelihood, Tonge subjected the hungry Oates to an unending diatribe while Oates dined at Tonge's table. At later meals, Oates embellished Tonge's tale and repeated it to the maniacal minister, thus feeding Tonge's hatred of Roman Catholics and his desire to revenge himself upon Catholics. Had Oates's tale proceeded no further than this, history would know nothing of Titus Oates. Once Oates repeated Israel Tonge's tale to Tonge (who, curiously enough, proved unable to recognize it as his own), Tonge's response was to insist upon a broadening of Oates's audience. Tonge arranged for Oates to tell his story to Christopher Kirby, a chemist in the employ of Charles II, who brought news of the plot to the King. The day before Oates was to testify before the King's council, Tonge brought Oates to Judge Edmundbury Godfrey and had Oates sign a deposition which contained details of the plot which Oates alleged existed. Few members of this newly expanded audience embraced Oates's claims fully, but Godfrey's murder fueled fears and inspired Parliamentary sectarians to force a further widening of Oates's audience. At this point Oates ceased to be the primary inscriber of the extended text of the Popish Plot and became instead victimized by the audience his fictional narrative had
inspired. The fanatical elements of Oates's audience demanded more, and audience satisfaction became the primary goal of the additional testimony Oates offered. Left to his own devices, it is doubtful Titus Oates would ever have accused Catherine of Braganza of participating in a plot to kill her husband. But Oates had an audience to appease, and his audience demanded that the Queen be accused. This historical example suggests that at some point the extended text reaches a critical state, at some point the audience, and not the author, become principal inscribers of the extended text.

Each author studied clearly views "audience" as a bipartite entity. Dryden divides his characters [the godly and those who are but parodies of godliness] and his audience [Fools and the Wise] into two groups. In the bookseller's introduction, a framing device employed by the anonymous author of The Plot in a Dream, the audience consists of those whose eyes are open and those whose eyes are shut. Sidney divides his Arcadian characters into two groups: those capable of penetrating the princes' disguises and those incapable of performing this critical act. And Defoe's text has elicited a two-fold response from literary critics, some of whom perceive consistent irony within the text and others who deny the text is consistently ironic. While it may be argued, perhaps cogently, that such a bipartite division of audience is a gross oversimplification,
I submit that the division is, in fact, a natural one resulting from the fact that fictional narratives are a form of mask, the masks of literate cultures! Just as primitive masks imply a duality of meaning -- one meaning represented by a surface reading of the mask and of the being or object which the mask represents and another meaning which penetrates the surface of the mask to discover the identity of the being guilty of co-opting the mask -- fictional narratives, because they are masks, imply the possibility of two disparate readings, one which acknowledges the surface or literal meaning of the text, another which exposes the text and its meaning, or identity, more fully.

Like Coleridge, I acknowledge the reader's freedom to surrender or to refuse to surrender himself to a text. Of their own free wills, readers decide whether or not they will suspend disbelief upon entering the fictional world of the discrete text. I am unconvinced, however, of the degree of free will which remains once the reader has made the choice to suspend disbelief. Readers who abandon themselves to the mask which the text represents experience a transformation which mirrors that which overtakes Sidney's two princes; that is, they identify so completely with the roles they assume thereby that they surrender, at least temporarily, their own identities. Robert Bell argues convincingly that Moll Flanders' failure to reform results from her inability to identify fully with the role she
purports to assume. Moll, according to Bell, fails to convince certain audience members of the validity of her reformation because Moll remains unconvinced of the necessity or of the desirability of reformation. Discrete texts, in fact, assign to audience members specific roles and expect from audience members specific (although often unstated) [re]actions. The willing suspension of disbelief, then, represents little more than an acknowledgement of that role and agreement to perform that role for a period of time during which the text is being perused. Audience members, however, prove just as subject to the fiction to which they surrender themselves, as those fictions are subject to the demands of the audience. This, I believe, is the point that most of the dream visions produced in response to the Popish Plot sought to make. Once enveloped by a fiction, audience members become subject to the demands of that fiction. Audience members may choose to exit a text prematurely (that is, to set aside the book before reaching the end of the text), but as long as they remain within the confines of the fictional world which the text represents, audience members signify their willingness to remain subject to the demands of the fictional world which that text re-creates for and through them. Furthermore, although audience members may assume that they exit the fictional world of a text with their individual identity intact, I believe that each encounter with a text permanently alters the reader’s
identity in some way.

The extended text implies a certain degree of audience responsibility for the text. Just as John Dryden and the anonymous author of *The Plot in a Dream* were moved to engage actively the text of Titus Oates's narrative, critics are moved to confront actively Sidney's narrative and Defoe's narrative. When such a critical (that is, written) confrontation occurs, each respective text is extended as audience members become co-authors or co-inscribers of the extended text. And just as Titus Oates lost control of his narrative once members of the London audience began participating in the inscription of the [extended] narrative, the author of a fictional text surrenders sole authorship of his or her text once the narrative is offered for public consumption and audience members begin responding to it. Furthermore, if the lessons of the Popish Plot are valid, once audience members accept their roles as co-inscribers of the text, they quickly establish proprietary rights over the text, including the right to dispose of the text in any way they deem appropriate.

The problemized fictional narrative invites readers into the text, invites readers to extend the text. Consequently, while critics such as Ian Watt may call for a "limited liability for [the] narrative," the texts examined suggest that fictional narratives defy such restrictions. The expansion of his audience created a
situation in which Titus Oates was forced to surrender control of the narrative he related. And once Oates surrendered control of his narrative to the demands of his audience, no effective means remained to limit the narrative in any way. Oates’s narrative became the product of a collective authorship, with Oates relegated to the status of textual initiator. Similarly, once an audience establishes proprietary rights to a given text, that text ceases to exist and gives way instead to a collective or extended text.

Extended texts are dynamic texts which remain in a continual process of revision. Fictional texts, in fact, lend themselves readily to alteration, including the type of alteration which results in an extension of the text. Each of the texts examined highlight, in one way or another, the essential malleability of the text in question. Titus Oates’s fictional narrative proved malleable enough to encourage other fictional narratives, which other alleged plot witnesses volunteered. Furthermore, all Plot witnesses expressed a willingness to alter the testimonies they provided in accordance with audience demands. In addition, the eclectic investigative procedures practiced by the Parliamentary committee examining alleged Plot witnesses demonstrate the willingness of members of Parliament to mold the narrative in accordance with their own needs.

Its status as an "edited" text enables readers to
identify *Moll Flanders* as an extended text; that is, because the text of *Moll Flanders* has (allegedly) been altered in accordance with a reader's demands, the reader in question being the editor-narrator, the text is equivalent to an extended text. Moll comments repeatedly upon certain of her life experiences. Subsequent accounts of those experiences violate narratorial claims made in Moll's initial description of the event. Yet readers are hampered in identifying Moll as an unreliable narrator because they can never know the extent of the editor-narrator's interference with the text. Did Moll contradict herself in the original narrative, or is it the editor deletions which give Moll's narrative this self-contradictory appearance? Moll's constant remolding of events eventually exposes her alleged reformation as a rhetorical claim which Moll's actions specifically contradict. Yet it is possible that if readers were presented with an unedited version of Moll's tale they might conclude differently. By introducing a second narrator, then, Defoe has further complicated his readers' interpretive tasks.

On the surface, Sidney's *Old Arcadia*, a tale allegedly about the operations of fate, appears to belie the concept of malleability. Sidney's text, however, specifically examines how the assumption of a mask (or the reading of a text) may change the individual forever. Just as Pyrocles becomes subject to self-fashioning by surrendering himself
fully to the role he plays as Cleophila, readers become subject to a type of self-fashioning every time they surrender themselves to a discrete narrative. Although Pyrocles believes himself to be unchanged by his assumption of the role of the Amazon, the narrative reveals Pyrocles's swift acquiescence to the power of the mask he assumes. Similarly, readers who surrender themselves to the mask of the fictional text, who allow themselves to be drawn, for a time, into the fictional world of the text, cannot escape the effects of assuming that mask: readers are refashioned, remolded by their encounters with texts, even if the changes which occur remain difficult for readers or for their friends and acquaintances to recognize.

The extended text, always in the process of being re-inscribed, is by implication an incomplete text. Interestingly enough, the essentially incomplete nature of the text proved a significant concern of many eighteenth-century writers, as is apparent from texts such as Mackenzie's *A Man of Feeling* and Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*.

Extension of a text both inflates and deflates the text, for the simple reason that any critique of a narrator/narrative disjunction both encourages and simultaneously frustrates critics' attempts to elaborate the text. I have argued, for instance, that the narrator/narrative disjunction encourages readers to extend the text. From this standpoint, extension inflates a given
text. What the Popish Plot revealed, however, is that the farther one moves from an original text, that is, the more a text is extended, the less the text remains subject to meaningful control. Once Titus Oates's audience became co-inscribers of his text, in other words once Oates's text had been subjected to extension, Oates lost effective control of his narrative. A similar experience occurs, I believe, to Daniel Defoe in *Moll Flanders*. Defoe so problemizes his text, he surrenders so much responsibility for the meaning of his text to his audience, that, for some readers, Defoe appears to lose control. As far as this critic is concerned, Defoe remains in control. But it is easy to see how critics such as Ian Watt, critics whose methodological assumptions provide no room for such a thing as an extended text, might easily become disoriented by an author such as Defoe, an author who demands that his reader extend his text if they are to discover meaning therein.

Extended texts are always self-inscribed, and extended texts, consequently, differ (at times almost imperceptively) from one individual to the next. The extended text of the Popish Plot provides an interesting and graphic illustration of this point. William Bedloe, it has been noted, named five murderers whom he insisted had murdered Judge Edmundbury Godfrey. Among the five Bedloe named was Samuel Atkins, clerk to Samuel Pepys. The Opposition hoped to use Atkins to implicate Pepys and Pepys to implicate James, Duke
of York, in Godfrey's murder. When Atkins was able to provide an alibi for the time Bedloe alleged to have seen Atkins at Somerset House standing over Godfrey's body, the Opposition was forced to abandon its plans to implicate James in Godfrey's murder. The Opposition then turned its attentions to Miles Prance, the London goldsmith whom the Opposition suborned into testifying in the Godfrey murder case. Like Bedloe, Prance named five murders. None of the five Bedloe named, however, were among the five Prance had named. When the discrepancy was noted in the press, Whig propagandists countered with the explanation that more than one band of assassins had been involved. Over a century later, James Hogg explored the implications of self-inscription of the extended text when he offered readers the same tale told by three distinct narrators. Hogg relates the events which lead up to the death of his young protagonist at the hands of the protagonist's brother, the "justified sinner." In relating what is basically the same tale three different times, once by a supposedly neutral narrator, once by the "justified sinner," and a third time by the protagonist who is slain, Hogg explores narratorial perceptions and the ways in which narratorial claims and emphasis can alter audience interpretation of the entire tale.

Because the extended text is self-inscribed, readers typically extend texts as they see fit and in accordance
with their individual needs. In the first chapter I explained how the Popish Plot represented, in many ways, a self-fulfilling prophecy; that is, it fulfilled the Opposition's need to discover some effective means of limiting Charles II's exercise of his monarchical powers. Both Sidney's and Defoe's texts provide expressions of readers fulfilling their own needs by extending the text. The intrusion of Pyrocles and Musidorus into the Arcadian desert, for instance, represents attempts by these two characters to extend the text (of Basilius' retirement) for their own needs. Similarly, Moll's insistence upon her repentance represents Moll's attempt to obtain admittance into the polite, Christian society [of the reader] by claiming repentance and by implicating the reader in Moll's acquittal of her own culpability.

Extended texts imply that no essential division exists between life and art. Readers live by and through texts; texts define and regulate readers' lives. In a literate society individuals are molded by three distinct aspects of their reading: 1) by what texts they read; 2) by the order in which they read those texts; and 3) by individual susceptibility to the literature; that is, by the individual's willingness to surrender his or her personal integrity to a given narrator and whether that integrity is surrendered only during perusal of the text or continues long after the perusal of the text has been completed.
I identified Dryden’s *Absalom and Achitophel* as an occasional text, that is, a text which both complements and comments upon some pre-existing text. I have argued, further, that Dryden’s narrative constitutes a part of the extended text of the Popish Plot. In a literate culture, in fact, all texts act much like occasional texts, or so the extended text seems to imply; that is, all texts are related to other texts -- but they are related not directly but rather through the medium of the reader. The reader, then, provides an inter-textual cohesiveness not immediately apparent in the body of the literature itself.

The fictional testimony of Titus Oates ordered the lives of thousands of seventeenth-century English men and women. But because it also addressed the fears and needs of a number of Englishmen, Oates’s fiction captivated its audience, an audience whose critical skills, for the most part, proved insufficient to enable members of that audience to escape the fictional world that Oates created and that Opposition forces supported. Only critical intervention by writers such as John Dryden, Roger L’Estrange, and the anonymous author of *The Plot in a Dream* succeeded in extricating the English audience from the fictive world Titus Oates had created. Once extricated, readers could seek new fictive worlds to explore....
NOTES


2. Ibid.

3. The character of a Jesuit. London: for J. Newton, 1681. See also pamphlets and broadsides such as The character of a papist in masquerade; supported by authority and experience. In answer to the character of a popish successor. n.p., 1681; and The character of a Tory. n.p., n.d. [1681?]; see also The Character of a Turbulent, pragmatical, Jesuit and factious Roman priest. n.p. 1678.


5. Although I identify Israel Tonge as the originator of the narrative in question, no record of Tonge's narrative remains, for it was an oral production which accompanied the meals Tonge provided for Oates. Similarly, there remains no
way of knowing whether or not Tonge's tale exhibited a narrator/narrative disjunction. Thus, while I acknowledge Tonge as the original "author" of the story of a plot to overthrow the English government, I nonetheless identify as the discrete text of the Popish Plot the narrative found in Titus Oates's initial deposition before Judge Edmundbury Godfrey, a narrative which represents a part of the written record of the English culture.


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"Arcadia Disjointed: Confrontations with Texts, Polemical,
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example provided by the extended text of the Popish Plot, that is, by the polemical press battle which raged during this major threat to Charles II's Restoration government, I identify what I term a narrator/narrative disjunction. The narrator/narrative disjunction occurs when the narrator or teller relates one story, while the narrative events he or she relates suggest or strongly intimate that the narrator should be adjudged less than reliable. In the course of this exploration, I read several Tory polemical texts on the Popish Plot, including Dryden's Absalom and Achitophel, not as literary works, but rather as literary critiques of the extended text of the Popish Plot. Turning my attentions to two admittedly fictional narratives, Sidney's Old Arcadia and Defoe's Moll Flanders, I then explore the ways in which these works, and any literary text displaying a narrator/narrative disjunction, may be critiqued according to the same rules established by Tory polemicists during their "readings" of the narrator/narrative disjunction present in the extended text of the Popish Plot.

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