Ethos and Authorship in “The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish”

A chunk of David Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas* recounts the misadventures of a harried vanity publisher, Timothy Cavendish. Fleeing his enemies, Cavendish pleads for fraternal assistance, but his brother instead proffers irony and maleficence. That brother tricks Cavendish into checking into Aurora House, a high security rest home where, at first, all seems rosy. When the illusion of that first pleasant night fades, Cavendish finds himself in agon, fighting to reclaim his lost freedom. He protests, “I checked in [...] believing Aurora House was a hotel. My brother made the booking, you see. But... oh, it’s his idea of a practical joke. Not in the least bit funny” (Mitchell 175). Happily for him, by ordeal’s end he, along with two allies and a stowaway, do break free because Cavendish “used [his] superior powers of language to chain the villain” (Mitchell 177). His struggle for his freedom, then, is a struggle of rhetoric.

Still today, rhetorical theory roots in Aristotle, to whom Cavendish alludes when he dubs his time in Aurora House as “peripatetic tribulation” (Mitchell 147). Although he writes a lowercase “p,” suggesting itinerancy, his literary sensibilities—which encompasses greats like Gibbon (147, 153), Tolkien (154), Shakespeare (Mitchell 154, 377), Dante (Mitchell 170), Swift (176), Conrad (Mitchell 355), Salinger (Mitchell 386), and Solzhenitsyn (Mitchell 180, 181, 387)—seem too keen to overlook the greater, conventionally capitalized meaning. Capitalized, Peripatetic means “of or pertaining to the Aristotelian school,” and that school stresses, even above logos and pathos, ethos.
Under Peripatetic episteme, ethos equates with credible personal character. Aristotle elaborates,

> We believe good men more fully and more readily than others: this is true generally whatever the question is, and absolute true where exact certainty is impossible and opinions are divided [...] It is not true, as some writers assume in their treatises on rhetoric, that the personal goodness revealed by the speaker contributes nothing to his power of persuasion; on the contrary, his character may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion he possesses. (1389)

During the philosopher’s time, however, rhetoric applied primarily to oratory rather than to writing. With its displacement of word and event, signifier and signified, voice and audience, writing differs inherently from verbal communication. Consequently, authorship trumps ethos, and Timothy Cavendish furnishes an example how.

Beginning with his casualness with truth, Cavendish pits ethos against the authority of his pen. The publisher admits that “desperation makes [him] wheedle” (Mitchell 155) and “hanker after lives[he] never led” (Mitchell 169), casting a pallor over his legitimacy. Such wheedling occurs in at least two instances: First, early in the narrative, he encounters a trio of “teenettes, dressed like Prostitute Barbie” (Mitchell 145), who litter on the sidewalk. When he voices an objection, the young girls assault him, and to save face, he refuses to report the crime and tells his ex-wife, “Madame X,” that his “muggers were five louts with swastikas shaved onto their skulls” (Mitchell 146). Cavendish shows a taste for hyperbole.

Second, en route to the “hotel,” he meets a Rastafarian in the train station, and he lets a “witless fib run wild” (Mitchell 170). The “black Virgil” (Mitchell 170) strikes up a conversation, inquiring about Cavendish’s destination. Out of self-preservation, Cavendish
stammers, “Hull... To return a novel. To a librarian who works there. A very famous poet. At the university. It’s in my bag. It’s called Half-Lives” (Mitchell 170). These lies do contain a modicum of truth, but little more.

His penchant to lie for self-preservation manifests itself again when, at the beginning of his memoirs, he finds himself embroiled in controversy. He says, “Look, I was Dermot ‘Duster’ Hoggins’s editor, not his shrink or his ruddy astrologer, so how could I have known what lay in store for Felix Finch on that infamous night” (Mitchell 146). To exculpate his name in connection Finch’s murder, he then mentions his memoirs specifically: “I make no apology, however, for (re)starting my own narrative with my version of that shocking affair” (Mitchell 150). The publisher makes no claim at objectivity. Rather, he appeals directly to subjectivity, claiming this version of the truth, labeled as “The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish,” as his own. Given his desire for self-preservation and his behavior in Adelstrop, he degrades the ethos of both himself and his manuscript.

By conceding his deviations from truth, Cavendish summons a rhetoric of procatalepsis, anticipating his readers’ concerns and addressing them. That procatalepsis, however, remains selective, and Cavendish injects further ethos-undermining ambiguity into his narrative. In addition to the previously mentioned “Madame X,” he also self-edits his manuscript. For example, he opts for words like c*** and f*****g (Mitchell 148, 154) and f*** (Mitchell 377). These withholdings echo the notion of writing sous rature, a technique employed commonly by both Heidegger and Derrida. In the introduction to Of Grammatology, Gayatri Spivak defines translates this term as “under erasure,” saying, “This is to write a word, cross it out, and then print both word and deletion. (Since the word is inaccurate, it is crossed out. Since it is necessary, it remains legible)” (Derrida xiv). She then concludes, “our language is twisted and
bent even as it guides us. Writing ‘under erasure’ is the mark of this contortion” (Derrida xiv). This lack of precision, this contortion, weakens the ethos of Cavendish and his account.

_Sous rature_ suggests that Cavendish’s vacuum of credibility owes, in part, to the failings of language, rather than his personal character. However, beyond the scope of the words and writing, he continues to negate his own ethos, particularly in his doubtable chronology. In the first sentence of this _Cloud Atlas_ section, Cavendish compositionally stutters, “One bright dusk, four, five, no, my God, _six_ summers ago” (Mitchell 145). Clearly, the six-year displacement of word and event affects the ethos of both manuscript and author.

Struggling to restore his narrative integrity, Cavendish then launches into a false beginning. Confusedly, he writes,

*Where was I?*

*Odd how the wrong stories pop into one’s head at my age.*

*It’s odd, no, it’s ruddy scary. I meant to begin this narrative with Dermot Hoggins... [time and scene break] (Mitchell 146).*

Attempting to excuse his faults through writing’s physical limitations, he says, “That’s the problem with inking one’s memoirs in longhand. You can’t go changing what you’ve already set down, not without botching things up even more” (Mitchell 146). Such reasoning may sound tenable, at least superficially; yet, during the course of his narrative, two other blips occur because of altered consciousness.

His first state of altered consciousness occurs at the station in Adelstrop. The Rastafarian offers Cavendish a drag, and the fleeing man “obeyed his offer and sucked on his turd-thick cigar.” When he asks in shock, “Ruddy hell! ‘What is this stuff?’” the Rastafarian says simply, “That don’t grow in Marlboro country.” Cavendish then remembers, “My head enlarged itself by
a magnitude of many hundreds, *Alice*-style, and became a multi-story car park wherein dwelt a thousand and one operatic Citroëns... Next thing I remember, I was on the train again” (Mitchell 170). The shock from the obviously illicit substance is so intense that, during the high, he refers to himself as “the Man Formerly Known as Tim Cavendish” (Mitchell 170), his senses, his reason, his sense of time, his credibility, even his very self displaced.

His second state of altered consciousness occurs at Aurora House. During a meal of a “tepid lamb chop” (Mitchell 181) and vegetables, Cavendish says, “as I pushed cold peas onto my plastic fork, a chain of firecrackers exploded in my skull and the old world came to an abrupt end” (Mitchell 181). He then suffers a putatively induced stroke (Mitchell 368), which he describes as a trio of vignettes for those “whose psyches have never been razed to rubble by the capillaries rupturing in their brains” (Mitchell 354). Cavendish notes that for a month after the incident, “I spoke like a spastic. My arms were dead. I couldn’t wipe my own arse. My mind shambled in fog yet was aware of my witlessness, and ashamed” (Mitchell 354). These holes in chronology, owing to both his physical and psychological instability, further undermine his character and his narrative.

In his version of these events, Cavendish portrays himself as a victim; he feels scared or intimidated in Adelstrop, and he eats drugged food unknowingly. Yet, at the beginning of the narrative, he also exhibits a lack of self control with alcohol. He praises a “1983 Chablis from the Duruzoi vineyard, a magic potion that dissolves our myriad tragedies into mere misunderstandings” (Mitchell 145). Then, at a literary party, Cavendish admits, “I got sloshed. Guy the Guy introduced me to a cocktail called ‘Ground Control to Major Tom.’ Time’s Arrow became Time’s Boomerang, and I lost count of all my majors” (Mitchell 147). In fact, Cavendish may well be an alcoholic. While an unwilling resident at Aurora House, the boiler man sneaks
him a dram of Irish malt. Cavendish reacts, “Rain on the Serengeti! Cacti flowered, cheetahs loped!” (Mitchell 360). For him, such encounters are hardly rare.

Cavendish also suggests a commercial bent. He concerns himself over writing a commercially snappy title (Mitchell 147), and his memoirs include film directions for a fictionalized director named Lars, “an intense, tutlenecked Swede” (Mitchell 355). Significantly, Cavendish writes not if his memoirs will become a film but rather “when” (Mitchell 354). Plus, as in bestselling “supermarket” literature, the narrative features thriller-like action sequences like grand theft auto, a gripping chase scene, and a whiteknuckled, improbable escape (Mitchell 380-381). Then follows a satisfying denouement, the epilogue allotting the Aurora House escapees each a satisfactory ending (Mitchell 385-387), where Cavendish emerges, like a stereotypical tragic hero, with new wisdom and a new vision for his life. He writes,

> Middle age is flown, but it is attitude, not years, that condemns one to the ranks of the undead, or else proffers salvation. In the domain of the young there dwells many an undead soul. They rush about so, their inner putrefaction is concealed for a few decade, that is all. Outside, fat snowflakes are falling on slate roofs and granite walls. Like Solzhenitsyn laboring in Vermont, I shall beaver away in exile, far from the city that knitted my bones (Mitchell 387).

Following this Campbellian emergence, poetically pleasing diction, and exposition of universal truths to rhetorically tickle his readers, the narrative then ends where it begins—with the words “one bright dusk” (Mitchell 145, 387). These features of Cavendish’s narrative, though certainly not conclusive, strongly imply mass-market niching.

His motive for commercialism? In a word, “creditors” (Mitchell 152). After the legal system falls upon Dermot Hoggins—the author of *Knuckle Sandwich* who, in a drunken stupor,
murders a naysaying critic—Cavendish enjoys a flurry of “runaway success” (Mitchell 151). He writes that “On the wings sweet, free publicity, my *Knuckle Sandwich* turkey soared up the bestseller charts, where it roosted until poor Dermot was sentenced to fifteen of the best in Wormwood Scrubs” (Mitchel 151). Not surprisingly, “Money entered [Cavendish’s] cavernously empty accounts like the North Sea through a Dutch dike” (Mitchell 152). For a time, he feels the intoxication of success.

The financial storehouse of that success, however, proves fickle. When word of his monetary earnings spreads, his “saber-toothed meerkat creditors bounded into [his] office” (Mitchell 152), and Dermot’s thuggish, London Irish brothers demand compensation of fifty thousand pounds (Mitchell 154). The publishing company strapped for money, his bookkeeper, Mrs. Latham, informs him, “Every *Knuckle Sandwich* penny has already been Hoovered up by long-standing debts... This is the age of credit limits, Mr. Cavendish” (Mitchell 155). Only after his ordeal does financial stability return, a studio optioning *Knuckle Sandwich—The Movie,* but “a lot of the money will go to the Hogginses” (Mitchell 387).

His cash cow parcelled between creditors and thugs, Cavendish has suspiciously produce something resembling a “gusty fictional memoir” (Mitchell 151) that he intends to turn into a movie likewise. With his eye on movie production, he relegates the entire memoir to a cinematographic preface. This relegation suggests error on a philosophical level; as Spivak points out, “It is clear that, as it is commonly understood, the preface harbors a lie... ‘It involves a norm of truth,’ although it might well be the insertion of an obvious fiction into an ostensibly ‘true’ discourse” (Derrida x). By their nature, prefaces inject fiction into truth.

Yet another strike against ethos is the author’s bigotry. Early during his stay at Aurora House, Cavendish’s snide quips turn sexist as he presents his case to the Residents’ Committee.
He tells fellow-resident Gwendolyn Bendincks, “Look, I’m sure you’re a reasonable woman,” noting immediately afterwards that “The oxymoron passed without comment” (Mitchell 179). Whether due to bigotry or a passing frustration, this “oxymoron” calls into question the author’s ability to present his memoirs in a spirit of fairness.

His brother casts other aspersions on Cavendish. The publisher admits to his brother Denholme, “I’ve had a minor run-in with the wrong sort. If I can’t get my hands on sixty thousand pounds, I’m going to take an awful beating,” to which Denholme replies, “So, you’re shoddy at being duplicitous” (Mitchell 157). Given that Cavendish has appealed for money previously (Mitchell 157) and given his cashing in on another man’s misfortune (Mitchell 150), his brother’s angst seems understandable. However, Cavendish reinforces the accusation of duplicity himself.

In order to write, writers must adopt a fictionalized persona, and during the course of his narrative, Cavendish fictionalizes himself abundantly. “Tim Cavendish the Disgusted Citizen” (Mitchell 146); the “Last of my Tribe” (Mitchell 177); “Cavendish the Younger” (Mitchell 180); “starving man” (Mitchell 358); “True Grit Cavendish,” “Curious Cavendish,” “Feral Cavendish,” “John Wayne Cavendish,” “Cavendish à la Carl Sagan” (Mitchell 355), and “Timothy ‘Lazarus’ Cavendish” (Mitchell 387). Yet, not all such fictionalizations name the publisher directly. He also sees himself as “Dirty Harry,” “Lisping Baggins” (Mitchell 154), “Gulliver among the Lilliputians” (Mitchell 176), and Robert Thorn (Mitchell 177). At one point, he additionally sees himself as the duplicitous Samuel Fosso (Mitchell 164).

A preeminent African photographer, Samuel Fosso creates art from illusory identities, giving substance to Denholme’s accusations. When Cavendish declares, “Je suis un homme
solitaire,” he echoes the artistic philosophy of the French-speaking Fosso, who, in a poetic press release, said,

As in all my works, I am both character and director. I don’t put myself in the photographs: my work is based on specific situations and people I am familiar with, things I desire, rework in my imagination and afterward, I interpret. I borrow an identity. In order to succeed I immerse myself in the necessary physical and mental state. It’s a way of freeing me from myself. A solitary path. I am a solitary man.¹ (artinfo.com)

Like Fosso, Cavendish plays, evidently, both character and director in his memoirs. Like the Fosso, Cavendish, rather than recounting truth, delves into his imagination, interprets, and as shown above, borrows another identity.

The author, readers may conclude, lacks ethos. In a more critical, anatomized light, ethos subdivides into “good sense, good moral character, and goodwill” (Aristotle 1378), and Cavendish cannot claim a single one of these three subdivisions: His drinking habits and experimentation with controlled substances thwart any claims of good sense. His sexism and deviations from the truth prevent good moral character. And the commercial aspects of his memoirs, their uncanny similarities to his Knuckle Sandwich bestseller, casts serious doubts on his goodwill; rather than writing to inform, Cavendish writes to sell books. Yet, because of the power of authorship, particularly the author’s rhetoric of contrasts, readers will excuse him.

The first contrast occurs in the treatment of space, and for rhetorical effect, he describes his first night in Aurora House in particularly flowery terms. He says,

¹ The original French reads, « … Comme dans toutes mes œuvres, je suis à la fois le personnage et le metteur en scène. Je ne me mets pas moi-même dans les photographies: mon travail est basé sur des situations spécifiques et des personnages avec qui je suis familier, des choses que je désire, que j’élaboré dans mon imagination et, qu’ensuite j’interprète. J’emprunte une identité. Pour y réussir, je me plonge dans l’état physique et mental nécessaire. C’est une façon d’échapper à moi-même. Un passage solitaire. Je suis un homme solitaire. »
“Sweet dreams, then.” I knew they would be. I took a quick shower, slipped into my jimjams, and cleaned my teeth. My bed was firm but comfy as beaches in Tahiti. The Hoggins Horrors were east of the Horn, I was scot-free, and Denny, dearest Denholme, was footing my bill. Brother in need, brother indeed. Sirens sang in my marshmallow pillows. In the morning life would begin afresh, afresh, afresh. This time round I would do everything right. (Mitchell 173)

Quickly juxtaposing this near-utopic enargia, Cavendish then exposes a high security facility that deprives him of his basic rights. When he awakens there his first morning there, he finds Nurse Noakes rummaging through his personal effects. Despite his protests, she confiscates his keys and cigars (Mitchell 173-174) and, rendering her authority concrete, slaps Cavendish “hard across the chops” (Mitchell 174). Plus, barring his attempts to escape are “ruddy security lock” (Mitchell 176), gates and bars (Mitchell 371), a surveillance camera (Mitchell 362), and a physically imposing groundskeeper. Cavendish recounts, remembering his first escape attempt scotched by the groundskeeper, “In one powerful yank my trousers were pulled from my waist—was he going to bugger me? What he did was even less pleasant. He laid me on the body of his mowing, pinned me down with one hand, and caned me with a bamboo cane in the other” (Mitchell 177). According to Cavendish, Aurora House enforces physical space with physical violence.

However, the retirement home’s control techniques supersede physical violence. Nurse Noakes also controls the immaterial space of language, warning Cavendish that “Because you are new I will not have you eat soap powder. This time. Be warned. I do not stand for offensive language in Aurora House. Not from anyone. And I never make idle threats, Mr. Cavendish. Never” (Mitchell 173). Other techniques Aurora House employs to control space involve
psychological, rather than physical, violence. In the aforementioned run-in with the
groundskeeper, Cavendish fears being sodomized (Mitchell 177), and after he awakens from a
drug-induced sleep, he says, “All at once, my memory’s chastity belt was unlocked and
removed” (Mitchell 355).

Along with sexual fear comes attempts at mental control, including pressure to conform
to crowd behavior. The Residents Committee advises him, three different times in three different
ways during their short meeting, to “Just obey the regulations” (Mitchell 179). Later, after
Cavendish clandestinely calls for help from an office telephone, the Residents Committee fillips
a room-wide chant of “Shame on you!” (Mitchell 366). Nurse Noakes then issues the warning,
“Don’t dare look away while you’re being shamed!” (Mitchell 367), allowing the rhetorically-
barbed chant to take its maximum effect. Additionally, all residents must limit themselves to the
same library. There, Cavendish finds back issues of This English magazine, a cookbook, a
damaged copy of All Quiet on the Western Front, and an American military suspense writer
(Mitchell 387). Crowd behavior and limited reading material allow Aurora House sway over
their residents’ mental space.

These detailed descriptions of space control obscure the fact that Cavendish, as author,
ultimately controls all space in his memoirs. He dedicates the first twenty-eight pages of his
ghastly ordeal to exclusively himself (Mitchell 145-173) and adds a two page epilogue in which,
again, the focus turns to him. In any work, initial and final positions boast the greatest rhetorical
power, and Cavendish exploits these two positions to his own purposes. As narrator, he serves as
the readers’ gateway to his memoirs, but to access his narrative, they must inherit his biases and
dispositions. They see the events through his eyes, for he controls the description of physical
control and mental control. However, to maintain his control, he must demarcate, and he does so
through a rhetoric of otherness. Sartre, who defines the concept of otherness, writes in *Being and Nothingness* that “every conception of otherness amounts to positing it as an in-itself—that is, establishing between it and being an external relation” (Sartre 787). In his relationship to Aurora House’s other residents, Cavendish creates that necessary external relation.

Recounting the experience of visiting carolers, he remembers, “The Undead sang along with wrong verses and death rattles, and the racket drove me out, it wasn’t even funny. I limped around Aurora House in search of my lost vigor, needing the lavvy every thirty minutes. (The Organs of Venus are well known to all but, Brothers, the Organ of Saturn is the Bladder)” (Mitchell 356). Cavendish’s references to the “Undead,” “Venus,” and “Saturn,” pulled from the texts of mythology, sever his identification with these other residents. Mythology obscures its own origins, as well as the origins of what is being mythologized, which affirms his own power and the powerlessness of his subjects—the other residents. The label of “Undead,” then, demarcates identity from his surroundings because, by applying the word “Undead” to the other residents, he relegates them to inhuman, unpersuasive silence.

Derrida seems equally applicable here. In *Of Grammatology*, he elaborates on Rousseau’s condemnation of the written word, explaining, “Writing is dangerous from the moment that representation there claims to be presence and the sign of the thing itself” (Derrida 144). Because it is Cavendish who holds the pen, who connects readers to the events of six summers ago and provides their perspective, these “Undead” cannot transcend their subaltern presence. They cannot to represent themselves, at least in Cavendish’s memoirs. In fact, except for Gwendolyn Bendincks and Gordon Warlock-Williams, no other resident in Aurora House is named. The reader knows them only through the subjective antonomasia of “Undead” and may easily
mistake Cavendish’s representation of those residents as the residents themselves. Writing reconstructs presence, and, ethos be damned, that presence depends entirely on the author.

The workers in Aurora House fare no better, for those who oppose Cavendish suffer his vilification. Throughout his stay, Cavendish labels Nurse Noakes with a variety of demeaning antonomasia, including “pilfering warty sow” (Mitchell 173), “robber” (Mitchell 173), “thief” (Mitchell 173), “crazy dragon” (Mitchell 174), “madwoman” (Mitchell 174), “demented bitch” (Mitchell 175), witch (Mitchell 377), and “huntress” (Mitchell 377). Consequently, readers will unlikely sympathize her, especially when Cavendish locks her in his room and breaks for freedom. Because Cavendish holds the pen, readers see Nurse Noakes, and other authority figures, as the labels he applies.

In addition to rhetorically effacing those who surround him, Cavendish addresses his readers directly at least eight times. Each time, he incorporates a little flattery. For example, he says, “I refer the curious reader to page 244 of *Knuckle Sandwich*, available from your local bookshop. Not on a full stomach” (Mitchell 155), giving the readers a literary tip; or “Old Father Timothy offers this advice to his youngest readers, included for free in the price of this memoir” (Mitchell 166). He also compliments the reader’s acuity, saying, “You can see it, can’t you dear Reader? I was a man in a horror B-movie asylum” (Mitchell 179), and addresses his imagined audience as friends. He chimes, “Dear Reader, Withers saw only a hysterical inmate making nuisance calls after midnight” (Mitchell 365), and “Reader, you would have been proud of me” (Mitchell 375). Then, near the very end of the tale, he insists, “Very well, dear Reader, you deserve an epilogue if you’ve stayed with me this far” (Mitchell 385). Both charming and disarming, this rhetorical breaking of the “fourth wall” positions him directly between his audience and the subaltern others—Aurora House, its staff, and its residents. By directly
addressing readers, Cavendish assumes a position of power, juxtaposing the distance he places between readers and the “Undead of Aurora House.”

Another contrast is one of diction. Throughout his narrative, Cavendish adopts a slangy vernacular, marketing himself to the lowest common denominator of readers. Especially before the introduction of Aurora House, he peppers his narration with “ruddy” (Mitchell 145, 146, 147, 158, 159, etc.), “pick ‘n’ mix” (Mitchell 146), “filch” (Mitchell 146), “keep mum” (Mitchell 146), “tosh” (Mitchell 147), “sloshed” (Mitchell 147), “breather” (Mitchell 147), “bombed” (Mitchell 148), “niblies” (Mitchell 150), “over a barrel” (Mitchell 150), and other informal language to cast himself on a comfortable, common level with his readers. As a result, they will likely sympathize with the captive, rather than the captor.

An elevated diction, on the contrary, pervades Aurora House. When Cavendish realizes his brother’s deception, the worker at the front desk tells explains the effects of his “residency papers” (Mitchell 175). She says sweetly, “Aurora House is your home, now, Mr. Cavendish. Your signature authorizes us to apply compliancy. And I’d get out of the habit of referring to my sister in those tones” (Mitchell 175). Her Latin-based lexicon contrasts sharply with the Anglo Saxon words of Timothy Cavendish, and her conditional verbiage further softens her rhetorical appeal. Although she appears much less forceful than Cavendish, Latin-based conditionals also underpin legal and political language, inviting mistrust. Cavendish uses legalese as well, accusing Aurora House of “breaking, entering, and theft” (Mitchell 173), “assault” (Mitchell 177), “illegal confinement” (Mitchell 177), “incarceration” (Mitchell 386), and even “castration” (Mitchell 386). However, unlike the rhetoric of the institutionalized Aurora House, Cavendish’s legalese serves to reveal, rather than conceal, violence. Through his authority of authorship, his
language becomes a medium of justice, and readers forgive, or at least overlook, his faults. Authorship trumps ethos.

In light of “The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish,” Aristotle’s definition of ethos seems frustratingly limited. Aristotle says ethos “may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion he possesses” (1329), yet it plays such a tiny role in the former publisher’s narrative. A man lacking ethos bypasses the ethos of those around him, portraying himself successfully as victim and even as a hero. Perhaps the Peripatetic definition applies specifically to oratory and not to writing. With ethos so easily bypassed, writing seems darker, more dangerous; as Claude Lévi-Strauss observed in his own memoirs *Tristes Tropiques*, writing “seems to favor rather the exploitation than the enlightenment of mankind” (Derrida 101). Likewise, through his authorship, the ethos-lacking Timothy Cavendish has evidently exploited his readers for his own commercial ends.

To dismiss the entire Aristotelian episteme as strictly oratorical would be hasty, however. By its nature, writing conceals its author but not its author’s logos or pathos. Throughout “The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish,” the author appeals equally to readers’ sense of logic and their emotions, and given the decreased import of ethos, the import of logos and pathos must necessarily increase. All three pillars of Aristotle’s rhetorical episteme—logos, pathos, ethos—remain active, only in differing proportions in writing than in speech. This diminished ethos, then, makes writing intensely ethical, even for authors like Timothy Cavendish, who makes his entire living through what “seemed almost unethical” (Mitchell 151).
Works Cited


